

ARTH 101 section 002: Introduction to Visual Arts

3 credit hours. Introduction to the content and principles of the visual arts.

Class meeting: Tuesday/Thursday 10:30-11:45
Instructor: Dr. Vanessa M. Schulman
Email: vschulma@gmu.edu

Classroom: Music Theater Building 1007
Office Hours: virtual by appointment
Office: Horizon Hall 3158

The Basics

Course Description

This course will expose students to the fundamentals of viewing and interpreting visual art. Students will first learn about the materials, techniques, and visual elements artists have used to produce works of art. The remainder of the course will survey how artists from the late 18th century to the present have used their art to communicate ideas, produce change, respond to major global events, and push the boundaries of what art can be. The primary focus of this course will be the United States and Europe, but artworks from Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia will also be considered in comparative perspective.

Course Materials

All readings will be in PDFs or linked from the Blackboard (BB) site. There are no books to buy.

Mason Core

This course satisfies the Arts requirement in Mason Core. Students who successfully complete a course in the Arts category will meet the learning outcomes listed on the Mason Core homepage at <https://masoncore.gmu.edu/arts-2/>

Class Learning Goals

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

- recognize and describe formal and compositional elements of visual art
- accurately identify materials and techniques used by artists
- recognize and classify works of art made in the modern era (circa 1750 to the present)
- interpret artworks according to their political, cultural, and aesthetic contexts

Class Communication

I will send communications to your GMU email only. It is the student's responsibility to read and follow up on all emails. I try to respond to emails within 36-48 hours, but if you do not hear back from me after that time, please send a follow-up to vschulma@gmu.edu.

Enrollment

You must be enrolled to attend this class and to access materials and assignments on the BB site. Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes:

Last day to add: Mon. 1/31

Last day to drop: Mon. 2/7

Last day to drop with 50% refund: Mon. 2/14

Withdrawal period: Tues. 2/15 – Tues. 3/1

Selective withdrawal: Wed. 3/2 – Mon. 4/11

Attendance

You are an adult and have many responsibilities to manage. Daily attendance is recommended but not required. I take attendance only with the goal of noticing unusual patterns of absence so I can contact students who may be struggling. You do not need to notify me if you will be missing lecture.

Assignments and Evaluation of Student Work

There are 650 possible points to earn. These points equate to the following grades:

A- (585-604 pts)	A (605-630 pts)	A+ (631-650 pts)
B- (520-539 pts)	B (540-565 pts)	B+ (566-584 pts)
C- (455-474 pts)	C (475-499 pts)	C+ (500-519 pts)
D (390-454 pts)	F (0-389 pts)	

Your grade will be calculated as a running total and all grades will be posted on BB My Grades.

Breakdown of points

Four quizzes; 100 pts each	= 400 pts
Six online posts; 15 pts each	= 90 pts
Gallery gallop assignment	= 60 pts
Visual analysis essay	= 100 pts
Total	= 650 pts

Explanation of assignments

Quizzes: Each unit will conclude with a non-cumulative quiz. The format will include definitions, fill-in-the-blank/short answer, and multiple-choice questions. These quizzes will be given in class on Feb. 15, March 10, April 12, and May 5. *There is no "final" exam. The Unit 4 Quiz is the last assessment.*

Short Posts: Each week there will be a prompt for a short blog post of about 150 words. There are twelve total opportunities to submit a post, and you must write any **six** of them (15 pts each). Posts should be submitted to the BB Blogs function and are due on Thursdays by 11:59 PM.

Gallery Gallop: You will visit an art museum or gallery and complete a scavenger hunt connecting visual/compositional terms with artworks you see there. This short assignment will also form the basis of your visual analysis paper. Full instructions are on BB. Due on March 1.

Essay: After completing your Gallery Gallop, you will choose a single artwork and compose a visual analysis. Your visual analysis should be approximately 3 pages and should discuss the artwork's formal/compositional elements and its medium. Full instructions are on BB. Due on April 19.

