STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY
Department of Media Studies

Syllabus

Visual Culture
7.5 Credits

Code: MS1FU01
Finalized by: Prefekt Institutionen för mediestudier, 2026-09-30
Valid from: Spring semester 2027 (2027-01-18)
Level within study regulation: Third cycle

Course modules Visual Culture, 7.5 Credits

1. Entry requirements

The student must be accepted to a doctoral education program

2. Learning outcomes

After completing the course, students will be able to:

• Demonstrate an advanced understanding of salient theoretical underpinnings and scholarship in visual culture, and of key concepts concerning visual communication and perception.
• Critically discuss and contrast different perspectives on visual representation, artifacts and practices, as they relate to power, knowledge, and resistance.
• Critically reflect on visual perception, creation and curation based on central theories from the course and experiences gained from course seminars focused on exhibitions.
• Apply theoretical and methodological tools to conduct an independent research inquiry into aspects of visual culture in relation to historical, current and future-oriented contexts.

3. Content

The course aims to provide a conceptually and theoretically grounded understanding of visual culture, an interdisciplinary field that places visual communication into broader cultural and social contexts, encompassing various types of imagery, viewing practices, perception and the entire field of vision as central to the production of meaning and knowledge. The overall focus of the course is the poetics and politics of visual representation, creation and reception over time and in a changing media world. To this end, theoretical approaches and scholarship from overlapping connected fields, including cultural studies, media studies, art history, film studies, and literature, are applied to the critical, thematic study of visual expressions, artifacts, and practices in various fields and genres, ranging from icons, via museum exhibitions and photography to illustrated childrens' books, film and and social media. The course opens with foundational works on visual culture and communication, drawing on traditional representation and production-reception models, subsequently problematizing these with theories considering the visual in today's participatory media society characterized by discussions about generative AI, deep-fakes and technological surveillance. Students use theoretical and conceptual tools gained from the course to critically reflect on visual dimensions in relation to contemporary debates and exhibitions, to their own research and their own disciplinary field.

4. Mandatory exams

Participation in all seminars and workshops and the successul completion of related assignments and exercises.

5. Forms of examination

Assessment is based on an individual written course paper, which is also presented orally. For the grade Passed [godkänt] the student shall also actively have participated in all seminars/workshops and shall have completed the seminar/workshop assignments.

6. Form of instruction

The course consists of lectures, required seminars containing oral and written presentations, a workshop, film screening, and visits to museums.