

ARTH 472 001/ARTH 599 003/WMST 300 003 Frida Kahlo

Wednesdays 4:30-7:10

Classroom: East Building 134

Professor: Michele Greet

Email: mgreet@gmu.edu

Phone: 703-993-1250 (message only)

Office: Horizon Hall 3141

Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:00-4:00 or by appointment

Course Description: Frida Kahlo is one of the most famous artists in the world. Her life has been made into a popular film and her paintings reproduced on T-shirts and trinkets sold far beyond her native Mexico. While her painful personal story is well-known, study of her creative process and the cultural contexts in which she painted tell us a much richer story. In this seminar we will engage in a deep exploration of the paintings Frida Kahlo created between the 1920s and the 1950s in Mexico, the United States, and Paris. We will examine her work from every angle, employing formal and stylistic analysis, iconographic and biographic interpretation, historical context, feminist approaches, historiography, and contemporary reception to arrive at a much fuller understanding of her many contributions to 20th-century art.

Course Format: This class will consist of seminar-style discussions of assigned readings and critical assessment of the readings led by graduate students. Written assignments will complement in class discussions.

Objectives:

- To study Frida Kahlo's paintings using diverse methodologies
- To understand how historical and cultural contexts influence how Kahlo's art is interpreted
- To perform specialized research using the ideas discussed in class and to convey the results your research as a class presentation and research paper

Writing Intensive requirement (ARTH 472):

This course fulfills all/in part the Writing Intensive requirement in the Art History undergraduate major. It does so through 3 formal analysis assignments (+/- 250 words each) and weekly posts to the discussion board (to total about 1500 to 2000 words) and the 2000 to 2500-word research paper. The research paper will be completed through a draft/feedback/revision process.

Research and Scholarship Intensive Course (ARTH 472):

This class is designated as a Research and Scholarship Intensive Course, which means that students are given the opportunity to actively participate in the process of scholarship and will make a significant contribution to the creation of a disciplinary-appropriate product.

In this RS course, students will:

- Engage in scholarly inquiry by reading and assessing primary and secondary art historical sources as well as assessing visual sources.
- Perform specialized research resulting in an original scholarly paper.
- Communicate knowledge from an original scholarly project in an oral presentation.

Course Requirements:

Undergraduates:

- **Readings:** Complete all reading **before** the class. If a reading is listed under Sept. 1, for example, it should be completed **before** class on the 1st.
- **Attendance/Participation:** (15% of your grade) Participation refers to both the content of your verbal contributions as well as your attention and response to others' comments. The GMU catalogue reads: "**Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register...instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as *de facto* evidence of non-participation.**" To get an A for participation you need to actually contribute to most of the class discussions.
- **Formal Analysis:** (15% of your grade) 3 times throughout the semester you will write and present a +/- 250 word formal analysis of an assigned painting. Specific instructions posted on blackboard. The formal analysis will be presented at the beginning of the class assigned.
- **Discussion board:** (30% of your grade) Specific instructions posted on blackboard. **You must complete at least 7 out of 10 possible response papers.**
- **Presentation:** (10% of your grade) 20-minute presentation of your research topic to be followed by class discussion. The issues raised in the discussion following your presentation should inform the final revisions to your research paper.
- **Final Research Paper:** (30% of your grade) 8-10 page research paper with footnotes, bibliography and illustrations. Assignment posted on blackboard. **You will be required to turn in a draft of your paper for review.**

Graduate Students:

- **Readings:** Complete all reading **before** the class. If a reading is listed under September 1, for example, it should be completed **before** class on the 1st.

- **Attendance/Participation:** (5% of your grade) Participation refers to both the content of your verbal contributions as well as your attention and response to others' comments. The GMU catalogue reads: **"Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register...instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as *de facto* evidence of non-participation."** To get an A for participation you need to actually contribute to most of the class discussions.
- **Formal Analysis:** (15% of your grade) 3 times throughout the semester you will write and present a formal analysis of +/- 250 words on an assigned painting. Specific instructions posted on blackboard. The formal analysis will be presented at the beginning of the class assigned.
- **Lead discussion:** (10% of your grade) Each graduate student will be required to lead a discussion of the assigned readings in **three** classes. Leading the discussion entails presenting a clear and concise summary of key arguments in one of the assigned articles (choose one of the more substantive articles and be prepared to explain why you chose the article) and preparing 3-4 questions for discussion based on or in response to **all** of the readings. The questions should not require a yes/no answer, but rather provoke thoughtful response.
- **Discussion board:** (30% of your grade) Specific instructions posted on blackboard. **You must complete at least 8 out of 10 possible response papers.**
- **Presentation:** (10% of your grade) 20-minute presentation of your research topic to be followed by class discussion (Powerpoint or Prezi). The issues raised in the discussion following your presentation should inform the final revisions to your research paper.
- **Final Research Paper:** (30% of your grade) 15-18 page research paper with footnotes, bibliography and illustrations. Assignment posted on blackboard.

