#### Art and Environment

ARTH 471 sec 001 / ARTH 599 sec 005 • Fall 2023 Mondays 4:30 – 7:10 PM • Horizon Hall 1007

Dr. Vanessa M. Schulman
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Office hours by appointment at <a href="https://gmu.campus.eab.com/pal/k-OKVShxt5">https://gmu.campus.eab.com/pal/k-OKVShxt5</a>

"Consistent with the ecological principle of interconnectedness, ecocritical interpretation views human beings and their work as part of a larger biotic community ... Ecocriticism does not limit itself to explicitly 'green' creators and works, but insists that all have some sort of ecological meaning, for better or worse." – Alan C. Braddock

Description: This course examines histories of art through the lenses of ecology, climate, landscape, environment, and natural resources, beginning around the time of the Industrial Revolution (c. 1750). It introduces a form of art history known as ecocriticism, which encompasses interdisciplinary perspectives from the humanities, sciences, and social sciences to re-examine art history in light of the growing climate crisis. Ecocriticism often studies images that directly represent the environment and humankind's interaction with it, such as landscape painting, or re-evaluates canonical artworks through an environmental lens. Additionally, this class will examine themes and concerns such as: histories of artistic materials (including cotton, mahogany, cochineal pigment, and plastic); representations of non-human animals and ecosystems; movements such as Land Art and Earthworks that intervene in natural environments; and artworks that respond to concerns about pollution, conservation, and Indigenous land/water stewardship. Ecocritical approaches also by necessity address histories of colonialism and racism. While the primary focus of the class will be the United States, other traditions may be brought in as well.

**ARTH 471 Course Information:** 3 credit hours. Studies a particular area of American art, focusing on a form, such as landscape or genre painting; theme, such as nationalism, regionalism, or iconography of the family; or movement, such as American modernism. May not be repeated for credit. Recommended prerequisites: ENGL 302/ENGH 302 and 6 credits in Art History at the 300-level.

**ARTH 599 Course Information:** 3 credit hours. Special topics in art history and the decorative arts. May be repeated for credit when topic is different. May be repeated within the term.

Writing Intensive in the Major: This course fulfills the writing-intensive Mason Core requirement for the Art History major. Among other requirements, writing intensive courses are ones in which:

- students revise at least one substantive assignment
- students receive instructor feedback on their writing
- writing assignments count substantially toward final grades
- writing assignments combine to a total of at least 3500 words (see assignments below)

If you are not an Art History major, this class may not satisfy this requirement. Check with your academic advisor.

**Communication:** The best way to reach me is at vschulma@gmu.edu. Please allow up to 48 hours for a response. I will send reminders to your GMU email only, so check that account regularly.

**Materials:** There are no materials or books to buy for this course. All readings will be made available as PDFs or links on Blackboard. This is a reading-intensive course.

### Assignments, Grading, and Grade-Related Policies

### Assignments (graded using a 100-point scale)

Participation	10%
"AQUA" Discussion Preparation	25%
Reading Presentation	10%
Museum Essay	15%
Micro-Landscape Journal	15%
Final Project	25%

More detailed instructions for all assignments are available on Blackboard.

**Participation:** I will give you a score worth 5% of your final grade, based on an evaluation of the quality, relevance, and engagement of your participation across the semester. The other 5% is self-assessed. At the end of each class, you will fill out an exit ticket evaluating your performance. At the end of the semester, I will use the exit tickets to calculate your self-assigned participation grade.

"AQUA" Discussion Preparation: The class will be broken into three groups. I expect everyone to be prepared to discuss <u>all</u> assigned readings each week, but your group will be assigned a single text to focus on for each meeting, which will be the subject of your "AQUA" report. These must be turned in at the end of each class (typed or handwritten hard copy). The report consists of the following four parts:

- Argument: What is the main thesis or argument that the author is trying to get across? In other words, what is the main "take-away" message of this reading? (about 2-4 sentences)
- Questions: Substantive questions that have been generated by your reading of the article.
   These should not be questions that can be answered with a yes/no or a simple fact; rather they should be designed to provoke conversation. (2-3 questions)
- Use: How could the information in this article be used by art historians, students, museum professionals, or other audiences? Does it have a practical application, or is it more of theoretical interest? What is its significance? (about one paragraph)
- Assessment: Nothing is perfect! There is always room for improvement in academic projects, as in life. In your opinion, what is one area that could be improved in this reading? It could be a gap in the evidence, a missed opportunity, a topic you wanted to hear more about, or an additional argument. (about one paragraph)

**Reading Presentation:** For each day of class, there is an additional reading listed on the course calendar. Students will choose one of these dates to deliver a 15-minute oral presentation covering the text's main points and will present 3-4 questions for group discussion.

