

## **GE Visual Literacy - Course Approval Description**

### **I. Bylaw**

The UC Davis Requirements for Higher Degrees, Section 522, sets forth the Baccalaureate Degree Requirements in General Education. Literacy with Words and Images is a component of Core Literacies (522-C-1) and requires 20 units of work in specified categories. Coursework in Visual Literacy (3 units) forms part of that requirement. Regulation 523 sets forth the Criteria for General Education Certification of courses, stating: “A course in visual literacy improves a student’s ability to understand ideas presented visually and to communicate knowledge and ideas by visual means.” (523-C-3)

### **II. Interpretation**

The objective of the Visual GE Core Literacy Requirement is to provide individuals with the analytical skills they need to understand how still and moving images, art and architecture, illustration accompanying written text, graphs and charts, and other visual embodiments of ideas inform and persuade people. Coursework may stress the skills needed to communicate through visual means as well as the analytical skills needed to be a thoughtful consumer of visual messages.

Certified courses will instruct students in the analysis and structure of visual images, by teaching students how to communicate their ideas in visual messages and/or by providing students with the critical skills necessary for understanding the persuasive power of images.

Departments and programs are encouraged to identify the ways that their disciplines use visual evidence to generate and to test knowledge; they should identify discipline-specific models of visual literacy in already existing courses and develop courses that meet the requirement in discipline-appropriate ways.

The course proposal should identify the kind of visual materials covered in the class and should also provide specific guidelines for evaluating the students’ mastery of visual literacy (e.g. through examination, written analysis, production of visual materials, and so on).

Education Abroad Program courses may be used to satisfy the GE Visual Literacy requirement if they meet these criteria.

### **III. Guiding questions:**

1. What kind of visual materials does the class incorporate?
2. How does the course enable students to think critically about visual materials?
3. How is evaluative criteria used to assess students’ mastery of the critical skills necessary for understanding and/or conveying visual meanings?

## Sample Course Information and Possible Justification in Fulfillment of the Visual Literacy Requirement

- 1. Sample Course:** A beginning-level class in studio art that teaches students any of a variety of basic skills and concepts related to drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography, video, film, or other visual media.

**Justification:** This course teaches students technical skills for communicating through a visual medium. It also introduces fundamental concepts necessary to a thoughtful understanding of the process involved in creating the art form.
- 2. Sample Course:** A historically based literature course that looks at both the textual and production-based facets of a playwright's work. Such a course would focus especially on how plays were composed to be performed in the theater, and consider the plays in relation to key areas of dramatic production. By attending to the theatrical conditions in which the plays were staged, students would be positioned to explore the ways these dramas grapple with a range of historical and contemporary concerns.

**Justification:** By focusing on specific elements of theatrical spectacle, this course teaches the critical analysis of visual imagery. The paper assignments will ask students to consider staging practices and audience, as well as text, in order to develop the ability to interpret visual spectacle in its historical context.
- 3. Sample Course:** A contemporary literature course that examines poetry with and against other arts. Such a course would contain units considering poetry in relation to painting, movies, architecture, and music.

**Justification:** The interdisciplinary structure of this course prominently features visual culture. Students will consider how painting, film, and architecture convey ideas, as well as explore the relationship between reading images and reading texts. Assignments will incorporate the analysis of visual objects.
- 4. Sample Course:** An art history survey course that looks at western art and visual culture from 1600–present. Its primary objects of study would be artists and movements, as well as theories of visuality. It might explore cultural issues such as class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity over an extended historical past and into the present.

**Justification:** With its primary focus on visual evidence (including painting, sculpture, and other media), this course teaches students how to understand developments in aesthetics, critical theory, and philosophy through the interpretation of visual imagery and visual forms. Papers and exams will test students' mastery of the artistic traditions as well as their ability to analyze these images critically.
- 5. Sample Course:** An introductory astronomy course on the solar system. It would survey the history of human encounters with the visible sky and the development of physical laws that address our particular situation in the universe. Such a course would emphasize how we “see” with our eyes, and would survey

individual planets in the solar system, examining the clues they provide as to how the solar system evolved into the entities we see today.

**Justification:** This course teaches students to understand and interpret patterns of visual material. Its assignments also give students techniques for recording and conveying visual evidence. Students are tested throughout on their ability to interpret visual data accurately and observantly.

6. **Sample Course:** An introductory course in technocultural studies that explores the making of meaning across different media and artistic practices. Such a course would relate image to text and to sound. It would teach students techniques for using digital media to express ideas and arguments. Students would therefore be encouraged both to create and to critically examine visual material.

**Justification:** This course teaches visual literacy by giving students the skills they need to communicate through visual images. Course assignments require them to produce their own multimedia artistic objects and critical statements. All these productions significantly incorporate visual elements.