

Arts of the United States  
ARTH 370 sec 001 • Fall 2017  
Dr. Vanessa M. Schulman  
MW 10:30-11:45 am • Art and Design L008

Email: vschulma@gmu.edu • Office Hours: MW 12:00-1:15 pm • Office: Robinson-B 377D

**Course Information:**

3 credit hours. Art and architecture of North America from the pre-contact period through the end of the Second World War. Mason Core: Arts.

**Description:**

This course covers developments in the art of the United States beginning with the arts of North American native peoples and ending circa 1955. Examining art and architecture, this course will tie visual developments to cultural and political changes. We will study canonical American artists as well as decorative and fiber arts, furniture, political cartoons, and items of everyday use made by unknown creators. Special attention will be paid to the operation of race and gender within the American art world and the impact of international exchange and cross-cultural encounters on visual production across North America.

**Goals:**

By participating in this course, students should meet the following goals:

- synthesize information to articulate critical responses to objects and texts
- analyze and evaluate visual images and material culture objects
- develop skills of academic communication, both written and oral
- identify major movements and stylistic forms in the history of American art

**Textbook:**

Frances K. Pohl, *Framing America: A Social History of American Art*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thames & Hudson, 2012). I recommend purchasing or renting for the semester; one copy will be on reserve at Fenwick Library. Additional readings will be made available as PDFs on the Blackboard site.

**Class Communication:**

I will send messages to your Mason email only, so be sure you check that account or have your mail forwarded to an account that you check regularly. Please allow 48 hours for a response to email.

**Mason Core:**

This course satisfies the Arts requirement in Mason Core, which includes art history courses that address the intrinsic relationship of personal and cultural creativity, and the manifestation on aesthetics, visual culture and visual narrative within historical contexts. Students who successfully complete a course in the Arts category must meet the following learning outcomes:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between artistic process and a work's underlying concept, and where appropriate, contexts associated with the work.
2. Identify and analyze the formal elements of a particular art form using vocabulary and critique appropriate to that form.
3. Analyze cultural productions using standards appropriate to the form, as well as the work's cultural significance and context.
4. Analyze and interpret the content of material culture through its social, historical, and personal contexts.

### Evaluation of Student Work:

I use a 100-point scale for grading, as well as the following measurements of student performance:

A+ (98-100)	A (93-97)	A- (90-92)	Clearly stands out as excellent performance
B+ (87-89)	B (83-86)	B- (80-82)	Level of work is good to very good
C+ (77-79)	C (73-76)	C- (70-72)	Level of work is satisfactory to average
D (60-69)			Work is below average and marginally acceptable
F (below 60)			Quality and/or quantity of work is unacceptable

### Course Requirements:

The grade for this course will be weighted in the following way:

Participation	5%
Visual Analysis	15%
Bibliographic Essay	25%
Midterms (2 @ 15%)	30%
Final Exam	25%

Participation: Students start with an 80 for participation; this will be raised when students participate in a thoughtful, relevant way and decreased when students act disruptive, disrespect class members, or engage in nonacademic activity. Refrain from texting, checking email, or surfing the web. Such behavior, when practiced in a flagrant and repeated manner, will result in a zero for participation.

Writing Assignments: Both your written assignments will focus on a single object from a local museum or collection. The object must be American (or have a strong connection with American art), must have been created between 1492 and 1955, and must be viewed in person. You will write:

Visual Analysis: A 3-4 page (double spaced) descriptive essay exploring the visual qualities of your object and analyzing the artistic choices made by its creator(s). Due October 18.

Bibliographic Essay: A 6-page (double spaced) essay discussing your object in its historical context. You will locate and review at least 3 scholarly sources that help you contextualize your object and discuss how they expand your knowledge beyond visual analysis. Due November 20.

Exams: Two non-cumulative midterms (15% each) will be given in class on Monday, October 2 and Monday, November 6. A cumulative final exam (25%) will take place during finals period.

Exams may be missed without penalty in cases of: religious observance, academic, or athletic obligations, with at least one week's advance notification; or serious illness or emergency, with notification as soon as possible. Generally you will be expected to make up the missed test within one week. All cases will require documentation in writing. Any other reasons for missing an exam (overslept, missed bus, etc.) will incur a -20 point penalty on a make-up test.

### A Note on Attendance:

You are an adult and presumably juggle many responsibilities in your life. I understand that sometimes class attendance conflicts with those responsibilities. That said, repeated absenteeism in college students is positively correlated with poor exam performance and lower overall GPA.<sup>1</sup> I will take attendance daily, but only with the goal of noticing patterns of nonattendance and reaching out to students who may be struggling. <sup>1</sup>Credé et al, "Class Attendance in College," *Review of Educational Research* 80.2 (2010).

### **Policies for Submitting Written Work:**

Assignments will be posted and turned in using Blackboard and are due at 11:59 pm on the due date. Late work will be penalized 5 points for each day past the due date, including weekend days.

Please format your files according to the following guidelines:

- Double-spaced with standard margins and 12-point font
- Cover sheets, works cited, images, etc. do not count toward the page count
- Files should be saved as .doc, .docx, or .pdf and will not be read in any other format

### **Academic Honesty:**

I have a **zero tolerance** policy for academic dishonesty, whether intentional or not. Students who violate standards of academic honesty will earn a **zero** for the assignment and may risk failing the course or being subject to disciplinary action at the University level.