<u>Museum Essay:</u> A 2-3 page review of one of the following exhibits: *Many Wests* (Smithsonian American Art Museum); *Sharing Honors and Burdens* (Renwick Gallery); *The Land Carries Our Ancestors* (National Gallery, opens 9/22); or *Afrofuturism* (NMAAHC). Due Fri. 10/6.

Micro-Landscape Journal: Choose a specific place for intense ecological observation. You will make multiple visits to the site over the course of several weeks and record your observations in writings, drawings, photographs, charts, or other formats. Due Fri. 11/3.

Final Project: A substantial written or creative project, due Mon. 12/4. There are multiple planning steps. These are not graded, but each missed step will result in a 10 point grade deduction on the project.

- Individual meetings to discuss project topics: Tues. 10/10 through Fri. 10/13
- $\bullet$  One-paragraph description of project with tentative bibliography: Fri. 10/20
- Rough draft/progress check: Fri. 11/17

**Attendance**: Attendance is not a calculated portion of your grade; it is a baseline expectation. Absences will be excused in cases of illness, family emergency, and religious observance. Frequent absenteeism without notification or excuse will result in the following penalties:

<u>nexcused Absences</u>	<u>Result</u>
More than 2	Course grade drops by one letter
More than 3	Course grade drops by two letters
More than 4	F for the course

### Undergraduate Grading Scale:

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

### MA Grading Scale:

GMU's graduate grading scale stipulates a grade below 80 is unsatisfactory and below 70 is failing.

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 acceptable to very good
C+ (77-79)	C (73-76)	C- (70-72)	Work is below average and unsatisfactory
F (below 70)			Quality and/or quantity of work is unacceptable

**Late work** will be penalized 5 points for each day past the due date. All assignments are due at 11:59 PM on the due date, after which they are considered one day late. Extensions will be granted *if deemed appropriate* when students submit a request in writing at least one week before the due date.

**Academic Honesty:** Academic dishonesty constitutes a serious violation of your learning process and your social contract with other students. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- -failure to cite sources for quotations and ideas
- -cutting and pasting text from other sources
- -passing off another's work as your own
- -purchasing or copying a paper found online
- -reusing a paper you wrote for another course

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, including definitions of cheating, lying, and plagiarism, can be found at the Office of Academic Integrity website at oai.gmu.edu.

**AI Policy:** Any text generated by an artificial intelligence (AI) text-generation tool (such as ChatGPT) is not accepted in this class as "the student's own work," and so will be considered similarly to published texts or texts composed or significantly edited/altered by another person. The use of such text without proper attribution is a violation of academic integrity.

**Enrollment:** You must be enrolled to attend this class. 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. 8/28

Last day to drop with 100% refund: Tues. 9/5 Last day to drop with 50% refund: Tues. 9/12 Withdrawal period: Wed. 9/13 – Tues. 9/26 Selective withdrawal: Wed. 9/27 – Mon. 10/23

### **Support Resources for Students**

#### Accommodations:

Disability Services (DS) at George Mason University 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 George Mason. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit <a href="https://ds.gmu.edu">https://ds.gmu.edu</a>, email <a href="https://ds.gmu.edu">ods@gmu.edu</a> or call 703-993-2474.

I am committed to providing all accommodations approved by DS. Please note that faculty do not automatically receive notice of accommodations from DS, so please email me a copy of your letter to discuss how we will implement your approved accommodations.

#### **LGBTQ+** Resources:

While not a major topic of this course, this syllabus may include some material about histories of gender and sexuality. This classroom is a Queer safe space for discussion of related issues relevant to the class. LGBTQ+ Resources "works to promote the academic success, health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students and their allies." <a href="https://lebtq.gmu.edu">https://lebtq.gmu.edu</a>

#### 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 images made by creators from diverse backgrounds across North America. 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, and become aware of our biases. See the Center for Culture, Equity, and Empowerment <a href="https://ccee.gmu.edu">https://ccee.gmu.edu</a>

## **Emotional and Mental Support:**

College life and our current reality are 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. <a href="https://caps.gmu.edu">https://caps.gmu.edu</a>

### Bereavement:

Students dealing with loss are encouraged to speak with the Dean of Student Academic Life for their College. The Dean's office can help you contact your professors and deal with the academic challenges of bereavement. CHSS students contact <a href="mailto:chssdean@emu.edu">chssdean@emu.edu</a>.