Grading Scale

A+ (97-100)	A (93-96.5)	A- (90-92.5)	Excellent performance
B+ (87-89.5)	B (83-86.5)	B- (80-82.5)	Satisfactory to very good
C+ (77-79.5)	C (73-76.5)	C- (70-72.5)	Passing
D (60-69.5)		Unsatisfactory pass undergraduate/failing graduate	
F (<60)		Failing	

Policies:

- Students are responsible for all material covered in class (announcements, lectures, discussions) whether you are present or not.
- Late assignments are not acceptable. Any work turned in late without a valid written excuse (i.e. doctor’s note) will be graded down one grade per class late. If an assignment is not turned in by the last day of class you will be given a 0 for that assignment. If you are having difficulty completing an assignment please see me well before the assignment is due. If I am aware of your circumstances I am more than willing to work with you.
- Make-up presentations or extensions will be granted only in the case of documented emergencies.
- GMU operates with an **Honor Code**. It is clearly defined in the catalogue (<https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/full-honor-code-document/>) **Plagiarism** (presenting someone else’s ideas or words as your own without proper acknowledgement) violates the Honor Code. I will notify the Honor Committee concerning possible infractions.
- GMU requires you to activate your GMU e-mail account to receive official campus communications. If you prefer to use another address, you must activate the e-mail forwarder. I will use GMU addresses exclusively.
- Cell phones must be **silenced** during class.
- Accommodations will be made for students with documented disabilities, in accordance with law and university policies. Students requiring accommodations must register with the University’s Disability Resource Center 703-993-2474 and produce documentation. Please do this well **before** the first test or presentation in case alternate arrangements need to be made.
- If English is your second language, I encourage you to turn in a rough draft of your paper at least one week before it is due. If needed I will recommend that you work with the Writing Center. **All final papers must be in good standard English.**

Other important resources:

<https://historyarthistory.gmu.edu/undergraduate/resources-and-support-services>

Important dates:

Aug. 28	Last day to add classes
Sept. 5	Last day to drop classes (100% tuition refund)
Sept. 20	No class; I’m at a conference
Nov. 1	Drafts due (undergraduates)
Nov. 15	Presentations
Nov. 29	Presentations
Dec. 6	Final papers due

Recommended background reading:

Deffebach, Nancy. *María Izquierdo and Frida Kahlo: Challenging Visions in Modern Mexican Art*. Austin: University of Texas, 2015. (Assigned chapters will be on blackboard).

Herrera, Hayden. *Frida, a Biography of Frida Kahlo*. New York: Harper & Row, 1983.

Lecture/Discussion Schedule:

Aug. 23 Introduction

Read (short 5 min. read): Online: Sheena McKenzie, "Queen of the Selfie: The enduring allure of Frida Kahlo," CNN, July 28, 2015:

<http://www.cnn.com/2014/07/28/world/americas/queen-of-the-selfie-the-enduring-allure/>

Aug. 30 Background and Historical Context

Oles, James. "Chapter 7: From Revolution to Renaissance (1920-1934)" in Oles, James. *Art and Architecture in Mexico*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2013, 234-277 (43 pp)-background.

Zamudio-Taylor, Victor. "Frida Kahlo: Mexican Modernist," in Herrera and Carpenter, ed. *Frida Kahlo*. Ex. cat. Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2007, 14-34 (20pp).

Barson, Tanya. "All Art is at Once Surface and Symbol: A Frida Kahlo Glossary," in Dexter, Emma, Tanya Barson, Gannit Ankori, Oriana Baddeley, Raquel Tibol, Cristina Burros. *Frida Kahlo*. Ex. cat. London: Tate, 2005, 55-79 (24pp).

Dexter, Emma. "The Universal Dialectics of Frida Kahlo," in Dexter, Emma, Tanya Barson, Gannit Ankori, Oriana Baddeley, Raquel Tibol, Cristina Burros. *Frida Kahlo*. Ex. cat. London: Tate, 2005, 11-29 (18pp).

