

Professor Chester

Zoom Office Hours: Tue 215-315pm, Fri 2pm, & by appt (tinyurl.com/25prev5t)
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IAFS 3000-003: Visualizing International Affairs (Spring 2025)

[<canvas.colorado.edu/courses/111782>](https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/111782)

This course examines the impact of the visual in international affairs. It explores the role of maps, photographs, films, sculptures, monuments, and digital images in geopolitics, security, activism, and disinformation. Drawing from a range of geographical contexts, we will use interdisciplinary approaches to understand theoretical perspectives and practical implications. This syllabus is subject to change as current events dictate.

Within this thematic context, students will acquire and develop skills that they can apply more broadly, in other courses, in graduate work, and in life beyond the classroom. These skills include:

- 1) evaluating, interpreting, and synthesizing evidence, especially visual evidence;
- 2) distinguishing between reliable and unreliable sources of information;
- 3) developing the ability to give a convincing briefing;
- 4) building and refining an analytical argument.

This is a demanding course, and students are expected to read thoroughly and thoughtfully. Course requirements include regular reading quizzes, a short visual analysis paper, a midterm exam, a research presentation, a final project, and a final exam.

If you feel ill, please stay home! There will be no penalty for missed classes or late work due to illness.

I may need to cancel class on short notice due to unforeseen circumstances. If so, I'll let you know via email. Please check your email before coming to campus.

The modality for this class has been designated as "in-person." You should not expect to be able to attend class remotely or to access class recordings. Exceptions to this policy may be granted at the instructor's discretion. If you are unwilling or unable to commit to attending and participating in person over the duration of the semester, your advisor can help you seek alternative options for all-remote or online courses.

REQUIRED READING:

Available at bookstore:

Mark Monmonier, *How to Lie with Maps*, 3rd ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018)

Available on Canvas:

Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977) 15-51

William A. Callahan, *Sensible Politics: Visualizing International Relations* (Oxford UP, 2020), excs

Lucy Chester, "Image and Imagination in the Creation of Pakistan," in *Mapping Migration, Identity, and Space*, eds. Tabea Linhard and Tim Parsons (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) 137-158

"Concepts" and "Practices," *Writing Visual Histories*, ed. Florence Grant and Ludmilla Jordanova (London: Bloomsbury, 2020) 147-161

- J.B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*, ed. Paul Laxton (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001) 51-107
- Gavin Hood, dir., "Eye in the Sky" (Bleecker Street, 2015) 1 hr., 42 min.
- Peter Maass, "The Toppling: How the Media Inflated the Fall of Saddam's Statue in Firdos Square," *Pro Publica* (2 Jan 2011)
- Sumathi Ramaswamy, "Maps, Mother/Goddesses, and Martyrdom in Modern India," *Empires of Vision*, ed. Jay and Ramaswamy (Durham: Duke UP, 2014) 415-449
- Ernst Renan, "What is a Nation?" trans. Martin Thom, in Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990) 8-20.
- Özlem Savaş, "The Muslim 'Crying Boy' in Turkey: Aestheticization and Politicization of Suffering in Islamic Imagination," *Visual Culture in the Modern Middle East*, ed. Christiane Gruber and Sune Haugbolle (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2013) 103-126
- Agha Shahid Ali, "Postcard from Kashmir" *The Half-Inch Himalayas* (Wesleyan UP, 1987)
- Susan Sontag, "Looking at War," *The New Yorker* (9 Dec 2002) 82-98
- Roger Stahl, *Through the Crosshairs: War, Visual Culture, and the Weaponized Gaze* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2018) 47-93
- Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) xi-xiv, 1-128, 160-167
- Patrick Witty, "The Toppling of Saddam's Statue," parts 1-3, *Field of View* (8-10 Apr 2023), patrickwitty.substack.com

ASSIGNMENTS:

READING QUIZZES

To succeed in this course, you must do the required reading before the date on which we'll discuss it and come to class prepared to join actively in discussion.

Regular quizzes will incentivize you to stay up to date on the reading.

SHORT PAPER—FEB 26

In 5-7 pages, analyze the context, content, and reception of an image of your choice.

MIDTERM EXAM—MAR 6

RESEARCH BRIEFING—APR 15-29

Students will brief the class during weeks fourteen through sixteen on their developing research projects.

FINAL PROJECT (15-20 pages or equivalent)—APR 30

Design your own research topic, in consultation with me, on a subject of your choice related to visual international affairs.

