

**ARTH 101-001: INTRODUCTION TO THE VISUAL ARTS**

Professor Lisa Passaglia Bauman

Class times: TTh 12:00-1:15

Office hours: T 10:30-11:45; or by appt

**Spring 2016**

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**THE PROMISES OF THIS COURSE:** It is my opinion that this is one of the most important classes you will take in college. Yes, **it fulfills the University General Education requirement**, but, assuming we both do our jobs correctly, it is also the class that you will take with you every time you walk into an art museum, or travel around the world, or take your children down on the Mall. It is not a studio class although we will study different media and techniques; nor is it a survey class although works of art will be presented in their historical context. Rather this class will focus on how art communicates, how to analyze and interpret it, and how we can see it as a cultural product that reveals something about the society that produced it.

By the end of the semester, you will have been exposed to many works of art, various media, and a great deal of new vocabulary. You will also have learned some of the fundamentals of looking at works of art. You will know that interpretation of a work depends on the interpreter, and that you, too, are necessarily an interpreter. That is not to say that all interpretations are equally valid; interpretations can be well- or ill-formed, responsible or irresponsible, useful or useless; opinion is not interpretation. Naturally, I hope that you conclude this course intrigued by the possibility of art historical study and with the confidence and impetus to continue your engagement with art—and indeed with all aspects of our emphatically visual culture.

I spend a great deal of time thinking about the larger questions of this course, questions like “what should you be able to do intellectually in this discipline at this time? How can I encourage you to develop those abilities?” At any time, however, you too can ask me a big question. Any time in this course, with any image, you can ask me “why”? Why does this issue matter? I will stop and try to explain why this material is important and how it relates to larger issues. It may take a few weeks, but I will try to get you to a payoff. This course is my responsibility; don’t hesitate to come to me if you have a problem or complaint. I can’t promise I’ll fix things, but I will do my best.

**TECH REQUIREMENTS AND POLICY**

I can only communicate with you via Mason e-mail account or Blackboard, so please activate and check your GMU e-mail account and the Blackboard site regularly for any communication regarding the class.

A successful course is made by the collaborative efforts of the group. That means being engaged—doing the reading before class, taking notes in class. To that end, there are no cell phones in our classroom (unless you are awaiting an organ transplant, are a volunteer fire fighter and may be called into action, or need to be accessible to young children or elderly parents). Also no laptops, not even for note-taking, unless you have a note from Disability Services allowing that accommodation.

Email Etiquette: Until we get to know each other better, please remember that when you send an email to any professor, you are addressing a teacher, not your best friend. Thus, try to remember the following when sending an email: (1) Include a subject. When I receive an email without a subject and do not recognize the address, it is immediately deleted. (2) Let me know which class you are in—my TTh 10:30 section or my MW 3pm section. (3) Be specific.

**GOOD EMAIL EXAMPLE:**

Subject: Missing Wed 10am exam due to hospitalization

Dear Dr. Bauman, I wanted to let you know that I will not be in class today because I am in the hospital with a broken leg. I will bring you a note from the doctor. Please let me know when I can schedule a make-up exam.

Thank you, Joe Smith

My response:

Dear Joe, I am sorry to hear about the broken leg. That’s awful. Yes, we can reschedule your exam for next week. I am available Tuesday and Thursday mornings or Friday all day. What works for you? I hope you feel better soon.

Best, LB

**BAD EMAIL EXAMPLE:**

Subject: (none)

hey I missed the exam because I was so sick. Can you tell me what I need to know for it? thnx PS When is the test?

My response:

**TEXT AND READINGS:** The schedule of lectures lists the reading in the text and/or on Blackboard for each class. You are expected to come into class prepared with that day's reading assignment completed. Every teacher I know says this in their syllabus; few students I know actually do it. Is this a problem? Depends on how you absorb material. Coming to class and looking at work which is completely new and foreign to you is an intimidating proposition. Reading before class introduces you to the story so that you are primed for class.

The textbook for this class is new: Debra J. DeWitte, et al, *Gateways to Art. Understanding the Visual Arts*. Second edition (Thames & Hudson, 2015). It's a good book, well-written and interesting—rare for a college text. But its newness also makes it expensive (retail \$134; rent \$38). If you are a vigilant note taker, it is possible to do quite well in this class without it. But if you are not doing well, the very first question I'm going to ask you is: "Have you been reading along in the text book?" Copies of the text are on reserve in the library. It is possible to use the earlier edition of this book; you will have to adjust the page numbers for the readings on the class schedule to accommodate your edition.