### **Student Support and Advocacy Center:**

The Student Support and Advocacy Center offers support services to help students address issues related to personal wellness, interpersonal violence, and alcohol and drug use. SSAC also assists students who are encountering life challenges or crises. https://ssac.gmu.edu

### Sexual Harassment and Misconduct:

George Mason is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment that is free from discrimination and a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. As a faculty member and designated "Responsible Employee," I am required to report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator.

### Course Calendar

Readings should be completed prior to the class for which they are listed. You should *focus* on the reading assigned to your group, but you are still expected to complete *all* listed readings for the week. Readings labeled "presentation article" are only required for the student doing the presentation.

### Week 1: Mon. 8/21 Course Introduction

Go over syllabus and course expectations.

### Week 2: Mon. 8/28 Foundations for Ecocritical Art History

Prepare AQUA report on one of the readings (your choice). We will form reading groups in class today. Readings:

- Cheryll Glotfelty, "Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis," in The Ecocriticism
  Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (U Georgia, 1996), xv-xxv.
- Alan C. Braddock, "From Nature to Ecology: The Emergence of Ecocritical Art History," in A
   Companion to American Art, ed. John Davis, Jennifer A. Greenhill and Jason D. LaFountain (Wiley,
   2015), 447-467.
- Wendy Parkins and Peter Adkins, "Introduction: Victorian Ecology and the Anthropocene," 19:
   Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century 26 (2018): <a href="https://19.bbk.ac.uk/article/id/1717/">https://19.bbk.ac.uk/article/id/1717/</a>
   (you can skip the part that summarizes the articles; read through the end of the paragraph that begins "The Anthropocene intensifies the Victorian provenance of our modern understanding of ecology.")

### Week 3: Mon. 9/4 NO CLASS (Labor Day)

# Week 4: Mon. 9/11 Imperial Materials Readings:

- Group 1 AQUA: Laura Turner Igoe, "Creative Matter: Tracing the Environmental Context of Materials in American Art," in Nature's Nation: American Art and Environment, ed. Karl Kusserow and Alan C. Braddock (Princeton, 2018), 140-169.
- Group 2 AQUA: Barbara Anderson, "The World of Cochineal" and Michael A. Brown, "The Color of Power: Red in the Portraiture of the Spanish and British Empires," in A Red Like No Other: How Cochineal Colored the World, ed. Carmella Padilla and Barbara Anderson (Museum of International Folk Art, 2015), 18-23 and 166-173.
- Group 3 AQUA: Anna Arabindan-Kesson, "Threads of Empire," introduction to Black Bodies, White Gold: Art, Cotton, and Commerce in the Atlantic World (Duke, 2021), 1-24.
- Presentation article: Jennifer L. Anderson, introduction to Mahogany: The Costs of Luxury in Early America (Harvard, 2012), 1-17.

# Week 5: Mon. 9/18 Systems of Knowing Readings:

- Group 1 AQUA: Ken MacMillan, "Centers and Peripheries in English Maps of America, 1590-1685," in Early American Cartographies, ed. Martin Brückner (Omohundro/UNC, 2011), 67-92.
- Group 2 AQUA: Michael Dean Mackintosh, "Ink and Paper, Clamshells and Leather: Power, Environmental Perception, and Materiality in the Lenape-European Encounter at Philadelphia," in A Greene Country Towne: Philadelphia's Ecology in the Cultural Imagination, ed. Alan C. Braddock and Laura Turner Igoe (Penn State, 2016), 32-46.
- Group 3 AQUA: Alan C. Braddock, "The Order of Things," in Nature's Nation: American Art and Environment, ed. Karl Kusserow and Alan C. Braddock (Princeton, 2018), 43-57 only.
- Presentation article: Robert Sayre, "William Bartram and Environmentalism," American Studies 54, no. 1
  (2015): 67-87.

# <u>Week 6</u>: Mon. 9/25 Romanticism, Nationalism, and Nineteenth-Century Landscape Readings:

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature," chapter 1 in Nature (1836): https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Nature (1836)/Chapter 1
- Group 1 AQUA: Angela L. Miller, "The Fate of Wilderness in American Landscape Art: The
  Dilemmas of 'Nature's Nation," in A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History, ed.
  Alan C. Braddock and Christoph Irmscher (Alabama, 2009), 85-109.
- Group 2 AQUA: Martin A. Berger, "Overexposed: Whiteness and the Landscape Photography of Carleton Watkins," Oxford Art Journal 26, no. 1 (June 2003): 3-23.
- Group 3 AQUA: Margaret Rose Vendryes, "Race Identity/Identifying Race: Robert S. Duncanson and Nineteenth-Century American Painting," Museum Studies 27, no. 1 (2001): 82-99.
- Presentation article: Rebecca Bedell, "Asher Durand's Progress Reconsidered." Panorama 5, no. 1 (Spring 2019): https://journalpanorama.org/article/durands-progress/

