This course provides conceptual and methodological tools for incorporating visual techniques, particularly documentary film and the PhotoVoice approach, into interdisciplinary social science research. The course provides a general conceptual overview of visual methods, examples of the application of specific strategies to research endeavors, practical skill-building exercises to prepare students for adapting these methods, and the opportunity to implement pilot projects throughout the course. The underlying purpose of the course is to develop students’ theoretical and practical foundation for incorporating visual methods into their own research, and to identify and practice the skills and resources needed to do so.

The course surveys several specific areas, including: 1) conceptualization of visual methods in the social sciences, 2) examples of specific films to illustrate documentary approaches, 3) technical and methodological considerations for documentary film; 4) the use of visual methods and Community-based Participatory Research in ethnography; 5) the PhotoVoice methods and considerations; 6) ethical issues in PhotoVoice; and (7) practical skills in implementing visual methods or adapting them to specific projects. Students will be guided through the implementation of small visual methods projects, which will enable practice with specific methods of interest.

**Required Text:**


All other reading materials will be made available via link to the FIU library.

**Office Hours:** Dr. Varas-Díaz’s regular office hours will be Wednesdays from 12:00-1:00 PM. Because these slots are on a “first-come, first-served,” however, you are encouraged to email him ahead (nvarasdi@fiu.edu) to confirm an appointment time.

Dr. Mark Padilla’s regular office hours will be Wednesdays from 12:00-1:00 PM. Because these slots are on a “first-come, first-served,” however, you are encouraged to email him ahead (marpadi@fiu.edu) to confirm an appointment time.

**Course-related PDFs:** The readings will be available on the course’s Canvas site.

**Learning Objectives:** At the end of this course, students will be able to:
• Understand some central conceptual issues in the use of visual methods in the social sciences.
• Gain practical skills for implementing certain visual methods techniques, and familiarity with the conceptual and ethical issues of each.
• Identify examples of the use of photographic and video methods in combination with social science research.
• Be able to implement an individual project using one of the visual methods techniques described in class.

Assignments: Students’ final grade will be calculated based on three assignments. The dates for handing in these assignments will be announced via Canvas and in class. These include the following:

1. **Documentary Reviews (30% of total grade)** – As part of the course students will watch multiple documentary films. The professors will assign some of these films and students may identify others. Students will provide reviews for two of these films. Each review should be six pages in length (double spaced) and it must: a) provide a summary of the film, b) examine the strengths and weaknesses of the film, c) link the film’s content to the conceptual discussion carried out throughout the course, and d) explain how the film advances a discussion on visual research methods for the social sciences. All reviews should be well written and logically constructed. Coverage of the aforementioned elements, as well as clarity of writing, will be considered in grading.

2. **Online Discussion (Canvas) (30% of total grade)** – The professors will post a weekly discussion thread in the Canvas platform. These discussions will be guided by specific questions and supplemented with videos or photographs. It is expected that all students engage in each discussion and provide insightful comments to move the reflection forward. This exercise is intended to provide an open forum that will allow you to engage with the ideas discussed in class and view how your peers are interpreting the material. Please remember to keep your writing respectful and professional. Keep in mind that this is an academic discussion, and non-academic or disrespectful comments towards peers are not acceptable. All students must engage in the online discussion for the week in order to receive credit. Students are encouraged to check the Canvas platform on a daily basis.

3. **Final project (40% of total grade)** – Each student will develop a short visual project linked to topic of interest for their research agenda, anchored in the field of the social sciences. These projects can be based on video or photography, in light of the topics discussed in class. Short documentary films should not be longer than 10 minutes. Photography based essays should not include more than 10 images for analysis. The final project must reflect how the use of visual research methods helps shed light on a social topic, issue or problem.

**Extra credit** - Some extra credit options may be announced during the course of the semester.
Other Considerations: Please take into account the following issues as they can influence the course’s progress and students’ grades.

**Canvas platform** – All students must be registered in the Canvas platform. Reading materials and group discussions will be carried out via Canvas. Some class meetings may be held using the Canvas platform via its video capabilities. Dr. Nelson Varas-Díaz will announce those sessions in class or via email in the platform.

**In-class discussion** - When we engage in class discussion, the learning process depends on the interaction between the professor and students. It is critical that students contribute to this conversational experience to ask questions, clarify points, or make relevant comments to extend the material. In-class discussion may also be considered by the professor in the final course grade.

**Style of written assignments** - All written assignments (e.g., reviews, essays) *MUST* be in the format and style used by the Chicago Manual of Style.

**Format** – Use MS Word, double-space using 1 inch top, bottom, and side margins. Use Times Roman 12 point font. Do not use footnotes. Single-space the “References Cited” section, which immediately follows the text. Do not use separate cover page. Place topic of paper, student name, and date single-spaced on top of first page. Name should appear on the top right of each page. Bottom center page numbers. For printed papers, simply staple pages together, do not use a binder or cover. All written assignments will be turned in as both print copies (in class) and as electronic versions (on Canvas). Papers submitted through Canvas are considered the “official” version for grading purposes, and print versions are back-up. Feedback to the student will be provided via Canvas. The final project, based on video or photographs, should also be uploaded to the Canvas platform.

**Timeliness** - Written assignments are to be turned in as hard copies at the beginning of the class in which they are due, and electronic versions are due in Canvas prior to the corresponding class. Late assignments received before midnight on the due date receive a half letter grade less than earned, and thereafter receive a letter grade reduction for each week it is late. Written assignments will not be accepted after two weeks of the deadline. As both printed and electronic versions are required, both are necessary in order to receive a grade. The last dates to submit extra credits and late assignments are posted in the course schedule below.