FINAL EXAM—MAY 3

GRADING

Student grades will be determined based on reading quizzes (15%); short visual analysis (15%); midterm exam (20%); research briefing (10%); final research project (20%); and final exam (20%). If you need an extension, **discuss it with me in advance**, except in cases of documented medical or family emergency. Late assignments will be penalized a third of a grade for each day they are late; for example, an A paper that is submitted two days late will receive a B+. It is your responsibility to ensure that documents you submit are readable. Corrupted or unreadable submissions will receive a zero. I grade as follows: 98-100=A+, 94-97=A, 90-93=A-, 87-89=B+, 84-86=B, 80-83=B-, 77-79=C+, 74-76=C, 70-73=C-, 67-69=D+, 64-66=D, 60-63=D-, 59 and below=F.

OFFICE HOURS AND EMAIL

Attending my office hours (listed above) for a one-on-one discussion is the best way to get immediate feedback. Email should be reserved for questions I can answer in a sentence or two. I aim to reply to emails within 72 hours (excluding weekends).

ACCOMMODATION FOR DISABILITIES, TEMPORARY MEDICAL CONDITIONS, AND MEDICAL ISOLATION

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or DSinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) on the Disability Services website.

If you're dealing with temporary illness, injury, or required medical isolation, I invite you to let me know so we can work together to arrange adjustments. There's no need for a doctor's note or for any detail about the nature of your illness. For the first missed day, I'll ask you to get class notes from one of your fellow students. For subsequent days, I will tailor the accommodations to your situation.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The University of Colorado Boulder is committed to the well-being of all students. If you are struggling with personal stressors, mental health or substance use concerns that are impacting academic or daily life, please contact [Counseling and Psychiatric Services \(CAPS\)](#) located in C4C or call (303) 492-2277, 24/7.

Free and unlimited telehealth is also available through [Academic Live Care](#). The Academic Live Care site also provides information about additional wellness services on campus that are available to students.

PREFERRED STUDENT NAMES AND PRONOUNS

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name.

THE HONOR CODE

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the [Honor Code](#). Violations of the Honor Code may include but are not limited to: plagiarism (including use of paper writing services or technology [such as essay bots]), cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. Understanding the course's syllabus is a vital part of adhering to the Honor Code.

All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution: studentconduct@colorado.edu. Students found responsible for violating the Honor Code will be assigned resolution outcomes from Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution as well as be subject to academic sanctions from the faculty member. Visit Honor Code for more information on the academic integrity policy.

PLAGIARISM

A key element of the university Honor Code is that CU students will not plagiarize (that is, use the words and thoughts of others as their own). Plagiarism will not be tolerated. As a violation of the CU Honor Code and the university's policy on Academic Integrity, it is punishable by dismissal from the university. We will discuss proper citation in class, but you are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the meanings of plagiarism.

It is my intention to submit all student papers to TurnItIn.com, to give a grade of F in the course to any student in violation of the CU Honor Code, and to refer Honor Code violations to the Honor Code Council. Note that you cannot submit the same material for two different classes without the express permission of both instructors. If you have any questions about this procedure or about any matter regarding proper citation and the Honor Code, ask me.

ACCEPTABLE USE OF AI IN THIS CLASS

The Honor Code requires responsible use of all resources, including artificial intelligence (AI). We are all still learning about the pros and cons of AI-based tools such as ChatGPT. For now, the key things to remember are that 1) you must ensure that the words and ideas you submit are your own and 2) you must properly cite anything that's not your own. If you do use ChatGPT or other AI tools in any way during your research or writing, you must cite them in your bibliography and be prepared to explain why your use was appropriate. Overreliance on technology can stunt the growth of the skills you are here to develop, including research, synthesis, and effective writing. I reserve the right to require a twenty-minute oral defense of any assignment, with the defense grade to replace the assignment grade.

We will discuss appropriate use of AI, with the goal of reaching consensus on a class policy. The fundamental rule of AI use is this: do not submit anything that comes directly from AI as your own work. Ensure that you are using AI to help you present your research and ideas, not as a replacement for doing your own work. I may use AI detectors (keeping in mind the very real possibility of false positives); if they turn up worrying results, I will discuss them with you before taking any action.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND RELATED RETALIATION

CU Boulder is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. University policy prohibits protected-class discrimination and harassment, sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner abuse (dating or domestic violence), stalking, and related retaliation by or against members of our community on- and off-campus. The Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) addresses these concerns, and individuals who have been subjected to misconduct can contact OIEC at 303-492-2127 or email CUreport@colorado.edu. Information about

university policies, [reporting options](#), and [OIEC support resources](#) including confidential services can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and graduate instructors are required to inform OIEC when they are made aware of incidents related to these concerns regardless of when or where something occurred. This is to ensure that individuals impacted receive outreach from OIEC about their options and support resources. To learn more about reporting and support for a variety of concerns, visit the [Don't Ignore It page](#).

ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS OBLIGATIONS

Campus policy requires faculty to provide reasonable accommodations for students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Please communicate the need for a religious accommodation in a timely manner. In this class, if you have a conflict with exams, assignments, or class meetings because of religious obligations, please let me know at least two weeks in advance. We will work together to arrange appropriate accommodations. See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

In this class, we will all treat each other with respect. Discussion of differing viewpoints is an essential part of the study of international affairs. Appropriate classroom behavior includes arriving on time and remaining for the entire class; let me know before class if you will need to leave early. Please do not text, play games, sleep, read the newspaper, have private conversations, etc. during class. Please silence and put away phones.

Students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote, or online. Failure to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, marital status, political affiliation, or political philosophy.

For more information, see the [classroom behavior policy](#), the [Student Code of Conduct](#), and the [Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance](#).

COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK ONE: Introduction and Overview

Reading: Shahid Ali

- Jan 14: welcome discussion
- Jan 16: the significance of the visual (read syllabus, Shahid Ali, and your choice of reliable news sources)

WEEK TWO: Concepts and Theory I

"Concepts;" "Practices;" Sontag; Renan; Harley 84-107

- Jan 21: key concepts ("Concepts," "Practices," Sontag)
- Jan 23: silences (Renan, Harley)

WEEK THREE: Concepts and Theory II

Barthes; Stahl 1-22; Monmonier 5-59

- Jan 28: visual theories (Barthes, Stahl, Monmonier)
- Jan 30: Academic Advising & Coaching Student Success workshop

WEEK FOUR: Methods

Harley 52-81, Callahan ch 2

- Feb 4: context, content, reception (Harley, Callahan)
- Feb 6: laboratory session: applying theory and methods

WEEK FIVE: Cartography I

Monmonier 60-133, 188-194; Chester; Ramaswamy

- Feb 11: how to read a map (Monmonier 60-122, Ramaswamy)
- Feb 13: international maps (Monmonier 123-133 and 188-194, Chester)

WEEK SIX: Cartography II

Catch-up week: review any missed readings

- Feb 18: map library session (meet at Earth Sciences and Map Library, downstairs)
- Feb 20: laboratory session: how to make a map

WEEK SEVEN: International Politics

Visual analysis paper due on Wed 11:59pm

Maass; Witty (parts 1-2); Stahl 47-66

- Feb 25: Iraq (Witty, Stahl, Maass)
- Feb 27: review session (review your notes)

WEEK EIGHT: Visual Resistance

Savaş; Tarlo; Callahan ch 6

- Mar 4: clothing and symbols (Savaş; Tarlo; Callahan)
- Mar 6: midterm exam

WEEK NINE: Marketable Skills

Self-selected research reading

- Mar 11: drafting discussion
- Mar 13: laboratory session: applying drafting techniques

WEEK TEN: Disinformation

Book review due on Wed 11:59pm

Witty part 3, Stahl 67-93, "Eye in the Sky"

- Mar 18: Iraq revisited (Witty, Stahl)
- Mar 20: surveillance

WEEK ELEVEN: SPRING BREAK

WEEK TWELVE: Tools for Research

Prepare for your meeting with me; self-selected research reading

- Apr 1: writing discussion
- Apr 3: laboratory session: applying writing techniques

WEEK THIRTEEN: Research Meetings

Prepare for your meeting with me; self-selected research reading

- Apr 8: NO CLASS: indiv research meetings w/ me (tinyurl.com/25prev5t)
- Apr 10: NO CLASS: indiv research meetings w/ me (tinyurl.com/25prev5t)

WEEK FOURTEEN: Research Briefings

Prepare your research briefing; self-selected research reading

- Apr 15: research briefings (self-selected research reading)
- Apr 17: research briefings (self-selected research reading)

WEEK FIFTEEN: Research Briefings

Prepare your research briefing; self-selected research reading

- Apr 22: research briefings (self-selected research reading)
- Apr 24: research briefings (self-selected research reading)

WEEK SIXTEEN: Conclusions

Final project due Wed 11:59pm

- Apr 29: research briefings
- May 1: conclusions

FINAL EXAM: Saturday, May 3, 130-4pm, HALE 240 (in person)