### Week 7: Mon. 10/2 Plants and Animals

Museum Essay **due** Fri. 10/6 at 11:59 PM Readings:

- Group 1 AQUA: Ellery Foutch, "Preserving the Perfect State: Titian Peale's Butterflies," Victorian Studies 60, no. 2 (2018): 171-184.
- Group 2 AQUA: Alan C. Braddock, "Icon of Extinction and Resilience," in Nature's Nation: American
  Art and Environment, ed. Karl Kusserow and Alan C. Braddock (Princeton, 2018), 246-263.
- Group 3 AQUA: Maura Lyons, "An Embodied Landscape: Wounded Trees at Gettysburg," American Art 26, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 44-65.
- Presentation article: John Ott, "Netted Together: Eadweard Muybridge's Animal Locomotion at the Dawn of Comparative Biology," in A Greene Country Towne: Philadelphia's Ecology in the Cultural Imagination, ed. Alan C. Braddock and Laura Turner Igoe (Penn State, 2016), 81-95.

## Week 8: Mon. 10/9 NO CLASS: Indigenous People's Day

Schedule a one-on-one Zoom meeting this week to discuss potential project ideas.

### Week 9: Mon. 10/16 Water and Stones

One-paragraph description of project **due** Fri. 10/20 Readings:

- Group 1 AQUA: Lauren E. LaFauci, "A Divided Portrait: Versions of Wilderness in Timothy O'Sullivan's Survey Photography," *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* 7, no. 1 (Fall 2005): 71-83.
- Group 2 AQUA: Timothy Mitchell, "Frederic Church's The Icebergs: Erratic Boulders and Time's Slow Changes," Smithsonian Studies in American Art 3, no. 4 (Autumn 1989): 3-23.
- Group 3 AQUA: Maura Coughlin and Emily Gephart, "Confluence: Painting Seawater across the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic," in Picture Ecology: Art and Ecocriticism in Planetary Perspective, ed. Karl Kusserow (Princeton, 2021), 206-221.
- Presentation article: Ross Barrett, "Picturing a Crude Past: Primitivism, Public Art, and Corporate Oil
  Promotion in the United States," in Oil Culture, ed. Ross Barrett and Daniel Worden (Minnesota,
  2014), 43-68.

# Week 10: Mon. 10/23 20th Century Modernisms Readings:

 Group 1 AQUA: Mark Andrew White, "Alexandre Hogue's Passion: Ecology and Agribusiness in The Crucified Land," in A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History, ed. Alan C. Braddock and Christoph Irmscher (Alabama, 2009), 168-88.

- Group 2 AQUA: Samantha A. Noël, "American Tropical Modernism: The African Diasporic Reaches
  of Aaron Douglas's Landscapes," chapter 1 in Tropical Aesthetics of Black Modernism (Duke, 2021), 2332, 36-59.
- Group 3 AQUA: Ellen Macfarlane, "Group f.64, Rocks, and the Limits of the Political Photograph," American Art 30, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 26-53.
- Presentation article: Jason Vartikar, "Ruth Asawa's Early Wire Sculpture and a Biology of Equality," *American Art* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 2-19.

### Week 11: Mon. 10/30 Land Art and Earthworks

Micro-Landscape Journal due Fri. 11/3

### Readings:

- Robert Smithson, "A Sedimentation of the Mind" (1968): https://holtsmithsonfoundation.org/sedimentation-mind-earth-projects
- Group 1 AQUA: Suzaan Boettger, "The Ground of Earthen Sculpture," chapter 2 in Earthworks: Art and the Landscape of the Sixties (California, 2002), 23-43.
- Group 2 AQUA: Elizabeth C. Baker, "Artworks on the Land" (orig. 1976), in Art in the Land: A Critical Anthology of Environmental Art, ed. Alan Sonfist (E.P. Dutton, 1983), 73-84.
- Group 3 AQUA: James Nisbet, "On and Off the Grid," in in Picture Ecology: Art and Ecocriticism in Planetary Perspective, ed. Karl Kusserow (Princeton, 2021), 222-239.
- Presentation article: Diana Shaffer, "Nancy Holt: Spaces for Reflections or Projections," in Art in the Land: A Critical Anthology of Environmental Art, ed. Alan Sonfist (E.P. Dutton, 1983), 169-177.

