

ARTH 289: Rights and the Image
Susan Merriam

This course examines the relationship between visual culture and human rights. It considers a wide range of visual media, as well as aspects of visibility (surveillance, profiling). The course is taught using case studies ranging in time from the early modern period (practices in which the body was marked to register criminality, for example) to the present day (the images at Abu Ghraib). Within this framework, we will study how aspects of visual culture have been used to advocate for human rights, as well as how images and visual regimes have been used to suppress human rights. An important part of the course will consider the role played by reception in shaping a discourse around human rights, visibility, and images. Subjects to be addressed include: evidence; documentation and witness; the aestheticization of violence; disaster pornography; censorship; surveillance; profiling; advocacy images; signs on the body; visibility and invisibility. Requirements include response papers, a research paper, and two exams.