The George Mason Honor Code reads as follows: “Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, and/or lie in matters related to academic work.” More information about the Honor Code, including definitions of cheating, lying, and plagiarism, can be found at the Office of Academic Integrity website at [oai.gmu.edu](http://oai.gmu.edu).

### **Support Resources for Students**

**Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities are entitled to request appropriate accommodations. Students wishing to request accommodations should register with Disability Services. After the registration process is complete, bring me your accommodation letter and I will work with DS to provide the necessary accommodations. See [ds.gmu.edu](http://ds.gmu.edu) or call (703) 993-2474.

**Help with Writing:** Especially if you have struggled with writing in the past, or if English is not your first language, you may want to seek help from the Writing Center. They offer one-on-one tutoring and workshops throughout the semester. Robinson-A, Room 114, or [writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu)

**Emotional and Mental Support:** College life is complicated. Students may find it helpful to talk with a professional. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can help address both personal and academic concerns. Services are free and confidential. SUB I, Room 3129, or [caps.gmu.edu](http://caps.gmu.edu)

**LGBTQ Resources:** LGBTQ Resources “works to promote the academic success, health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students and their allies.” SUB I, Room 2200, or [lgbtq.gmu.edu](http://lgbtq.gmu.edu)

**Diversity:** The Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education provides support for an inclusive campus, including resources for first-generation college students and undocumented students. [odime.gmu.edu](http://odime.gmu.edu)

### **Course Calendar**

#### **Week 1**

Reading:	skim Pohl, pp. 19-61 (sections on pre-contact native arts)
Mon. 8/28	Introduction to Course Policies and Expectations
Wed. 8/30	Pre-Encounter Diversity: Southwest, Midwest, and East Coast

### **Week 2**

Reading: Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, "The Cultural Biography of Objects"  
Mon. 9/4 NO CLASS: Labor Day Holiday  
Wed. 9/6 Images of Encounter, Cabinets of Curiosity; **BRING**: an "Artifact" or "Curiosity"

### **Week 3**

Readings: Pohl, pp. 24-28, 32-46, 63-74  
Wayne Craven, "The Seventeenth-Century New England Mercantile Image"  
Mon. 9/11 Visual and Material Culture of New Spain  
Wed. 9/13 Arts of Colonial New England and the Eastern Seaboard

### **Week 4**

Reading: Pohl, pp. 75-90  
Mon. 9/18 The Eighteenth-Century Culture of Consumption  
Wed. 9/20 Eighteenth-Century Painting: West, Copley, and Trumbull

### **Week 5**

Reading: Pohl, pp. 90-105, 113-136  
Mon. 9/25 Official Arts of the New Republic  
Wed. 9/27 Arts for the People in the New Republic

### **Week 6**

Reading: Pohl, pp. 144-165  
Mon. 10/2 **Exam 1 (In-class Midterm)**  
Wed. 10/4 The Rise of Landscape

### **Week 7**

Reading: Pohl, pp. 165-176  
Mon. 10/9 NO CLASS; Extra office hours during class time on Tues. 10/10 to discuss papers  
Wed. 10/11 Native Americans and the West

### **Week 8**

Reading: Pohl, pp. 176-216  
Mon. 10/16 Genre and Still Life Painting  
Wed. 10/18 War with Mexico and Slavery at Home; **DUE @ 11:59 PM**: Visual Analysis

### **Week 9**

Reading: Pohl, pp. 216-236; Steven Conn and Andrew Walker, "The History in the Art"  
Mon. 10/23 A Harvest of Death: Art and the Civil War  
Wed. 10/25 Emancipation and Reconstruction

### **Week 10**

Reading: Pohl, 236-256, 259-281, 312-320  
Mon. 10/30 The Battle for the West  
Wed. 11/1 Race, Gender, and Social Class in the Gilded Age

### **Week 11**

Reading: Pohl, pp. 281-302  
Mon. 11/6 Eclecticism and Aestheticism in the Gilded Age  
Wed. 11/8 **Exam 2 (In-class Midterm)**

**Week 12**

Reading: Pohl, pp. 300-307, 324-359  
Mon. 11/13 Tensions of Life in the Modern City  
Wed. 11/15 The Stieglitz Group and the American Avant-Garde

**Week 13**

Reading: Pohl, pp. 359-372, 407-411, 417-422  
Mon. 11/20 Influence from Mexico and the Southwest; **DUE @ 11:59 PM**: Bibliographic Essay  
Wed. 11/22 NO CLASS: Thanksgiving

**Week 14**

Readings: Pohl, pp. 372-381, 427-441  
Thomas Hart Benton, excerpt from *An Artist in America*  
Mon. 11/27 The Harlem Renaissance and the “New Negro” Movement  
Wed. 11/29 The Two Americas: Urban vs. Rural

**Week 15**

Reading: Pohl, pp. 390-403, 411-417, 441-475  
Mon. 12/4 The New Deal and Interwar Politics  
Wed. 12/6 Postwar Art: “The Triumph of American Painting”

**Finals Week**

Wed. 12/13 Final Exam, 10:30 am – 1:15 pm