



INTRODUCTION TO VISUAL ARTS • ARTH 101 001 • CRN: 70269

Professor Woodville, lwoodvil@gmu.edu • 540-729-6665 (e-mail preferable)

Tues/Thurs 9 AM to 10:15 AM at Innovation Hall 204

First class: Tues. Aug. 30 • Last class: Thursday Dec. 8

No class: Tues. Oct. 4 • Tues. Oct. 11 (Columbus Day) • Tues. Nov. 22 and Thurs. Nov 24

(Nov. 22 cancelled in lieu of museum visit Sunday Oct. 23)

Office Hours: 1/2 hour before or after class or by appointment

This course will explore how artists use the formal elements of line, shape, form, and space to create works of art that communicate specific messages—messages about themselves, the patrons who commission the works, and the society in which they live. We will discover how art can uncover truths about the human condition in addition to the religious, political, or social milieu in which it's created. Through lectures, class projects, required reading, and class presentations, students will learn how to look at art from the perspective of artists' and patrons' design skills and iconographic leanings. Short writing assignments will be an integral part of the curriculum.

Required "Reading"

A "deck" of 250 cards, each with a painting description from the Renaissance to the 1960s, ISBN 978-0-979-4476-0-0.

- Other articles, hand-outs, and web-based articles. And ... be sure to review the PowerPoints viewed in class that are subsequently uploaded onto Blackboard..

READING AND LECTURES

Aug. 30/Sept. 1: Introductory overview:

We will investigate the concept around which this course is built: how artists use the formal elements of **line, color, value, texture, shape and rhythm** to describe **form, space, plane and mass**.

—How do optical and descriptive/conceptual renditions differ from each other?

Sept. 6/Sept 8: Line and Shapes (including closed and open forms, linear and painterly brushstrokes)

Sept. 13/15: Color

Sept. 20/22: Light

Sept. 27/29 Space, including perspective, foreshortening, and three-dimensionality versus two-dimensionality

Oct. 4/6 Media (tempera, fresco, oil, watercolor, gouache; subtractive/additive sculpture.

NO CLASS Tues. Oct. 11

Oct 13: MIDTERM

In the second half of Introduction to the Visual Arts, we will investigate how artists from various periods used the tools that we have explored in the first half of this course.

Oct 18/20: Roman patrons and artists —> Medieval

Sunday, Oct 23: 11:15-12:15 PM visit National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

Oct. 25/27: Renaissance patrons and artists

Nov. 1/3: Baroque patrons and artists

Nov. 8/10: Neo-Classicism
DRAFT of paper due Nov. 8

Nov. 15/17: Impressionism/Post-Impressionism

November 22/24 NO CLASS, Thanksgiving holiday
No class Nov. 22 in lieu of Oct. 23 NGA visit.

Nov. 29/Dec. 1: Modern!
FINAL PAPER DUE Nov. 29

Dec. 6/8 Review for Final exam

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Class attendance (see below).
- A National Gallery of Art visit Oct. 23 from which you will write a major paper
- Assigned readings and hand-outs (I will assign some hand-outs as the course progresses)
- A midterm, a Final, periodic quizzes and in-class projects, and paper.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS: Please check your George Mason e-mail account because it is the one to which I send information. All students need to access Blackboard throughout the course (where you will find hand-outs that I will distribute throughout the semester). Some assignments may require reserve reading at the library or browsing the Web.

Classroom atmosphere. When you are late, it is very distracting. Please don't be late, and practice courtesy and common sense, please. Talking to friends during lectures, wandering in and out, cell phones, and eating food are all badly distracting, as are chatterers.

Late work will be graded down five points per day, including weekend days, out of fairness to everyone. **By the final exam, all missing work (including in-class projects and papers) becomes F.**

Academic honesty is expected in all tests and writing. Please respect the Honor Code, our classroom standards, your fellow students, and yourself. The Honor Pledge will be required on all tests. Please report violations to the Honor Committee.

GRADES are based on the following criteria:

- **Class attendance.** If you miss more than two classes (or continually leave after break), then your grade drops a point with each subsequent absence. If you have to miss a class because of extenuating circumstances (sick child, etc.), e-mail me at lwoodvil@gmu.edu so we can make arrangements for you to make-up the work you have missed, if possible. Whatever the reason, you will be responsible for obtaining missed notes and assignments from another Intro Visual Arts' student. If you miss a quiz or an exam, it is your responsibility to come to me and arrange for a (much more difficult) make-up quiz.
- On this same theme ... because **lateness** is extremely disruptive, as is leaving before class has ended, your grade will drop if you are habitually late. If you habitually leave class after the break (btw, I take attendance sometimes both before *and* after the break), you will be marked down.
- A **paper** based on the NGA required museum visit. (15%). Be sure that you don't plagiarize in any way; this includes not only copying from someone else's text, but also cutting and pasting material from a web site or copying words verbatim from an exhibition catalogue or pamphlet. Plagiarism can wreck your academic career, and I take no prisoners on this issue. If you want to use the words verbatim, simply credit your source. See Section "Required Paper based on Museum Paper."
- A Midterm and a Final with unscheduled quizzes and in-class projects. Midterm: 35%. Final: 35% Quizzes and in-class projects: 15%. Paper 15%.