Sept. 6 Frida Kahlo and Mexican Identity

Images for formal analysis:

1. Frida Kahlo, *Self Portrait [Time Flies]*, 1929
2. Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait on the Border Line between Mexico and the United States*, 1932
3. Frida Kahlo, *Four Inhabitants of Mexico City*, 1938

Readings:

Oles, James. "At the Café de los Cachuchas: Frida Kahlo in the 1920s." *Hispanic Research Journal* 8.5 (2007): 467–489 (22pp).

Udall, Sharyn R. "Frida Kahlo's Mexican Body: History, Identity, and Artistic Interpretation." *Woman's Art Journal* 24.2 (Autumn 2003–Winter 2004): 10–14 (4pp).

Volk, Steven. "Frida Kahlo Remaps the Nation." *Social Identities* 6.20 (2000): 165–188 (23pp).

Havard, Lucy Ann. "Frida Kahlo, Mexicanidad and Máscaras: The Search for Identity in Postcolonial Mexico." *Romance Studies* 24.3 (November 2006): 241–251 (10pp).

Andersen, Corrine. "Remembrance of an Open Wound: Frida Kahlo and Post-Revolutionary Mexican Identity." *South Atlantic Review* 74.4 (Fall 2009): 119–130 (11pp).

Reyes Palma. "Frida Kahlo: A gift-Wrapped Anti-Stalinist Bomb," in Prignitz-Poda, Helga, Ingrid Brugger, Peter von Becker, et al. *Frida Kahlo: Retrospective*. Munich: Prestel, 2010. pp. 58-65 (7p).

Sept. 13 Feminism and Fridamania

Images for formal analysis:

1. Frida Kahlo, *The Suicide of Dorothy Hale*, 1939
2. Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird*, 1940
3. Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait with Monkeys*, 1943

Readings:

Deffebach, Nancy. "Beyond the Canvas: Izquierdo, Kahlo, and Women's Rights" in Deffebach, Nancy. *María Izquierdo and Frida Kahlo: Challenging Visions in Modern Mexican Art*. Austin: University of Texas, 2015, 163-166 (just parts on Kahlo, second section focuses on Izquierdo) (3pp).

Orenstein, Gloria. "Frida Kahlo: Painting for Miracles." *Feminist Art Journal* 2 (Fall 1973): 7–9 (2pp)-early feminist writing on Kahlo.

Tully, Judd. "The Kahlo Cult." *ArtNews* (April 1994): 126–133 (7pp).

Baddeley, Oriana. "'Her Dress Hangs Here': De-frocking the Kahlo Cult." *Oxford Art Journal* 14.1 (1991): 165–189 (24pp).

Borsa, Joan. "Frida Kahlo: Marginalization and the Critical Female Subject." *Third Text* 12 (1990): 21–40 (19pp).

Lindauer, Margaret. "Introduction: Rereading Frida Kahlo" and "Fetishizing Frida"
Lindauer, Margaret. *Devouring Frida: The Art History and Popular Celebrity of Frida Kahlo*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999, 1-12 and 150-179 (12+29pp).

Kinsella, Tina. "Colonising Kahlo: Frida Kahlo and the Transcultural Encounter." In *Transcultural Encounters amongst Women: Redrawing Boundaries in Hispanic and Lusophone Art, Literature, and Film*. Edited by Patricia O'Byrne, Gabrielle Carty, and Niamh Thornton. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2010, 3–19 (16pp).

Sept. 20 No class, I'm at a conference

Watch: Taymor, Julie, dir. *Frida Kahlo*. Santa Monica, CA: Miramax Films, 2002.
<https://digitalcampus.swankmp.net/gmu277629/watch/DD9BA5BA77AC3C98>

Also available on Amazon prime and Apple TV for rent for under \$4.00
or through the library Media – DVDs: PN1997 .F749 2003

*Be prepared to discuss next class

Sept. 27 Frida Kahlo and Surrealism

Images for formal analysis:

1. Frida Kahlo, *My Nurse and I*, 1937
2. Frida Kahlo, *What the Water Gave Me*, 1938
3. Frida Kahlo, *The Two Fridas*, 1939

Readings:

Ades, Dawn. "Surrealism in Latin America." *A Companion to Dada and Surrealism*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2016, 177–196 (19pp)-background.

Breton, Andre. "Frida Kahlo de Rivera." Essay for Kahlo's exhibition, Julien Levy Gallery, New York, November 1938. In Breton, André, Mark Polizzotti, and Simon Watson Taylor. *Surrealism and Painting*. Trans. Simon Watson Taylor. 1st artWorks ed. Boston, MA: MFA Pub., 2002, 141-144 (3pp)-primary source text.

