INTRODUCTION TO VISUAL ARTS • ARTH 101 003 • SPRING 2012
Mon/Wed 3-4:15 PM at Innovation Hall 132
Professor Woodville, lwoodvil@gmu.edu • 540-729-6665 (e-mail preferable)
Office Hours: 1/2 hour before or after class or by appointment
First class: Mon, Jan 23 • Last class: Wed, May 2
Last day to Add: Tues. Jan 31 • Last day to drop: Fri. Feb. 24
MIDTERM IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS: Feb. 20-29 (four sessions)
No class Mon. March 5 (class cancelled in lieu of museum visit)
No class: Mon Mar. 12 and Wed. Mar. 14 (Spring Recess)
FINAL EXAM: May 14, 1:30 to 4:15 PM

Introduction to the Visual Arts will explore how artists use the formal elements of line, shape, form, color, and space to create works of art that move and delight people from a wealth of different cultures. We will also consider the messages that the artists, either consciously or inadvertently, relay about themselves, the patrons who commission the works, and the concerns of the society in which they live. Viewing art in this way can help us uncover insights as to the economic, religious, political, and social climate in which patrons and artists lived. In the process of our explorations, at times we will undoubtedly uncover truths about the human condition in general.

FORMAT: Through lectures, class projects, required reading, and class presentations, students will learn how to look at art from the perspective of the artists who created them and the patrons who requested them, taking into account a work’s iconography, its elements of design, and the socio-economic landscape in which it was created. Short writing assignments will be an integral part of the curriculum.

Periodically students will explore classroom sessions in groups of five. It is highly recommended that you plan on coming to each and every class, as when you are not present to contribute with your group, which could be at any point, it will impact detrimentally on your final grade.

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.

• ...Isms. Understanding Art by Stephen Little, Universe Press.

• Other articles, hand-outs, and web-based articles. And ... be sure to review the PowerPoints viewed in class that will be available on Blackboard.
READING AND LECTURES

Jan. 23/25: Introductory overview:
We will investigate of 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?
Handout: Syllabus
Handout: Intro Visual Art.doc
DIVIDE CLASS INTO GROUPS OF FIVE.

Jan. 30/Feb 1: Continue investigation of how artists use the formal elements of line, color, value, texture, shape and rhythm to describe form, space, plane and mass.

Feb. 6/Feb. 8: Continue investigation of how artists use the formal elements of line, color, value, texture, shape and rhythm to describe form, space, plane and mass.
CLASS PROJECT • not graded unless you do not hand it in, in which case you receive an F unless advance arrangements made with professor.

Feb. 13/Feb. 15: Continue investigation of how artists use the formal elements of line, color, value, texture, shape and rhythm to describe form, space, plane and mass.

Feb. 20/Feb. 22: START MIDTERMS: Session #1, 2

Feb. 27/29: MIDTERMS CONTINUED: Session #3, 4

Mar. 5: CLASS CANCELLED in lieu of 3-hour required museum visit to the National Gallery of Art on Saturday March 17

Mar. 7: Introduction to Renaissance

Mar. 12/14: SPRING BREAK

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.

Mar. 19/21: Roman—> Medieval—>Renaissance patrons and artists, a brief look

Saturday March 17: NGA VISIT
Required Museum visit, 3 hours, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.
11:15am-12:15pm • break for lunch • 1:15pm-3:15pm

Mar. 26/28: Renaissance patrons and artists

April 2/4: Baroque patrons and artists
CLASS PROJECT • not graded unless you do not hand it in, in which case you receive an F unless advance arrangements made with professor.

April 9/11: Rococo, Classicism/Realism
Draft of museum paper due April 11

April 16/18: Impressionism/Post-Impressionism

April 23/25: Dada
CLASS PROJECT • not graded unless you do not hand it in, in which case you receive an F unless advance arrangements made with professor.

April 30/May 2: Modern
CLASS PROJECT • not graded unless you do not hand it in, in which case you receive an F unless advance arrangements made with professor.
FINAL PAPER DUE April 30

May 14, 1:30 to 4:15 PM FINAL EXAM

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
• Class attendance (see below).
• A National Gallery of Art visit from which you will write a major paper. (If you can’t make one of these dates outlined on syllabus, please see me.)
• Assigned readings and hand-outs (I will assign some hand-outs as the course progresses)
• A Midterm, a Final, as well as in-class projects, and a major research paper based on the aforementioned museum visit.

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 chatters.

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. This includes the in-class projects.
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 AND PARTICIPATION.** If you miss more than two classes (or habitually leave after ten or fifteen minutes), 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 in-class project 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 an in-class project, quiz or 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.

- **REQUIRED READING ASSIGNMENTS** In addition to readings from the required texts, selections accessible on the Internet or on Blackboard will also be posted.

- **QUIZZES, IN-CLASS PROJECTS, EXAMS, and a required museum paper:** A Midterm and a Final with unscheduled quizzes and in-class projects will test you on the required readings from the Isms book, the cards, required readings posted onto Blackboard, and in-class lectures and projects.  
  
  **Midterm:** 35%. **Final:** 35% Quizzes and in-class projects: 15%. **Paper 15%**.

**GRADING POLICIES**

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, neglecting to participate in a class project, 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.

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 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.

REQUIRED MUSEUM PAPER: 15% of your grade. 800-1200 words on a work that you have selected from the National Gallery of Art.

Based on the required National Gallery of Art visit. If you cannot attend the museum with the class, make sure you tell me when you are visiting NGA on your own.

Be sure that in writing this 800-1200 word paper, you do not 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 GMU professors take no prisoners on this issue. If you want to use the words verbatim, simply credit your source.

NOTE: If you find you cannot attend the required National Gallery of Art visit with the class, please see me as to the date that you will visit the museum, which is required. When you hand in the draft of this museum paper, 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.

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 we go to the National Gallery of Art, you will be given some time to 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? Take extensive notes while looking at the work—the single most important exercise of the paper.

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, set 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? (Remember that during the medieval and Renaissance periods, displaying piety and bragging about your wealth are not mutually exclusive concepts.) If your work was created after, say, 1600 and it 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? Who paid for the work?

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?
   - If before 1600, who commissioned the work (if known). Remember that “commissioned” means that a person—not the artist—went to the artist and ordered a work of art by him or her, often writing out a formal contract delineating cost, colors to be used, subject to be rendered, etc. Did the patron 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. Refer to that first powerpoint and review the Elements of Design, called “Looking at Art.ppt.”

**Mechanics for required museum paper:** 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 anger and despair.” This is specialized information that came from a primary source—so find it! Cite 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/](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/resources/).

**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.**

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 the Stern School of Business, NYU. 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 am 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. And for all of you, I’ll assume you’ve perused Strunk & White’s *Elements of Style.*