



Assessment Plan

By Professor Adam L. Kern, Director
Wednesday, 15 May, 2013

Program Overview

The Center for Visual Cultures (CVC) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison actively develops and sustains vital connections and collaborations between the study and practice of the visual with bridges across the arts, humanities, social sciences, and sciences.

As a leader in the field since 2002, the CVC supports cutting-edge creative production and transdisciplinary research, programming, and community outreach activities in the still emerging field of visual cultures studies. Engaged with the rapidly changing demands for visual literacy in the age of digital communications, this dynamic field responds to the necessity of confronting the major technological changes that contribute to the saturation of everyday environments with visually mediated information and entertainment. The field also takes its imperative from the forces of globalization. The CVC therefore considers visibility in a global context and attends seriously to differences among cultures across historical epochs.

With core faculty, faculty affiliates, and participating students in over forty different departments in nine schools and colleges at the UW-Madison, and in its student focus group, the CVC regularly organizes an exciting calendar of public events, ranging from lectures, research colloquia, and workshops to exhibitions, performances, and screenings.

Students at all levels take advantage of rich interdisciplinary course offerings and enrichment opportunities. We host an active Visual Cultures Student Focus Group whose members meet regularly to discuss readings, plan events, and curate exhibitions.

In terms of curriculum, the CVC has only recently begun teaching formal programs of study for graduate students: (1) a Designated Ph.D. Minor in the Transdisciplinary Study of Visual Cultures, launched last academic year (2011-12) and intended primarily for Ph.D. students in various departments across the university; and (2) a Graduate Certificate in the Transdisciplinary Study of Visual Cultures, launched this present academic year (2012-13) and intended primarily for students seeking an M.A., M.F.A., M.S. etc., most of whom are in departments that do not offer a Ph.D. program per se (as with Afro-American or Art). At present, we track student progress in both of these programs primarily by two forms: a “Declaration of Intent Form” and a

“Completion Form,” both of which are available to students on the CVC website(<http://www.visualculture.wisc.edu/>) but which are also attached herein. Student learning outcomes and course-based assessment strategies for these two programs are laid out below.

Program Goals

The goal of both the Designated Ph.D. Minor in the Transdisciplinary Study of Visual Cultures and the Graduate Certificate in the Transdisciplinary Study of Visual Cultures is to train students in the foundations of the theory and practice of the visual so that they can apply this theory and practice to their particular discipline(s). This goal is affected by a curriculum of at least 12 credits in specific coursework: (1) either “AH801: The Study of Visual Cultures: Historiography, Theory, Methods” or equivalent (3 cr); (2) either “AH802: Topics in Visual Cultures” or equivalent (3 cr); and (3) “Independent Study in Visual Cultures” (3 cr); and at least 3 credits from among a wide range of listed or cross-listed courses offered by several Visual Cultures core faculty and nearly 100 affiliated members. A more comprehensive listing of these courses can be found on the CVC website.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Strategies

Consistent with our goals, the main learning outcomes for students in both the designated Ph.D. minor and the Graduate Certificate include the ability to: (1) conduct transdisciplinary research and analyze, critique, write, and produce transdisciplinary scholarship that makes an original contribution to knowledge; (2) know how to look for funding and how to write grant applications; (3) establish a public as well as a professional presence through conference participation and other activities (in addition to publishing); (4) think, analyze, write, and practice in transdisciplinary, transnational, transhistorical, and global ways; and (5) work individually and collaboratively, especially with different communities.

Assessment strategies of the foregoing include embedded assessment in select courses (AH801 and AH802) via such things as quizzes, exams, oral presentations, and final projects (for items 1, 4, and 5); embedded assessment in the Independent Study in Visual Cultures course via a final project; and a written Exit Survey (for items 2 and 3).

Program Completion Form and Exit Survey

Presently, summative Assessment for both the Designated Minor and the Certificate is tracked by means of a “Completion Form.” We have charged our Curriculum Committee with the task of devising, over the next few months, an appropriate written Exit Survey that would need to be submitted along with the Completion Form. The Exit Survey would also be made available on the CVC website.

The Curriculum Committee would be responsible annually for tabulating the results of the Exit Survey and presenting the findings to our Steering Committee at one of its regular meetings.

Possible Exit Survey Questions

How confident do you feel in your ability to conduct transdisciplinary research in visual culture studies and analyze, critique, write, and produce transdisciplinary scholarship that makes an original contribution to knowledge within your field?

How confident do you feel about knowing how to look for funding and how to write grant applications?

Do you feel that you have established a public as well as a professional presence through conference participation and other activities (in addition to publishing)?

What is your assessment of your own ability to think, analyze, write, and practice in transdisciplinary, transnational, transhistorical, and global ways related to visual culture studies?

How confident do you feel about working both individually and collaboratively, especially with communities, in your chosen area of visual culture studies?

Which classes and out-of-class activities have been most useful in the development of your training in visual culture studies? What kinds of classes or out-of-class activities would you like to see more of?

Do you have a general sense of the state of the field of visual culture studies?

How competent a writer of essays on topics related to visual culture studies would you judge yourself to be? Which course or courses have been most useful in the development of this skill?

Have you participated in any of the workshops, brownbags, conferences, colloquia, or other CVC events? If so, which of these events were most successful? Least successful? What kinds of events would you like to see more of?

How do you expect your Designated Minor or Graduate Certificate to help you achieve your life and career goals after graduation?

Please share with us your post-graduation plans, particularly if they include landing a job related to visual culture studies.

Sincerely yours,



Adam L. Kern
Director, Center for Visual Cultures
Associate Professor of Japanese Literature & Visual Culture