Extra Credit: Submitting your essay early (by March 10) will earn +15 points on your overall grade.

Course Policies

Submitting Written Work

All work must be submitted through BB. It is your responsibility to make sure submissions have uploaded and submitted properly. I will not accept work that is emailed as an attachment or link. You may type your work directly into the submission function or upload files as .doc, .docx, or .pdf.

Late Work

Work submitted to BB is date-stamped in Eastern Time and most assignments are due at 11:59 PM. Late work is accepted but will be penalized -10% for each 24 hours past the due date.

Missed In-Class Quizzes

Quizzes may be rescheduled without penalty in case of serious illness or medical emergency, religious observance, or longstanding academic and professional obligations. Please give as much advance notice as possible and be prepared to show documentation in writing. Any other reasons for missing a quiz (overslept, missed bus, etc.) will incur a -20 point penalty on a make-up. If you miss a quiz and do not contact me within 24 hours, it will become an automatic zero.

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. More information is at <https://oai.gmu.edu>

Policies for Civil Discourse

We may discuss artworks that individuals in this class find challenging or even offensive. We will also encounter peers with viewpoints that are different from our own. I ask you, first and foremost, to come with the mindset that we are here to grow and make progress toward greater understanding of ourselves and the world. I include myself in this. To do this, we need to follow these principles:

1. Be a listener. To *listen* is to be active and engaged, with generosity and without prejudgment. We want all members of our class community to feel they can be heard.
2. Be intentional. We will try to be as specific as possible in the words we choose and the claims we make, preferably supported with evidence. We will avoid universalizing or making assumptions.
3. Be forgiving. We will approach alternate viewpoints in a spirit of inquiry, by asking “what do you mean by that?” rather than accusing or attacking.
4. Be appropriate. Racist, sexist, or homophobic language are *never* acceptable in this classroom.

Support Resources for Students

Accommodations

Disability Services (DS) is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Students can begin the registration process with DS at any time during their enrollment at GMU. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit <https://ds.gmu.edu>, email ods@gmu.edu or call 703-993-2474. I am committed to arranging all approved accommodations. Provide an official copy of your DS letter as early in the semester as possible so I can provide accommodations in a timely fashion.

LGBTQ+ Resources

This course is a Queer safe space and includes material that informs us about issues of gender, gender identity, and sexuality. If you are looking for additional support, LGBTQ+ Resources “works to promote the academic success, health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students and their allies.” <https://lgbtq.gmu.edu>

Diversity

This course is designed to grow your intercultural competency by providing you with the tools and vocabulary to speak in a knowledgeable and sensitive way about works of art made by diverse creators. I believe that by fostering willingness to hear and learn from a variety of sources, we gain competence in communication, critical thinking, and global understanding. The Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment provides support for an inclusive campus. <https://ccee.gmu.edu>

Emotional and Mental Support

College life and our current reality are complicated, and 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. <https://caps.gmu.edu>

Sexual Harassment and Misconduct

GMU is committed to providing a learning, living, and working environment free from discrimination and a campus free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence to promote community well-being and student success. As a designated “Responsible Employee,” I am required to report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator. <https://diversity.gmu.edu/sexual-misconduct>

