Mind’s Eye Redux: ITP/IDM Ability Lab Special Topics, Spring 2015
Georgia Krantz/Christie Leece

Note: We will be meeting at 2 Metrotech, Room 803. Closest metro stops are Jay St
Metrotech: A/C/F/R. The NYU entrance is on Lawrence St, between the Five Guys and
Hale & Hearty Soups. It is about a 15 minute ride on the F from Broadway Lafayette.

Wednesdays, 3:30-6pm
If you get lost, please call Christie (202) 276-4927
Office Hours: please email to set up a time with Georgia: glk2@nyu.edu
or Christie: christie.leece@nyu.edu

Accommodations
If you are a student with a disability who is requesting accommodations, please contact New
York University’s Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or
mosescsd@nyu.edu. You must be registered with CSD to receive accommodations.
Information about the Moses Center can be found at www.nyu.edu/csd. The Moses Center is
located at 726 Broadway on the 2nd floor.

Mind’s Eye Redux

We don’t see things as they are, we see them as we are. Anais Nin
The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled. John Berger
I paint objects as I think them, not as I see them. Pablo Picasso

This course comprises a re-envisioning of a decade of work at museums teaching people who
are blind or have low vision about 20th-century art. We will focus not on people’s lack of sight,
but rather the different kinds of sight they bring to art objects and the world around them.

In the above quotes, Anais Nin considers subjective vision, John Berger the complex
relationship between seeing and knowing, and Pablo Picasso the non-privileging of sight as
the primary mechanism for making and creativity. Fundamental to our understanding of the
world, matters of sight and perception have been studied through many lenses, going back to
the Greeks. Vision science is a term that comprises a large and diverse number of fields
including physics, psychology and computer science and graphics. Philosophers approach
sight and perception as related to subjectivity, reality, knowledge and experience. Areas of
cultural studies consider identity, gender, race, power and history.

The course was conceived to bridge ideas from this vast area of study with the everyday
experiences of people who have different levels of sight. Students will engage with art and
areas of cultural studies as related to vision. How might philosophy enhance understanding of
the experience of a blind person visiting a museum? What could questions of identity bring to bear on the use of technology by sighted or non-sighted users? A new course, the ultimate goal is to forge new spaces of focused thought and discussion by investigating these intersections. Readings and lecture segments will be chosen to broaden perspectives on weekly engagements.

Work
This course will include weekly reading, discussion and lectures as well as site visits to museums and other cultural spaces and a series of independent projects. Students will have ample opportunity to apply their learning to their own individual practices through regularly assigned exercises and four small projects. Each project will have a set of parameters and students will be free to choose their materials/technologies. Throughout the semester, we will work with people who are blind or have low vision to gain insight into their experience and collaborate on designing new ways of accessing work. This is a new course and we will be looking to you for feedback along the way to improve or expand on classes and ideas you find particularly interesting.

Students taking the course for four credits will be assigned a final project which will comprise an expanded fourth project: students will be asked to build on one or more of their earlier class projects.

Conduct
- No email, phones, IM or work on other classes - it is important that everyone remain present during class.
- Laptops down when other students or outside guests are presenting.
- Critique sessions will be carefully timed so as to give everyone a fair allotment.
- A student may be excused from class in exceptional cases and at the discretion of the professor. Leave will be only be considered 1 week (or more) in advance of a class, not after. This does not apply to sudden illness, a death in the family, or other last-minute exigencies. Situations which merit consideration for class absence include:
  * Unique and compelling professional opportunities relevant to your studies
  * Important family events (weddings, funerals, and the like)
  * Incapacitating or contagious illness (NB: A student must call or e-mail the professor BEFORE the class time if he or she cannot attend as a result of serious illness. Failure to do so will result in an unexcused absence.)
  * Religious holidays
- An unexcused absence counts as one full grade demotion (i.e. A to A-)
- Two unexcused absences will result in an academic warning.
- For off-site visits, students are responsible for knowing where to meet and arriving on time.
- Lateness (more than 5 minutes) or early departure from class translates into one half absence.
Assessment - Grades are based on class participation (40%) and assignments (60%).
Class Participation: 30%
Reading Responses/Short Assignments: 10%
Project Assignment 1: 15%
Project Assignment 2: 15%
Project Assignment 3: 15%
Project Assignment 4: 15%

For students taking 4 credits:
Class Participation: 30%
Reading Responses/Short Assignments: 10%
Project Assignment 1: 10%
Project Assignment 2: 10%
Project Assignment 3: 10%
Final Assignment 4: 30%

Please note: Students will be working individually and in pairs on different projects. When working in pairs, each student will be assessed individually on their preparation, thoughtfulness and presentation. This means that one of the pair could receive a A on the project whereas the other could receive a B.

