STAGE 3

Module	Politics of the Image
Course code	BAPO-PI
Credits	5
Important Notes	This is a Level 7 module. Students need to have an interest in visual media.
Allocation of marks	50% continuous assessment 50% final examination

Intended Module Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this module, the learner will be able to:

1. Demonstrate their ability to think critically about the relations of images to power.
2. Discuss the most influential contemporary theories concerning the politics of images.
3. Integrate their photographic knowledge into a wider social vision.
4. Progress to more advanced fields of learning and research.
5. Apply the photographic theory gained to their practical modules.

Module Objectives

This module aims to:

- Provide learners with an overview of a range of theories that discuss how we engage with visual cultures, how images can be understood as vehicles which communicate representation, self-expression, politics, pleasure, information or entertainment.

- Examine the inherent power relations within visual imagery, explore the complex arena of visual culture, how meaning circulates, how the visual has impacted society, and the role of the visual form as both a connecting force and source of conflict.

- Develop the learners' critical and analytical skills in relation to visual imagery.

- Deepen the learner's knowledge of contemporary visual cultural theory and to discuss the role of the photograph in the power relationship of observer and observed.

Module Curriculum

Images, Power and Politics

Meaning does not reside within images, but is produced the moment they are consumed by and circulate among viewers. This is discussed with reference to concepts of semiotics, the

study of signs, and aspects of image production and consumption particularly through exploring areas of marketing and branding. Thereby building on the language of texual analysis studied in previous modules. In addition the relationship of images to ideology is examined in more depth and how viewers attempt to produce meanings from image.

Documentary Photography

This topic engages with the various different areas of documentary realism in photography. Critical aspects of documentary photography will be examined including its applications in photojournalism and reportage, street photography, social investigation, travel and exploration, typology and contemporary art practice.

Sex Talk

Examines theories which consider an idealised viewer, such as the spectator of the cinematic and still images. It also addresses the concept of the gaze in both psychoanalytic theory and concepts of power. Both concepts of how viewers identify with images, the ways that images can be used as elements of discourse and categorization and the role of visual representation in the construction of gendered power relations are examined.

Post Postmodernism

The role of visual imagery in the establishment of collective identities and a sense of the 'Other', visualising cultural change, fashion and globalisation. Key concepts examined include re-appropriation, belonging and difference, the gaze and the exotic, reflexivity. How hegemony operates within the dominant culture which is in constant flux as it works in tension with marginal cultures.

The Visual Image in the Digital Age

The truth value of the photographic image has been the focus of many debates about the different 'truths' images can tell. Much of the power of the photograph lies in the shared belief that photographs are objective or truthful record of events. The subjective nature of the image is in constant tension with the legacy of objectivity ascribed to the photographic image. Here we shall examine these key concepts in addition to the impact of the digital imagery in contemporary society. Locating the discussion in an historical context, will then increase our understanding of contemporary representations from satellite imagery to digital distribution, posing the question, what gets shown and what does not. And indeed why some images find their way to flicker and others the art gallery.

Iconic Images. How Art Makes the World

Here we look at the role of art in political life from cave paintings to today's contemporary art. Focus is put on the impact of the mass production of images examining case studies such as; Alex Korda's "Che", the work of Edmund Curtis, Pollock, Rothko, Kandinsky, Caravaggio, Picasso and others.

Surveillance

The idea of surveillance and being under the gaze has been prevalent in societies for a long time. However in contemporary, particularly digital society, issues of surveillance have come to the fore. This topic explores how the camera serves as a reincarnation of the image of the eye in history.

The Image as a Tool of Political Campaigning

Posters, billboards, papers, mailed literature, websites, blogs, social networks and TV ads are just some of the communication tools used by political parties. This topic examines how these images are used in political campaigns, both contemporary and past.

The Politics of Illusion and the Power of Art

Symbolic images have throughout human history had considerable impact on how society behaves and how it sees itself.

Outsider Art and Society

The work of Banksy has transformed not just public perceptions of graffiti but also how other artists produce and promote their own art. Case studies of contemporary graffiti and other visual art forms such as cartoons & comics are discussed.