**Attendance** - In order to succeed in this course, students are expected to attend every class. Avoid arriving late or leaving early since this disrupts the presentation and student concentration. Course materials, exercises and discussions presented in class are the responsibility of the student. A missed class is not an explanation for poor performance on assignments. While there is no formal grade for attendance, class attendance in this course and participation during discussions is important. If you have a valid situation (health-related or otherwise) that seriously affects your attendance, you must speak to the professors right away at the beginning of the course to make us aware of this and help you to meet your obligations if we are able. In short, we are happy to work with you, but you need to keep us informed and treat course requirements as obligations. Please note: attendance will be tracked and can be taken into
consideration in end-of-semester grades if there is a significant and consistent attendance problem that has not been justified by the student.

**Notes on academic integrity** - The faculty of the School of International and Public Affairs believes that the conduct of a student registered or taking courses in the School should be consistent with that of a professional person. Courtesy, honesty, and respect should be shown by students toward faculty members, guest lecturers, administrative support staff, and fellow students. Similarly, students should expect faculty to treat them fairly, showing respect for their ideas and opinions and striving to help them achieve maximum benefits from their experience in the School.

Student academic misconduct refers to behavior that may include plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, falsification of records or official documents, intentional misuse of equipment or materials (including library materials), and aiding and abetting the perpetration of such acts. *The preparation of reviews and essays, assigned on an individual basis, must represent each student’s own effort and must not reproduce verbatim previously published material, including from the Internet.* Quoted material must be described as such and appropriately set apart with quotation marks, and all sources must be identified with in-text citation and in a “References cited” section. Reference sources should be indicated clearly when quoting prior texts (internet or otherwise).

**Laptops, tablets, phones** - Students may use these devices to take notes as part of the course. Please do not use these devices in class to email, IM, text message, update your social media, or browse the web in ways not related to class activity. These activities will limit your ability to engage in the class discussion and can distract other students.

**Students with disabilities** - Student with disabilities who require academic accommodations should contact the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259 (voice) or 471-4641 as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining the needed and authorized accommodations.

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jan 8</td>
<td>Introduction and structure of the course</td>
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Assigned reading: None.

Note: Bring your favorite documentary or photo to class. If you don’t have a hard copy, bring a YouTube link.

| 2       | Jan 15 | Visual Research and the Social Sciences – Part 1 |

Assigned reading:


Supplemental reading:


Note: Watch assigned documentary “13th”

3  Jan 22  Visual Research and the Social Sciences – Part 2

Assigned reading:


Chapter 1: Visualizing social life.
Chapter 2: The research process and visual methods.

Note: Watch assigned documentary “Marlon on Marlon”

4  Jan 29  Defining documentary film

Assigned reading:


Note: Watch assigned documentary “Paradise Lost”

5  Feb 5  Ethnographic film vs. documentary film

Assigned reading:


Note: Watch assigned documentary “I’m Still Here”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Documentary film, ethics and social change</th>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Feb 12</td>
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**Assigned reading:**


**Supplemental reading:**

Christensen, C. (2009) ‘Political documentary, online organization and activist synergies’, *Studies in Documentary Film, 3*(2), pp. 77–94. doi: 10.1386/sdf.3.2.77/1. (Location – Canvas)


Note: Watch assigned documentary “Koyaanisqatsi”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Visual sovereignty, community and documentary film</th>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Feb 19</td>
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**Assigned reading:**


Raheja, Michelle H. (2010). *Reservation Reelism – Chapter 5.* Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press. (Location – Canvas)

Note: Watch assigned documentary “The Trader”

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assigned reading</th>
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<tr>
<td>8 Mar 4</td>
<td>Practical aspects of documentary film making</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Mar 18</td>
<td>PhotoVoice methodology; &quot;SHOWED&quot; and OAA method; analyzing example pictures; individual and group facilitation; Technical aspects of photography.</td>
<td>Wang, Caroline and Burris, Mary Ann. (1997). “PhotoVoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment.” Health Education &amp; Behavior 24(3): 369-387. (Location – Canvas)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 Mar 25</td>
<td>Ethical aspects of PhotoVoice and IRB submissions</td>
<td>Folkman: “Privacy and Confidentiality” and Review IRB protocol for PhotoVoice project. (Location – Canvas)</td>
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<td>12 Apr 1</td>
<td>Photography and its implications for policy - Example of &quot;Project Lens&quot; in the Dominican Republic; the strength of art as a part of the OAA approach</td>
<td>Padilla, et al. 2018. “Adaptation of PhotoVoice Methodology to Promote Policy Dialog among Street-based drug users in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.” <em>Arts and Health.</em> (Location – Canvas)</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Apr 8</td>
<td>Narratives: Captioning pictures for a meaningful message; What is the difference between a meme and a PhotoVoice image? Combining ethnography with PhotoVoice</td>
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<td>Assigned reading:</td>
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<td>Aging and Thriving with HIV: A PhotoVoice Project with Long-Term Survivors in Miami, Florida (Forthcoming) (Location – Canvas)</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Apr 15</td>
<td>Practical aspects of PhotoVoice: Facilitation techniques and strategies</td>
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<td>Assigned reading: Review assigned sections of “PhotoVoice manual” (By Armando Matiz) (Location – Canvas)</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Apr 22</td>
<td>Final Project Presentation and Analysis</td>
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<td>Assigned reading: None</td>
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