The other readings for this class will be made available on Blackboard which is free. Thus, there is no reason not to do them.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**ATTENDANCE:**

It's my job to care about your education and I take that charge seriously. I am quite sure it is even more important to you. Since our mutual expectation then is that you are in class, there is no need for me to take attendance. This class is a lecture format during which I will address ideas, present key works, and define terms. I will be using power point presentations, so all terms, ideas and key works for which you are responsible will be clearly labeled, spelled, defined, and emphasized in class. With the exception of a few study slides, I will not, however, be putting those powerpoints on Blackboard. I will answer questions about the material **in class**, go over the readings **in class**, and discuss assignments **in class**. If you do not understand something that I covered in class, there is no way I can explain that material better in an email. If you missed class, you will need to get notes from a classmate. I will not teach a missed lecture in my office during office hours. I'll answer any specific questions you have about missed material, but you'll need to bring specific questions to a meeting in my office. Meeting in person rather than via email allows us to get to know each other better and fosters a more collegial learning atmosphere.

**EXAMS:**

- **Exam #1 on Fundamentals: Thursday, September 29.** 25% of your final grade
- **Exam #2 on History of Art, part 1: Thursday, November 3.** 25% of your final grade
- **Exam #3 on History of Art, part 2: Thursday, December 8.** 25% of your final grade

All exams will test for terms. The first exam will test for design concepts with images you will not have seen before. The remaining two exams will have slide identification of those key works that we designate in class. If this is a work of art, you need to know not just the name of the object, the artist or architect, and the style or period to which it belongs, but also why it is important for the history of art. This involves knowing something about those larger issues and concepts that we will develop in class. This idea will also help you develop thoughts for the slide comparison.

Let me give you an example of a slide comparison. Two slides appear on the screen. First, you identify them by title, artist/architect, and time period.

- Michelangelo, *David*, Italian Renaissance
- Jackson Pollock, *Number 1*, 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Discuss what is novel about each of these objects and how that reflects the ideas of their time period and culture.

I will also ask questions regarding the readings on Blackboard. You don't need to know every little detail of each article as I am not going to test your ability to remember dozens of separate pieces of data. Rather you need to be familiar with the central thesis of each article. Having a head full of facts is less important than your ability to understand those facts and use it in a real situation.

Exams are not cumulative.

I will post a study guide on Blackboard, with some study images, a week before the exams. Any images that you have to identify will be in your textbook.

These three examinations are scheduled. You should mark those dates on your personal calendar immediately. I won't give an exam earlier or later than the scheduled slot. Yes, this includes Thanksgiving break, weekend plans, and end of the semester issues. Please do not request special favors that cannot be granted to all of your peers. Only in extreme circumstances will a makeup examination be provided for a student who misses an exam. Extreme circumstances include death in the family, hospitalization, car accident on the way to school. Extreme circumstances do not include oversleeping, missing the bus, alarm clock failure, not knowing we had an exam. If you cannot make an exam at the specified date and time, you have 24 hours to contact me and provide me with a legitimate written medical excuse or police report, on printed letterhead stationery, with a phone number I can call for confirmation. I mean this seriously. **If I don't hear from you within 24 hours of the exam and if you do not have a legitimate written excuse, you will receive a 0 for that exam.** Better to take the exam and get an F than to receive a 0. All make-up exams must be taken within one week of the scheduled exam date.

Let me say a few things up front about my expectations regarding exams. Art history demands a certain degree of memorization of information about works of art. It is only one part of the work and learning required, but it is an area that demands discipline and regular practice. To begin to understand how and why works were created in a particular time and place, the circumstances and background behind them, and their continuing role in the subsequent history of art can only be understood once you have a sense of the players involved and the circumstances around them. If you keep up-to-date (flashcards were always my preferred method), memorization of the works will be easy and will help your understanding of new material. If you wait until the night before the exams, memorization will be a nightmare.

A few words about **dates**: Dating a work is essential to understanding its origins and background in a specific period and place. Why? What matters is not so much your ability to memorize a set of numbers, but that you come away from this class knowing that Michelangelo could not have built the Empire State Building. That said, I will not be testing you on exact dates, but rather on general time periods that we will use to locate objects in history.

And finally, as in any discipline, a student is required to know the material.  $2 + 2 = 5$  is not correct, and neither is Mies van der Roeh for Mies van der Rohe. So, yes, spelling counts. I won't take off all the points, but I will take off some.

#### **ART MUSEUM FIELD GUIDE** (25% of your final grade):

There is one written project for this course, based on a field trip to look at art in the National Gallery of Art. Think of it as a scavenger hunt where you will be answering questions based on your observations of specific paintings and spaces. It will be metro-accessible and should take about an afternoon, especially if you stop for coffee along the way. I will post the assignment on Blackboard after the first exam. You will need to hand in a printed hard copy with your typed answers on the **due date, Tuesday November 8**. (I don't need to say that we don't submit hand-written work at university.)