# Week 12: Mon. 11/6 Myths of "Nature" in the 1960s and 1970s Readings:

- Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, "Introduction," (1993) in Ecofeminism (Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), read only pp. 13-20 (the sections titled "Ecofeminism" and "Spiritual or Political Ecofeminism?").
- <u>Group 1 AQUA</u>: Amanda Boetzkes, "Techniques of Survival: The Harrisons and the Environmental Counterculture," in *West of Center: Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965-1977*, ed. Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner (Minnesota, 2011), 306-323.
- Group 2 AQUA: Finis Dunaway, "The Crying Indian," chapter 5 in Seeing Green: The Use and Abuse of American Environmental Images (Chicago, 2015), 79-95.
- Group 3 AQUA: Jessica E. Jones, "Earth-Bodies as Re-Existence: Ana Mendieta's Siluetas Beyond the Limits of Ecofeminism," Feminist Formations 34, no. 3 (Winter 2022): 33-60.
- Presentation article: Rebecca Solnit, "Every Corner is Alive': Eliot Porter as an Environmentalist and Artist," in A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History, ed. Alan C. Braddock and Christoph Irmscher (Alabama, 2009), 213-236.

### Week 13: Mon. 11/13 Systems and Sustainability since the 1960s

Rough drafts due Fri. 11/17

### Readings:

- Group 1 AQUA: Barbara C. Matilsky, "Environmental Art: New Approaches to Nature," chapter 2 in Fragile Ecologies: Contemporary Artists' Interpretations and Solutions (Rizzoli, 1992), 36-55.
- Group 2 AQUA: T. J. Demos, "The Art and Politics of Sustainability," chapter 1 in Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology (Sternberg Press, 2016), 31-38, 45-62.
- Group 3 AQUA: Lindsay Kelley, "Cooking and Eating across Species: Natalie Jeremijenko's
   Cross(x) Species Adventure Club," in The Taste of Art: Cooking, Food, and Counterculture in Contemporary
   Practices, ed. Silvia Bottinelli and Margherita d'Ayala Valva (Arkansas, 2017), 279-292.
- Presentation article: Joanna Marsh, "Fieldwork: A Conversation with Mark Dion," American Art 23, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 32-53.

Field Code Changed

# Week 14: Mon. 11/20 Contemporary Materiality: Value and Waste

### Readings:

- Jennifer L. Roberts, "Things: Material Turn, Transnational Turn," American Art 31, no. 2 (Summer 2017): 64-69.
- Group 1 AQUA: Jessica L. Horton and Janet Catherine Berlo, "Beyond the Mirror: Indigenous Ecologies and 'New Materialisms' in Contemporary Art," Third Text 27, no. 1 (January 2013): 17-28.
- Group 2 AQUA: Amanda Boetzkes, "The Plastic Dilemma," chapter 4 in Plastic Capitalism: Contemporary Art and the Drive to Waste (MIT, 2019), 177-185, 193-209.
- Group 3 AQUA: Bridget R. Cooks, "The Desert as Black Mythology," in The Invention of the American
  Desert: Art, Land, and the Politics of Environment, ed. Lyle Massey and James Nisbet (California, 2021),
  167-184.
- Presentation article: Mark B. Feldman, "Inside the Sanitation System: Mierle Ukeles, Urban Ecology, and the Social Circulation of Garbage," *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* 10/11 (Spring/Fall 2009): 42-56

### Week 15: Mon. 11/27 Futures: Catastrophe and Resilience

- Donna Haraway and Martha Kenney, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulhucene," in Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies, ed. Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin (Open Humanities, 2015), 255-270.
- Group 1 AQUA: Janine Randerson, "Weather Materialized: Ice as Medium," chapter 7 in Weather as Medium: Toward a Meteorological Art (MIT, 2018), 137-146, 151-156.
- Group 2 AQUA: Brandon Ballengée, "Some Working Notes on Searching for the Ghosts of the Gulf," in Plastic Ocean: Art and Science Responses to Marine Pollution, ed. Ingeborg Reichle (de Gruyter, 2021), 115-133
- Group 3 AQUA: Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Aftermath: Two Queer Artists Respond to Nuclear Spaces," in Critical Landscapes: Art, Space, Politics, ed. Emily Eliza Scott and Kirsten Swenson (California, 2015), 77-92.
- Presentation article: Wolfgang Welsch, "Art Addressing the Anthropocene," Contemporary Aesthetics 18 (2020): https://digitalcommons.risd.edu/liberalarts\_contempaesthetics/vol18/iss1/16/

<u>Finals Week:</u> Mon. 12/4 Final Project due by 11:59 PM