REQUIRED READING ASSIGNMENTS

In addition to required readings from the required texts, I will ask you to read selections accessible on the Internet or on Blackboard.

Any required reading with the prefix .doc is a word document, either written by me or credited to another historian, about a particular subject or person. Again, required .doc files will be uploaded onto Blackboard and accessible there.

QUIZZES & EXAMS

There will be a Midterm and a Final Exam as well as unscheduled quizzes.
Midterm: 35%. Final: 35% Quizzes and in-class projects: 15%. Paper 15%.

REQUIRED PAPER based on Museum visit

NOTE: If you find you cannot attend the required October 23 National Gallery of Art visit, please see me as that is the museum from which you will select a work of art on which to write your paper. (see READING AND LECTURES section.) When you hand in the draft, also hand in proof that you went to the NGA. This can be a receipt for something you purchased, a brochure, etc.

FIRST THINGS FIRST: Please email me when you know what work you will write about. Then write an 800-1,200 word draft by the due date. After I edit this first draft, you will resubmit it. Then you will resubmit the final version of this paper. (See READING AND LECTURES section for due dates of draft, final paper.)

And remember... good writing is persuasive. To make your writing engaging, take advantage of the can't-do-without on-campus resource: The Writing Center in Robinson I, Room A116. Call them at (703) 993-1200, or go to <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>. For students to whom English is a second language, another option is the English Language Institute (ELI) at (703) 993-3664, <http://mason.gmu.edu/~eli>.

HOW TO WRITE THE PAPER.

1. When you are at the National Gallery of Art, select a work that you find compelling. AGAIN, be sure to e-mail me what work you have selected before the due date of the draft paper.

While you are at the NGA, spend a lot of time with this work of art. (If it's sculpture, walk around it.) What's going on? Describe what is in front of your eyes. What scene is represented? What are the figures doing? Can these figures in the works be identified? Write most of your paper while looking at the work.

2. While you are at the museum in front of the work, describe how the artist has manipulated formal elements—color, line, shape, forms, perspective, two-dimensional design, three-dimensional space—to set a tone and, in doing so, sets the stage for the iconography. Take into account where is the work from, and what was going on in that country/province/area at the time it was created. Does the work hold any theological, political, social, or religious significance? If a work created before the year 1600, is there evidence of a patron exhibiting his/her piety or wealth? (For the medieval and Renaissance periods, displaying piety and wealth are not mutually exclusive concepts.) If it's a later work that does not involve a patron, what has so compelled the artist to depict this particular scene or abstraction? What message is s/he trying to convey?

3. Be sure to include for each work:

- Who the artist is (*if known*). When did s/he live and where is he from?

- The date & place. When was the artifact created? Where?
- Who commissioned the work (if known). Did s/he come from the same place as the artist?
- Why do you think this particular work of art was commissioned, or (for works after 1600), why did the artist choose this subject or theme?
- What was happening at the time in the town/city/principality in which the painting was created? What other artists might have influenced this one?
- BE SURE TO INCLUDE A PICTURE OF THE IMAGES IN YOUR PAPER SO I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT. Most museums allow photography, so be sure to take a camera.

4. Now describe the work. Note that in an 800-1,200-word paper, you can't cover every aspect, so choose something that you find particularly striking. But ... be sure to include how the artist has used formal elements (line, color, balance, etc.) to compose his or her work. Go back to that first powerpoint if you have to.

[Required Museum Paper:

Mechanics: Please type and double-space your papers, using a standard font in 12-point size. Please stick to plain old white paper and standard fonts. Handwriting is *not* okay for your paper, but it's okay for homework.

VERY IMPORTANT: Please be sure to include a photo or xerox of the art work(s) you're writing about (and in this class, you will always be writing about an image or images).

Spelling and grammar are expected to be correct. Use the spell-checker. I will mark down work for sloppy spelling and grammar. If the writing is really awful—ungrammatical, no evidence of proofreading, horrible spelling, or laughably short—you will get an F.

Word counts should be observed, and should be your guide to the depth of writing. Eight hundred to 1,200-words means there is time to make a convincing point and argue it through several paragraphs, considering several different questions, angles, or pieces of evidence.

Citations. Any time you use a source of information you should consider citing it, to avoid the appearance of plagiarism. Generally-known facts are not normally cited. Anything else is, including a long recitation of facts from one source that you are paraphrasing, a single opinion stated by another author, and any direct quote.