Course Calendar

Date	Class Meeting Topics	Read Before Class	Turn In
Tues. 1/25	Course Policies and Expectations	Go over syllabus/BB site	
Unit One: Building Blocks for Artistic Analysis			
Thurs. 1/27	Why and How We Study Art: Forms of Analysis	Robert Glass, "Introduction to Art Historical Analysis"; optional for more background: Anne D'Alleva, "The Fundamentals of Interpretation"	Short post option 1 due by 11:59 PM
Tues. 2/1	Terminology for Art: Visual Elements	Margaret Lazzari and Dona Schlesier, "The Language of Art and Architecture: Formal Elements"	
Thurs. 2/3	Terminology for Art: Principles of Design	Henry M. Sayre, "The Principles of Design"	Short post option 2 due by 11:59 PM
Tues. 2/8	Materials and Techniques: 2D Media	Prof. Schulman, 2D media class handout (PDF)	
Thurs. 2/10	Materials and Techniques: 3D and Time-Based Media	Prof. Schulman, 3D media class handout (PDF)	Short post option 3 due by 11:59 PM
Tues. 2/15	Unit 1 Quiz in class		
Unit Two: The Age of Revolutions			
Thurs. 2/17	The Modern Era and the Art Academies	Daniella Berman, "The Formation of a French School"	Short post option 4 due by 11:59 PM
Tues. 2/22	History Painting and Revolution	Steven Zucker and Beth Harris, "The Age of Enlightenment"; and Claire Black McCoy, "The Oath of the Horatii"	
Thurs. 2/24	French Academicism, Romanticism, and Realism	Claire Black McCoy, "Romanticism in France" and "A Burial at Ornans"	Short post option 5 due by 11:59 PM
Tues. 3/1	The Death of History Painting: The American Civil War	Steven Conn and Andrew Walker, "The History in the Art"	Gallery Gallop assignment due by 11:59 PM
Thurs. 3/3	The Politics of Otherness: Orientalism	Nancy Demerdash, "Orientalism"	Short post option 6 due by 11:59 PM
Tues. 3/8	Reframing Orientalism: Japanese Popular Prints and Plains Indian Drawings	Janet Catherine Berlo, "Drawing and Being Drawn In"	
Thurs. 3/10	Unit 2 Quiz in class		Submit visual analysis by 11:59 PM to earn +15 points extra credit

<p align="center">Spring Break (no class 3/15 and 3/17)</p> <p align="center">Unit Three: The Twentieth Century</p>			
Tues. 3/22	The Avant-Gardes at the Turn of the Century	Charles Cramer and Kim Grant, “Constructivism” and “Dada Politics”; and Emily Casden, “Italian Futurism”	
Thurs. 3/24	The Fascist Attack on Modern Art	Stephanie Barron, “Modern Art and Politics in Prewar Germany”	Short post option 7 due by 11:59 PM
Tues. 3/29	Art and the Cold War	Museum of Modern Art, “Abstract Expressionism” (introduction and four essays)	
Thurs. 3/31	Feminisms	Josephine Withers, “Judy Chicago’s <i>The Dinner Party</i> ”	Short post option 8 due by 11:59 PM
Tues. 4/5	The Expanded Realm	Gillian Sneed, “Hélio Oiticia, Parangolés”; and Doris Maria-Reina Bravo, “The Gates”	
Thurs. 4/7	Monuments and Memory	Maya Lin, “Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial”	Short post option 9 due by 11:59 PM
Tues. 4/12	Unit 3 Quiz in class		
<p align="center">Unit Four: Themes Since the 1980s</p>			
Thurs. 4/14	Art Against Silence: Surviving a Pandemic	Douglas Crimp, “AIDS: Cultural Analysis/ Cultural Activism”	Short post option 10 due by 11:59 PM
Tues. 4/19	Censorship Controversies	Hilton Kramer, “Is Art Above the Laws of Decency?”	Visual analysis essay due by 11:59 PM
Thurs. 4/21	The Art of Language	Simon Leung, “Pseudo-languages: A Conversation with Wenda Gu, Xu Bing, and Jonathan Hay”	Short post option 11 due by 11:59 PM
Tues. 4/26	Institutional Critique	Kerryn Greenberg, “Meschac Gaba: Museum of Contemporary African Art”	
Thurs. 4/28	Decolonizing Art History	Catherine Grant and Dorothy Price, excerpts from “Decolonizing Art History”	Short post option 12 due by 11:59 PM
Tues. 5/3	Art and Ecology	Rob Nixon, “Three Islands: An Environmental Justice Archipelago”	
Thurs. 5/5	Unit 4 Quiz in class		Have a good summer!