Regarding the written assignment, I will take written work late but it will be penalized 5 points for every day it is late. Yes, the weekend counts. After one week, I will not take any late assignments. Remember that we are in the computer age where Murphy's Law applies with a vengeance. Assume that your computer will break down, that every other student in the school will be trying to print a paper on the same night, and so forth. Plan accordingly! There are no excuses for turning in a late assignment. You simply take the point deduction. Also, **I will NOT accept assignments via e-mail nor placed in my office**

**mailbox.** Why? Too many problems with viruses, with formatting, with accidental deletions, with deadlines, with misplacement. In the end, it shifts the responsibility from you to me and in this course these assignments are your responsibility. I will return your work in a timely fashion – exams and written assignments within two weeks.

## **HOW WE CAN UNDERSTAND THE NATURE, QUALITY, AND PROGRESS OF YOUR LEARNING:**

I believe a professor has two jobs: to help students learn and to tell society how much learning has been done. I expect ambitious and creative learning and I will work hard to use some strategies that I believe are effective in helping students learn. For the record though, here is my grading policy.

In order to receive a grade in this course, students must complete all assigned work. Grades will not be calculated on the basis of a percentage of work completed. **There are no extra credit projects.** There are often questions about grading and evaluation policies, especially for those who have never taken an art history class before and are concerned about how their work will be evaluated. Grade ranges and a description of the sort of work expected are as follows—please read them carefully.

- **A** (90-92 is an A-; 93-96 is an A; 97-100 is an A+) startlingly good, exceeding my expectations, and well-written. Must be imaginative; NOT given for simply following directions
- **B** (80-82 is a B-; 83-86 is a B; 87-89 is a B+) Good effort with a good result.
- **C** (70-72 is a C-; 73-76 is a C; 77-79 is a C+) Perfunctory; or tried but missed the point; or did something well but it wasn't the assignment; or a good idea but careless or sloppy.
- **D** (60-69) Warning: accepted under protest
- **F** (Below 60) Unacceptable as college-level work; see me immediately if you find yourself in this situation.

Please remember something though. The function of this course is not to enable you to get a good grade easily, although it is not difficult to get a good grade. As part of a general education curriculum, its function is to not to ready you for one particular job but for many jobs over a lifetime that require a depth and breadth of understanding that exposure to the range of human knowledge is uniquely intended to impart.

It is not just the professor though who should be vested in the nature of learning. A student also has a tremendous responsibility here; **you should be able to judge the quality of your own work.** If you cannot assess the quality of what you have produced, then you haven't really learned anything. Here are the **Student Learning Objectives.**

- Analyze the formal elements of a particular art form using vocabulary appropriate to that form
- Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between artistic technique and the expression of a work's underlying concept
- Analyze cultural productions using standards appropriate to the form and cultural context
- Analyze and interpret material culture in its social, historical, and/or personal contexts
- Engage in critical analysis in writing using reasoned, well-organized arguments with introduction, thesis statement, supporting evidence, and conclusion

At various points in this course, you might want to sit down and ask yourself about your progress and the strategies you are using to understand those learning objectives. Talk to me if you are struggling here.

**CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE:** Courtesy and common sense please. We're all adults; sometimes emergencies come up. However, talking to friends during lectures, wandering in and out, and cell phones/web surfing are all badly distracting to everyone else. Chronic chatters and latecomers are disruptive and will be asked to leave the classroom. If you know you will have to leave a few minutes early, please on the aisle and let me know. I am going to teach this class as if we were in a business meeting twice a week. For those of you who have never been in a business meeting, here's what's acceptable: [http://www.today.com/id/18079593/ns/today-money/t/oh-behave-tips-proper-business-manners/#.U9gJaxrD\\_IU](http://www.today.com/id/18079593/ns/today-money/t/oh-behave-tips-proper-business-manners/#.U9gJaxrD_IU)  
Here's another one: <http://work.chron.com/behave-professionally-meeting-6212.html>

**PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING:** These are not fooling-around offences with me. Your written work is to be the product of your own thinking. Ditto with tests. Be warned: **if you cheat, I will send you and**

**your work on to the Dean of Students.** No excuses, no tears, no “I didn’t understand about citing other people’s work/talking during an exam” stories.

If you are not sure how the University defines plagiarism, please see the Plagiarism Statement in the George Mason University Honor System and Code at <http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>.

**DISABILITIES:** If you have a learning disability, it must be properly documented by the Office for Disability Services and I am happy to make the necessary accommodations for those students. I need to see and sign the documentation from the Office for Disability Services well before tests and assignments are given in order to accommodate you. Please contact them for more information. <http://ods.gmu.edu/> (703.993.2474)

**ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE:** If English is not your first language, please discuss any concerns you might have about the writing assignment with me. And don’t forget about the Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>)

**IMPORTANT DATES:**

**Friday, September 30.** Last day to drop a class

**Monday, October 10.** No school. Columbus Day holiday. But Tuesday, October 11, you go to your Monday classes; Tuesday’s classes are not held.

**Wednesday, November 23, and Thursday, November 24.** No school. Thanksgiving holiday.