**Assignment 2: Toward an Ecology of Images**

Use *Towards an Ecology of Images* lecture notes to guide you through this examination of the social life of an image online. The goal of this exercise is to map the image in its environment. Just as you have done earlier in the semester, with a physical photograph, you will consider how the content, form, location, function, and cultural significance of the image interact, but this time, online.

Choose an image that you feel comfortable sharing with me. *The significance of this image should not only be situated in its content*: the person/people portrayed, a place dear to you/your family, an important moment frozen in time. One quality that distinguishes this image from the physical photograph from the beginning of the semester, is that it inhabits an online environment such as a social media platform or a photo sharing site.

*The significance of the image should also be clear from where it is displayed online, who is the intended audience to view it, what are the images next to it and the functions it serves*. Has the image been modified? If so, how? Can it be downloaded? If so by whom? If not, why? Has it been posted with your permission? Does it have captions? Are there comments or conversations surrounding the image? How long do you expect to have it posted? The scenarios I have just described are not exhaustive; they are simply to provide you with ideas of the kinds of images I have in mind.

**Instructions:**

**1.** Describe the content of the image. You may be very specific here if you wish in describing the people, the place, the event. Has it been altered? If so, how and by whom? It is up to you how much information you provide. A caption and a time frame of when the photo was taken/posted is the minimum required.

**2.** Describe the form of the image. How does the form of the image influence how you and others interact with it? Has it been altered? If so, by whom? Describe the ways in which the image has been altered from its original state? Who is authorized to alter it?

**3.** Describe the location of the image. Where is the image located online and what other images surround it? What is the relationship of your chosen image to other images it shares the same environment with? Is its location temporary or permanent? How long do you expect it to be displayed?

**4.** Describe the function of the image. What purpose does it serve? Is its purpose universal or is it personal, depending on the relationship to the individual(s)/place(s)/event(s) portrayed?

Is the content, location, or function of the image contentious? In other words, have there been conversations/comments about what it portrays or its significance?

**5.** Take a screenshot of the image and its immediate surroundings and paste it into the document below your write up. Please make sure that the image you take is of good quality – the resolution and size must allow for comfortable viewing.

**6.** You have just constructed a cultural biography of an image. Reflect on this exercise. Does it change how you might look at this or other images? Would you consider this object as an example of *inalienable wealth*? If yes, why? If not, why?