Greet, Michele. "Designated Surrealists: María Izquierdo, Frida Kahlo, and Manuel Álvarez Bravo." In *Transatlantic Encounters : Latin American Artists in Paris Between the Wars*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018, 219-230 (11pp, focus on sections on Kahlo).

Mahon, Alyce. "The Lost Secret: Frida Kahlo and the Surrealist Imaginary." *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas* 5.1–2 (2011): 33–54 (21)

Belnap, Jeffrey. "Disentangling the Strangled Tehuana: The Nationalist Antinomy in Frida Kahlo's 'What the Water Has Given Me'." *Genders* 33 (2001), unpaginated-for alternative interpretation.

Oct. 4 The Body, Psychology, and Pain

Images for formal analysis:

1. Frida Kahlo, *A Few Small Nips*, 1935
2. Frida Kahlo, *The Broken Column*, 1944
3. Frida Kahlo, *Without Hope*, 1945

Readings:

Begun, Henriette, "Frida Kahlo's Medical History," In Solomon Grimberg, ed. *Frida Kahlo: Song of Herself*. London: Merrell, 2008, 114-119 (5pp).

Grimberg, Salomon, "With the Image from the Mirror." In Solomon Grimberg, ed. *Frida Kahlo: Song of Herself*. London: Merrell, 2008, 13-29 (16pp).

Zarzycka, Marta. "'Now I Live on a Painful Planet: Frida Kahlo Revisited.'" *Third Text* 20.1 (2006): 73-84 (11pp).

Chedgoy, "Frida Kahlo's Grotesque Bodies," *Feminist Subjects, Multimedia: Cultural Methodologies*. In Florence, Penny., and Dee. Reynolds. *Feminist Subjects, Multi-Media: Cultural Methodologies*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995, 39-53 (14pp).

Alonso, Leticia Pérez. "Frida Kahlo and the Improper/Unclean: Toward the Condition of Abjection." *Women's Studies* 43 (2014): 407-424 (17pp).

Oct. 11 The Body, Disability, and Medical Imagery

Images for formal analysis:

1. Frida Kahlo, *Henry Ford Hospital*, 1932
2. Frida Kahlo, *My Birth*, 1932
3. Frida Kahlo, *The Tree of Hope*, 1946

Readings:

Lomas, David. "Body Languages: Kahlo and Medical Imagery." In *The Body Imaged: The Human Form and Visual Culture since the Renaissance*. Kathleen Adler and Marcia Pointon eds. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993. 5-19 see also pp. 191-192 (14pp).

Greeley, Robin Adele. "Disability, Gender and National Identity in the Painting of Frida Kahlo." In *Gendering Disability*. Bonnie G. Smith and Beth Hutchinson eds.. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004. 216-233 (17pp).

Zetterman, Eva. "Frida Kahlo's Abortions: With Reflections from a Gender Perspective on Sexual Education in Mexico." *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* 75.4 (2006): 230–243 (13pp).

Budrys, "Frida Kahlo's Neurological Deficits and Her Art," *Progress in Brain Research*, Volume 203 (2013): 241-254 (13pp).

Oct. 18 Self-Fashioning: Gender

Images for formal analysis:

1. Frida Kahlo, *Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera*, 1931
2. Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*, 1940
3. Frida Kahlo, *The Love Embrace of the Universe, the Earth (Mexico) Diego, I and Señor Xolotl*, 1949

Readings:

Wilton, Tamsin. "Frida Kahlo." In *The Queer Encyclopedia of the Visual Arts*. Edited by Claude J. Summers, San Francisco: Cleis, 2004, 197–199 (3pp).

Cocks, Neil. "On Frida Kahlo's Moustache: A Reading of Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair and Its Criticism." In *The Last Taboo: Women and Body Hair*. Edited by Karin Lesnik-Oberstein. Manchester, UK: Manchester University, 2006, 191–208 (17pp).

Roberts, Jodi, and Frida. Kahlo. *Frida Kahlo: Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2019. (45pp).