Example 1: "Van Gogh is considered a post-impressionist artist." We know that. No citation needed. Even if you didn't happen to know that, it is the sort of information that is so widely available that no specific citation is expected.

Example 2: “Van Gogh cut off his ear in a frenzy of craziness.” This is specialized information that came a primary source—so find it! And keep in mind that sometimes primary sources need to be taken with a grain of salt—mind you, they are still excruciatingly important, but sometimes they need to be read while keeping the author’s agenda in mind.

Citation style: In history and art-history, we usually use the **Chicago style**, which uses footnotes. In English and other language humanities, **MLA style** is the standard, with short parenthetical references to authors and page numbers, and a list of works cited at the end. Use one style correctly and consistently throughout your essay.

Take the necessary time to learn the standard rules, and follow them carefully. The rules are easily found in any writing manual.

Don't remember the rules? Go to the GMU Writing Center web site, find “resources,” and click on their “on-line style guides.” It's just that simple. go to: <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/resources/>.

GRADING POLICIES

A = 100% to 93%, or 4.00

A- = 92% to 90%, or 3.67

B+ = 89% to 87%, or 3.33

B = 86% to 83 %, or 3.00

B- = 82% to 80 %, or 2.67

C+ = 79 to 77 %, or 2.33

C = 76 to 70 %, or 2.00

D = 69% to 60 %, or 1.00

F = below 60% OR if anyone plagiarizes from a website, book, or unpublished work and does not cite the source.

FINAL GRADES will be based on the average of your paper, quiz, exams, and in-class projects and writing assignments:

Midterm: 35%. Final: 35%. Quizzes and in-class projects: 15%. Paper 15%.

Final grades may be lowered in the following circumstances:

- A pattern of pluses or minuses on ungraded quizzes and in-class projects
- if two major pieces of work (in-class writing assignments) are missing by the end of the course
- if you flunk the final exam and get an F on another major submission (paper, midterm), you'll probably receive an “F” as your final grade.
- To pass this course you must demonstrate some mastery of the material—no one passes for just showing up! (But ... you can fail for doing the work but rarely showing up.) Failing to hand in written work, or failing the final exam means you have not mastered the course material.
- Likewise, if you participate regularly in class and are an enthusiastic contributor, your grade may very well be higher than the calculated average.

WRITTEN WORK may be graded by points, or by the following criteria, as appropriate:

A = Startlingly good, exceeding our expectations, and well-written. Must be imaginative; NOT given for simply following directions.

B = Good effort with a good result.

C = Perfunctory; or, tried but missed the point; or, did something well but it wasn't the assignment; or, good idea but careless or sloppy.

D = Warning: accepted under protest.

F = Unacceptable as college-level work.

Paper grades will be lowered for lateness, sloppiness, lack of proofreading, bad English, lack of necessary documentation, faulty logic, or failure to follow directions for the assignment. Please study the directions for writing assignments, elsewhere in this syllabus.

Late written work: Papers are due in class on the day specified. After that, late papers will be lowered five points a day, or half a grade, during the work week (Mon-Fri) and lowered ten points over a weekend. Note that this causes even the best work to receive an "F" after about ten days. **If you need an extension, you must ask for it before the due date, not on or after, if you want to avoid a penalty.**

Dates to remember

Info from <http://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/2011Fall.html>

First Day classes: Aug. 29, 2011

Labor Day (GMU closed) Sept. 5, 2011

Last Day to Add (Full-Semester Course): Sept 6, 2011

Last Day to Drop (no penalty):

Sept 6, 2011

Last Day to Drop (33% penalty) Sept 19, 2011

Last Day to Drop (67% penalty) Sept. 30, 2011

Selective Withdrawal Period (Full-Semester Course): Oct 3 – Oct 29, 2011

No Class Oct. 11, Nov. 22, 24.

Last day of classes: Dec. 10

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. You need to let me know at the beginning of the semester that you need accommodations for disability.

Please note that each student is responsible for the accuracy of his or her own schedules. Be sure to check PatriotWeb regularly to verify that you are registered for your classes. This is particularly important since you are not dropped for nonpayment of tuition and fees.

OKAY. ENOUGH ABOUT REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES.

About me. I earned a Masters in art history, concentrating on Renaissance, from the University of Virginia after acquiring a B.A. in the field from Boston University. After working at the Metropolitan Museum in New York and William Doyle Auction

Galleries, I returned to school and acquired an M.B.A. from New York University. My experience includes writing about ancient civilizations for *Humanities*, the magazine produced by the National Endowment for Humanities. I am presently writing a book about the Flemish-born Tudor artist Levina Teerlinc.

One last thing. Since I used to be a professional editor and writer, good writing puts a smile on my face. Please pay attention to grammar and how you articulate an idea. For some of you, English is a second language, and I will keep that in mind when I read your papers. For the rest of you, I'll assume you've perused Strunk & White's *Elements of Style*.