

IND-1378A: Empowerment Through Cultures of Visual Thinking Course Syllabus

- **Instructor: Dr. Maryam Torbati**
- **Number of Credits/Units: 3 Semester Credits/Units**
- **Format: Online Self-Paced Course**
- **You will have 3 months from your date of registration to complete the course.**

Course Description:

In this course, participants learn how to create "cultures of visual thinking," communities where a group's collective as well as individual visual thinking is valued, visible, and actively promoted every day. Participants will explore the eight cultural forces present in every group learning situation—language, time, environment, opportunities, routines, modeling, interactions, and expectations—and how they influence the group's cultural dynamic. Using these eight forces as devices of transformation, participants will look at practical ways they can create a culture of visual thinking in their classrooms, whether face to face or virtual, and across their schools and organizations.

Course Overview:

Effective teaching takes more than decent planning and user-friendly instructional design; it also requires attention to the culture of the classroom. But how do we create a culture? How do we shape it so that it supports students' development as thinkers and individuals capable of deep understanding?

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As educators we must create opportunities for the kinds of culture of visual thinking we value and want to make an expectation learning environment in our classrooms. With the visual thinking students will solve problems effectively and we will allow them to promote a culture of thinking in the classroom.

According to the biggest research at Harvard: Project Zero, or PZ as we like to call it, is **an educational research group at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.** ... The research done at Project Zero is shared with educators in the form of frameworks and practices to help them design classroom experiences that cultivate a culture of visual thinking. This project was founded by **philosopher Nelson Goodman** at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 1967, Project Zero began with a focus on understanding and learning.

While **culture of thinking enables us to teach the curriculum**, it also shapes us as thinkers and learners. Understanding this process of enculturation holds the key to the formation of the dynamic new ways of learning communities we seek.

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is **a teaching method that improves critical thinking skills through teacher-facilitated discussions of visual thinking.**

"Let's build dynamic learning communities that engage students, promote deep understanding, and sustain a lifetime of inquiry. Once again, we are in the struggles of curriculum reforms designed to transform education. However, these efforts generally neglect the vital role classroom and its culture play in promoting learning. Any curriculum, good or bad, will sink or float on the culture of the classroom in which it is endorsed. Culture matters not only to realize curricular goals, but also as a shaper of students' development as powerful thinkers and learners."

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Define "visual thinking."
- Discuss the effect of culture on visual thinking.
- Describe the power of observation.
- Analyze what strengthens memory in learning.

- Depict how visual thinking is affected by people with ELD, dyslexia, and with disabilities.
- Build better explanations and interpretations.
- Employ reasoning with evidence.
- Make connections between culture and visual thinking.
- Compare and contrast different viewpoints and perspectives.
- Explore practical strategies to allow for cultural differences.
- Teach problem solving through visual thinking methods.
- Clarify the significance of the culture on learning.
- Demonstrate a deep knowledge of the connection between culture and the brain in performance-based effective learning.
- Give examples of visual thinking strategies.
- Apply a variety of strategies in enhancing the ultimate power of the brain through visual thinking.
- Name the five methods of cultural visual teaching.
- List the seven critical thinking skills.
- Identify the link between the adolescent brain, culture, and learning.
- Take initiative to understand the thinking process of students from all cultures.
- Develop a mission, vision, and values regarding empowering students through cultural visual thinking.
- Learn how to create a social and emotional balance in the classroom.
- Discuss why teachers need to learn to distinguish different cultural learning methods.
- Understand the social and emotional aspects of cultural visual thinking.
- Explain the correlations between culture and academic success?
- Identify ways that teachers often misinterpret student responses and emotions?
- Identify the complexities of the six types of poverty.
- Make appropriate alterations in the classroom environment.
- Develop plans to analyze data to assess levels of visual thinking.
- Understand how to use resources necessary to make change happen.
- Create appropriate materials to teach students from different cultures.
- Align visual thinking strategies to Common Core Standards.

Takeaways – What this Course Gives You:

- An understanding of the definition and characteristics of visual thinking.
- Awareness of how culture impacts students.

- Evidence-based strategies for teaching students visual thinking.
- Many visual thinking activities to implement with your students.
- Knowledge of how social and emotional issues affects the brain.
- Specifics on establishing an appropriate visual thinking environment.
- Ability to recognize and teach kids who are ELD, dyslexic, and special ed students.
- A focus on how students are thinking and how they are growing as thinkers and learners.
- Ability to recognize the difference between a balanced and unbalanced brain.
- Insight on ways students from a variety of cultures learn through visual thinking.
- Understanding how the brain learns.
- A vision for teaching visual thinking skills.
- Information on how to create step-by-step visual thinking classroom lessons.
- Strategies for going beyond the classroom.
- Tools to help teachers to shape timely instructional strategies targeted to student from all cultures.
- Methods for teaching students to be critical thinkers.
- Ways to prepare students to be visual thinkers.
- Ability to analyze students' learning methods.

Textbook – Dr. Torbati recommends the Following Textbook:

- [Creating Cultures of Thinking](#) by Ron Ritchhart, PhD
- [Visual/Spatial Portals to Thinking, Feeling and Movement: Advancing Competencies and Emotional Development in Children with Learning and Autism Spectrum Disorders](#) by Serena Wieder Ph.D. and Harry Wachs O.D
- [Experiences in Visual Thinking, 2nd edition](#) by Robert H. McKim
- [Visual Thinking Strategies: Using Art to Deepen Learning Across School Disciplines](#) by Philip Yenawine
- [Proofs Without Words: Exercises in Visual Thinking \(Classroom Resource Materials\)](#) by Roger B. Nelsen
- [Visualization Power: How Scientists, Inventors, Businessmen, Artists, Athletes, Healers and Yogis Can Improve Their Powers of Visualization and Visual Thinking](#) by Bill Bodri
- [Proofs Without Words II: More Exercises in Visual Thinking \(Classroom Resource Materials\)](#) by [Roger B. Nelsen](#)

- [Visual Thinking in Mathematics](#) by Marcus Giaquinto
- [Making Thinking Visible: How to Promote Engagement, Understanding, and Independence for All Learners](#) 1st Edition. By Ron Ritchhart, PhD.
- [Creating cultures of thinking](#) by Ron Ritchhart, PhD.

Assignments:

Module 1 Introduction to Visual Thinking

Assignment 1.1 Reflection and Goals

Reflect on your experience with visual thinking and learning then describe your future goals for enhancing learning through this *Empowerment Through Cultural Visual Thinking* course.

Module 2 Understanding Culture and Visual Thinking

Textbook, Videos, Readings

Assignment 2.1 Getting Acquainted with Empowerment Through Cultures of Visual Thinking

Designed to acquaint you with the empowerment through cultures of visual thinking.

Assignment 2.2: Reflection Forum

This assignment will help you to understand and reflect on what you have read about and viewed and how you can transfer this knowledge to your classroom.

Module 3 Preparing to Implement Teaching Methods

Assignment 3.1: Planning to Empowerment Through Cultures of Visual Thinking

Produce creative activities for teaching the empowerment through Cultures of Visual Thinking.

Assignment 3.2: Reflective Forum

This assignment will help you review and implement the module content.

Module 4 Planning and Presentation

Assignment 4.1 Lesson Plan

Create a detailed, multi-paged, 3-Day lesson plan for applying teaching methods for the topic of culture and visual thinking.

Assignment 4.2 PowerPoint Presentation

Create a 10-slide *PowerPoint* project based on the course readings and 2-slides of summary.