The grade percentage for each project includes points for documentation. Please document your projects and process on your personal website. If you do not have one, please see us after the first class and we can assign one to you for the semester.

Outline, subject to change

WEEK 1, 1/28
Introduction

WEEK 2, 2/4
Seeing: the science and the experience. Discussion of readings and group viewing of Sam Falls, Light Over Time (Metrotech Commons); Ben Sneed, Departures and Arrivals (Metrotech subway)
Reading due this week:
PROJECT #1 ASSIGNED, DUE WEEK 4. The External Eye.
The eye is the visual organ. In essence, it converts light into electro-chemical input that can be processed by the brain. *It synthesizes and communicates*. Over the next two weeks, please work in pairs to create an external eye that we all may experience. If you are unable to present your work directly in class, please document it thoroughly.

**WEEK 3, 2/11**

**Off-site visit to MoMA.** Visual description, with guest participants Jessica Jones and Ulli Kotanko. Jessica is blind; Ulli has low vision.

**Reading/viewing/listening due this week:**


**Assignment due this week:** Write a one-page description of an object of your choice. *Direct contact* is essential for this project: no use of images in books or on-line.

**WEEK 4, 2/18**

**Present Project #1**
Matters of perception. Lecture; group discussion

**Reading due this week:**

1) David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler*, University of Chicago Press, 1976, chapters 1 and 8


3) Maurice Merleau-Ponty, TBD

**PROJECT #2 ASSIGNED, DUE WEEK 6:**
Thus far, we have investigated assorted approaches to matters of vision and perception. For this project, take one of your own pieces of work (a project from a different class, your website, a personal endeavor) and rework it through a different lens. Suggestion: assess the primary lens(es) through which the work is manifest/used/perceived and work to shift the lens to be accessible to different users. You can work in pairs or alone.

**WEEK 5, 2/25**

Vision, Perception and Technology
Guest speakers: Zach Lieberman and Gus Chalkias (TBD)

Readings due this week:
TBD

WEEK 6, 3/4
Present Project #2 with guest critics who are blind or have low vision

WEEK 7, 3/11
Pad class

SPRING BREAK!

WEEK 8, 3/25
Off-site studio visit, artist Busser Howell (Busser is blind)

Reading due this week:

WEEK 9, 4/1
Session with photographer Wayde Harrison (who has low vision) and Bonnie Erickson (Wayde’s wife)

Reading due this week:
TBD

PROJECT #3 ASSIGNED, DUE WEEK 11
Barriers. We are thinking in this class about what makes experiences accessible. Just as it takes some exploration and intention to create rich experiences for many senses, it takes a different set of intentions to create something exclusive for people with a specific set of abilities. For this project, we want you to explore the idea of barriers. Work in pairs to create a work that is either barrier-free or barrier-ful.

WEEK 10, 4/8
Off-site visit to MoMA. Museum “audit” and touch tour with Francesca Rosenberg, Director of Community, Access and School Programs, and Carrie McGee, Assistant Director of Community, Access and School Programs

Reading/viewing due this week:
  1) Review MoMA’s initiatives regarding access:
       http://www.moma.org/visit/plan/accessibility
WEEK 11, 4/15
PROJECT #3 PRESENTATIONS
PROJECT #4 ASSIGNED, DUE WEEK 14:
Experiential Project (students will be working individually). Project options and parameters will be provided.

WEEK 12, 4/22
Guide dogs: perception, navigation, and communication between sighted animals and their non-sighted companions
Speaker: Guide Dog Foundation and guest with their Guide Dog
Reading due this week:
TBD

WEEK 13, 4/29
Pad class

WEEK 14, 5/6
PROJECT #4 PRESENTATIONS with guest critics who are blind or have low vision.