Nelson, Barbara. "Defusing the Bomb (Shell): Gender Issues, Popular Culture and Frida Kahlo." *Journal of Research in Gender Studies* 3.1 (2013): 108–118.(10pp)

Oct. 25 Self-Fashioning: Wardrobe

Images for formal analysis:

1. Frida Kahlo, *My Dress Hangs There*, New York, 1933
2. Frida Kahlo, *Memory or The Heart*, 1937
3. Frida Kahlo, *Self-Portrait as a Tehuana (Diego in my Thoughts)*, 1943

Readings:

Block, Rebecca and Lynda Hoffman-Jeep. "Fashioning National Identity: Frida Kahlo in 'Gringolandia'," *Woman's Art Journal* 19, no. 2 (1998-1999), 8-12 (4pp).

Aragón, Alba F. "Uninhabited Dresses: Frida Kahlo, from Icon of Mexico to Fashion Muse." *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 18.5 (November 2014): 517–549 (32pp).

Chassen-Lopez, Francie. "The Traje de Tehuana as National Icon: Gender, Ethnicity and Fashion in Mexico." *The Americas*, 71: 2, Oct. 2014: 281-314-have (33pp).

Sutherland, Camilla, "Indigenismo and the Limits Of Cultural Appropriation Frida Kahlo and Marina Núñez del Prado," *Angelaki*, 27:3-4, 2022, 75-90, (only read 75-82; skim through Nunez del Prado section for conclusions) (7pp).

Reference only: Rosenzweig, Denise, and Magdalena Rosenzweig, eds. *Self-portrait in a Velvet Dress: Frida's Wardrobe*. San Francisco: Chronicle, 2008.

**Nov. 1 Religious Iconography: Mesoamerican, Colonial, Catholic, and Jewish sources
Drafts Due: undergraduates only**

Images for formal analysis:

1. Frida Kahlo, *My Grandparents, My Parents, and I (Family Tree)*, 1936
2. Frida Kahlo, *Moses (The Birth of the Hero)*, 1945
3. Frida Kahlo, *Wounded Deer*, 1946

Readings:

Deffebach, Nancy. "Revitalizing the Past: Precolumbian Figures from West Mexico in Kahlo's Paintings," In Deffebach, Nancy. *María Izquierdo and Frida Kahlo: Challenging Visions in Modern Mexican Art*. Austin: University of Texas, 2015, 69-86 (17pp).

Comisarenco, Dina. "Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, Tlazoteotl." *Woman's Art Journal* 17.1 (Spring–Summer 1996): 14–21 (7pp).

Deffebach, Nancy. "Saints and Goddesses: Kahlo's Appropriations of Religious Iconography in Her Self-Portraits." In Deffebach, Nancy. *María Izquierdo and Frida Kahlo: Challenging Visions in Modern Mexican Art*. Austin: University of Texas, 2015, 51-66 (15pp).

Castro-Sethness, Maria. "Frida Kahlo's Spiritual World: The Influence of Mexican Retablo and Ex-voto Paintings on Her Art." *Woman's Art Journal* 25.2 (Fall 2004–Winter 2005): 21–24 (3pp).

Moriuchi, Mey-Yen, "Casta, Costumbrismo, Kahlo," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 95: 7, Jan. 7, 2018, 767-782 (15pp).

Ankori, Gannit. "Moses, Freud, and Frida Kahlo." In *Condition Judaica: New Perspectives on Freud's Moses and Monotheism*. Vol. 60. Edited by Ruth Ginsburg and Ilana Pardes, Munich: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2012, 135–148 (13pp).

Nov. 8 Still Lives and Botanical Imagery

Images for formal analysis:

1. Frida Kahlo, *Luther Burbank*, 1931
2. Frida Kahlo, *The Young Dimas Rosas Deceased at Age Three*, 1937
3. Frida Kahlo, *Bride Frightened at Seeing Life Opened*, 1943

Readings:

Deffebach, Nancy. "Picantes pero sabrosas: Kahlo's Still-Life Paintings and Related Images." In Deffebach, Nancy. *María Izquierdo and Frida Kahlo: Challenging Visions in Modern Mexican Art*. Austin: University of Texas, 2015, 135-148 (13pp).

Hoover Giese, Lucretia. "A Rare Crossing: Frida Kahlo and Luther Burbank." *American Art* 15.1 (2001): 53-73 (20pp).

Zavala, Adriana, "Frida Kahlo: Art, Garden, Life." In Zavala, Adriana, Mia D'Avanza, Joanna L. Groarke, et al. *Frida Kahlo's Garden*. Munich: Del Monico, 2015, 15-39 (24pp).

Reference only: Grimberg, Salomon. *Frida Kahlo: The Still Lifes*. New York: Merrell, 2008.

Nov. 15 presentations

Nov. 29 presentations

Dec. 6 **Final paper due**