

ICONOLOGY EAST AND WEST, WINTER 2023: SYLLABUS

Instructors: W. J. T. Mitchell, with Martin Powers

Course Assistant: Qingqi Zhang

Monday/Wednesday 4:30-5:50 PM; Tuesdays 8-11 PM Virtual Session

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This will be a “dialogic” course between Professor Mitchell’s writings on iconology, visual culture, and media aesthetics, and Professor Powers’ explorations of Chinese writings and artworks that address the same issues. The course will be in person, but will include weekly live streamed interventions from Professor Powers and his students. Our hope will be to create a hybrid, transpacific classroom with dialogues between students in Chicago and Beijing.

Iconology is the study of images across media and cultures. It is also associated with philosophical reflections on the nature of images and their relation to language—the interplay between the “icon” and the “logos.” A plausible translation of this compound word into Chinese would describe it as “Words in Pictures, Pictures in Words”: 诗中有画，画中有诗. Thus, the seminar will explore the relations of word and image in poetics, semiotics, and aesthetics with a particular emphasis on how texts and pictures have been understood in the Anglo-European-American and Chinese theoretical traditions. The interplay of painting and poetry, speech and spectacle, audition and vision will be considered across a variety of media, particularly the textual and graphic arts.

The aims of the course will be 1) to critique the simplistic oppositions between “East” and “West” that have bedeviled intercultural and intermedial comparative studies; 2) to test the universality and translatability of common understandings of the relation of words and images, speech and visual communication; 3) to identify common principles, zones of interaction and translation that make this a vital area of study.

Enrollment in the course will be with the consent of instructor; it is open to students at all levels, but enrollment will be limited to 15. University of Chicago students should send a one page statement of their interest to W. J. T. Mitchell (wjtm@uchicago.edu); Peking University students should do the same with Professor Powers (mpow@umich.edu) explaining what they will bring to the course, and what they hope to learn from it. Readings will be in English; fluency in Chinese is not required. Students will be expected to submit written discussion questions based on each week’s reading in advance of class sessions; active participation in class will be required, and there will be a final paper of around 15 pages.

Required readings will be available in a common folder of PDF files.

SCHEDULE:

MONDAYS (except for first class)	WEDNESDAY
<p>Tuesday 1/3: Zoom Session at 8 PM: Picturing Language: Writing, Speech and the verbal-visual sign. Peirce on Symbol/Index/Icon; Saussure's pictures of the linguistic sign; excerpts from I. J. Gelb's "History of Writing." Mitchell, "Image X Text"; "Introduction" to <i>Picture Theory</i>; excerpts from Michel Foucault, <i>This Is Not a Pipe</i></p>	<p>1/5: Ming Dong Gu, "Reconceptualizing the Linguistic Divide"; Zhang Longxi, "The "Tao" and the "Logos": Notes on Derrida's Critique of Logocentrism"</p>
<p>1/9: "Metapictures," from Mitchell, <i>Picture Theory</i>, chapter 2; online "Atlas of Metapictures" (URL to be provided) based on 2018 OCAT exhibition in Beijing.</p>	<p>1/11: Wu Hung "The Double Screen"; Alfreda Murck, "Su Shi and Zhao Lingrang: Brush Ideas of Wang Wei." (Online link)</p>
<p>1/16: Multistable Images: Wittgenstein and Gombrich on the Duck/Rabbit; Walter Benjamin on dialectical images and "history at a standstill"</p>	<p>1/18: Powers, <i>Pattern and Person</i>, Selections; Norman Bryson, "The Gaze in the Expanded Field."</p>
<p>1/23: Picturing Vision: Face, Surface, Interface; Screens and Frames; Lacan on the scopopic drive; Mitchell, "Spectacle and Surveillance"; "Showing Seeing"; excerpts from Descartes, <i>Optics</i>.</p>	<p>1/25: Richard Vinograd, "Hiding in Plane Site: accommodating visual incompatibilities in early visual modernity"; Hans-Georg Moeller, <i>Genuine Pretending</i>; (on Zhuangzi and "images that society reflects back to us")</p>
<p>1/30: Space, Place, and Landscape. Mitchell, Introduction to <i>Landscape and Power</i> and excerpts from "Imperial Landscape"; Milton's description of Paradise; excerpts from William Gilpin on the picturesque; excerpts from Hogarth, <i>Analysis of Beauty</i>.</p>	<p>2/1: Powers, "When is a Landscape Like a Body?"; David Porter, "The Socio-aesthetics of the Chinese Scholar's Stone (on William Chambers)."</p>

<p>2/6: Poetics: Ekphrasis and the word/image dialectic; verbal images. Mitchell, "Ekphrasis and the Other"; the shields of Achilles and Aeneas: passages from Lessing's <i>Laocoon</i> on Homer and Virgil; Wallace Stevens, "Anecdote of the Jar"; Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn"; William Carlos Williams, "Portrait of a Lady"</p>	<p>2/8: Wai-lim Yip, "Ezra Pound's Tensional Dialogue with the Chinese Conception of Nature"; Zhao Mingchian, "Painting into Poetry: Pound's 'Seven Lakes' Canto."</p>
<p>2/13: Image/Sound/Text: Mitchell, "Media Aesthetics," from <i>Image Science</i>; excerpts from Friedrich Kittler, <i>Gramophone Film Typewriter</i></p>	<p>2/15: Shuchen Xiang, "Giving Poetic Form to <i>Qing</i> (emotions)," ; Vinograd, "Situation and Response in Traditional Chinese Scholar Painting."</p>
<p>2/20: Monuments: sacred and profane images; magical images; cults, iconoclasm, iconomachia; Mitchell, "Totemism, Fetishism, Idolatry," from <i>What Do Pictures Want?</i></p>	<p>2/22: Ziporin, trans., Zhuangzi's Chapter 9, "Horse's Hooves," ; Yang Xiaoshan, "Fetishism and its Anxiety: a Poetic Biography of Fantastic Rocks."</p>
<p>2/27: Review and Overviews: Diagrammatics and the Structure of Thought: Mitchell, "Diagrammatology"; "Tables and Diagrams" in <i>Metapictures Atlas</i>; World Pictures and "Atlas Fever" in Allan Sekula's <i>Ship of Fools</i> and Aby Warburg's <i>Bilderatlas</i>.</p>	<p>3/1: ; Brook Ziporin, trans., Zhuangzi's Chapter II, "Equalizing Assessments of Things." Ziporin, "Penumbra Unbound."</p>
<p>3/6: Student Presentations</p>	<p>3/8: Student Presentations</p>