This seminar invites graduate students from all disciplines to look at modernity through the lens of vision. Why has vision become such a key category for comprehending and critiquing social, political, and cultural developments that shape our world today? We will place a particular emphasis on the agency of vision in theories of power and in ecological critiques of modernity. Modernity will emerge as a deeply conflicted episteme, entrenched in its dialectic of visual representation: promising absolute transparency and disemboding our relation to our environments ever more systematically. We will work on practical and theoretical ways of responding to this challenge through an ecology of seeing: the combination of an aesthetics of bodily engagement and a politics of resistance to the visual totalization of life.

In our discussions Wim Wenders will meet Yasujiro Ozu, Miguel Gomes Friedrich Murnau, and Werner Herzog Andrej Tarkovskiy; we will visit Heidegger among the sculptors, Merleau-Ponty among the painters, Benjamin among the photographers, Foucault among the architects. Literary readings from Goethe, Hölderlin, Handke, Sebald.

Film, Visual Culture, Performance Studies focus
No German required, texts available in English & German

German 8400 | Professor Bernhard Malkmus
Vision and Power in Modernity: Towards an Ecology of Seeing
autumn 2013 | Tu 4-6.45pm

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