

Indigenous Arts of the US and Canada

ARTH 375

Spring 2024

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Office Hours: Visit <https://gmucampus.eab.com/pal/k-OKVShxt5> to make an appointment.

This is a fully online asynchronous course hosted on the Blackboard (BB) platform

Course Information

3 credit hrs. Explores the arts of Indigenous peoples in the areas that are today the United States and Canada, from the pre-contact era to the present. Arts are discussed in relation to their cultural, regional, and historical contexts. *Mason Core: Arts. An elective for the Native American and Indigenous Studies minor.*

Description

This course examines the arts of American Indian, Alaska Native, and First Nations peoples in historical context. Organized both chronologically and geographically, the class will examine the visual arts of select Indigenous groups from the areas that loosely correspond to the present-day nations of the United States and Canada. The regions studied include the Arctic, Northwest Coast, Far West, Southwest, Central Plains, Great Lakes, and Northeast/Mid-Atlantic. Through examination of a wide variety of visual practices including painting, pottery, weaving and textiles, personal adornment, performance, and architecture, we will examine issues of class, status, gender, tribal identity, cosmology, and intercultural encounter within the arts of Indigenous peoples. Chronologically the course ranges from pre-contact arts to twentieth and twenty-first century art, as we examine how historical traditions merge with cutting-edge practices.

Mason Core

This course satisfies the Arts requirement in Mason Core. See the Mason Core webpage for the category learning outcomes: <https://masoncore.gmu.edu/arts-2/>

Goals

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

- discuss Native artworks using the appropriate academic vocabulary and in a way that is sensitive, specific, and knowledgeable
- recognize and classify works of art from the Arctic, Northwest Coast, Far West, Southwest, Central Plains, Great Lakes, and Northeast/Mid-Atlantic regions
- describe materials and techniques used by Indigenous artists
- interpret the religious, cultural, gendered, and/or political meanings of Indigenous arts

Required Textbook

Janet Catherine Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, *Native North American Art*, **2nd edition** (Oxford University Press, 2015). The second edition contains a lot of new information and is our preferred text. Page numbers in the course calendar are also correlated to this edition.

One physical copy is available on 2-hour reserve at Fenwick Library. Unfortunately the library does not have a digital license for this textbook, so it may be best to purchase a copy.

Class Communication

The best way to reach me is by email at vschulma@gmu.edu. Please allow up to 48 hours for a response. I will send important reminders to your GMU email, so be sure you check that account or have your mail forwarded to an account you check regularly.

Course Policies and Procedures

Academic Honesty

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.” 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 <https://oai.gmu.edu> (Office of Academic Integrity).

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/alterd by another person. The use of such text without proper attribution is a violation of academic integrity.

Important GMU Administrative Dates

Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes:

Last day to add: Mon. 1/23

Last day to drop with 100% refund: Tues. 1/30

Last day to drop with 50% refund: Tues. 2/6

Unrestricted withdrawal: Wed. 2/7 – Tues. 2/20

Selective withdrawal: Wed. 2/21 – Mon. 3/25

Special Considerations for Online Learning

Time Commitment

Students are expected to complete readings, watch lecture videos, and complete all assignments, as outlined below. Expect to spend 4-6 hours per week on this course.

Technology Requirements

Most of this hardware and software now comes pre-installed on computers and some mobile devices. At a minimum, you will need an internet connection and a computer or mobile device with:

- a recent version of Chrome, Edge, Safari, or Firefox
- Microsoft Office (free download from GMU)
- Adobe Reader or Preview
- speakers/headphone jack
- 2FA enrollment for library, email, and Blackboard access

For further information, see <https://masononline.gmu.edu/what-technologies-do-i-need/>

Technical Support

Blackboard troubleshooting: https://help.blackboard.com/Filter/Student/College_or_University

Mason IT Support: support@gmu.edu or call 703-993-8870 during these hours:

- Monday – Thursday: 8 am – 9 pm
- Friday 8 am – 5 pm
- Sunday 1 pm – 9 pm

Intellectual Property

Do not download (except for personal use/studying), distribute, or repost any course material posted by me or any other member of the course.

Course Grading and Assignments

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

Six unit quizzes	60%
Weekly discussion board participation	20%
Visual analysis paper	10%
Ethics paper	10%

Unit quizzes: Quizzes are open-note and consist of short answer and multiple choice questions about key terms and images. Weekly note-taking sheets will prepare you to study the terms and images you need to know. Quizzes will take place at the end of each unit. They will open on a Thursday and close at 11:59 PM on the following Sunday; once you start a quiz you will have 75 minutes to complete it.

Weekly discussion board participation: This is where I will assess your participation as if you were in an in-person class. You are expected to be active and engaged throughout the semester. Discussion prompts will take a different form each week. Their goal is to reinforce material discussed in the lecture and to give you a chance to engage with that material in a more involved way, to cement your learning.

New weekly modules, including lecture videos and discussion board prompts, will open each Sunday at 11:59 PM. You will have until 11:59 PM on Thursday to:

- 1) Submit an initial post

Then, you will have until 11:59 PM the following Sunday to:

- 2) Read other students' responses, and
- 3) Respond to their posts

Further information about the procedure for posting to discussion boards and about the grading policies for them are on BB. Late discussion board posts are not accepted.

Visual analysis paper: A 3-4 page (double spaced) essay in which you choose any artwork or item that we have covered in the course. You will analyze its visual characteristics and historical or cultural contexts. Full instructions and a rubric are on BB. This paper is due on Sunday, March 17, at 11:59 PM.

Ethics paper: A 3-4 page (double spaced) essay in which you respond to a case study based on recent news stories about Indigenous art and artifacts. You will need to use the knowledge you have gained in the course to argue about the best solution to the issue. (I will give three options to pick from.) Full instructions and a rubric are on BB. This paper is due on Sunday, April 21, at 11:59 PM.

Submitting Written Work

All written work must be submitted to BB. I will not accept work that is emailed or sent as a link to Sharepoint, Google, or online hosting services. Files must be formatted as .doc, .docx, or .pdf. It is the student's responsibility to make sure submissions are uploaded on time. Due dates are in Eastern Time.

Late Work

Late papers will be penalized 5 points for each 24 hours past the due date. After one week, papers are considered missing and will become a zero. Essay extensions must be requested in writing at least four business days before the due date. Late discussion board posts are not accepted.

Missed Quizzes

If you have a legitimate reason why you could not complete a quiz during its open window, please contact me ASAP with documentation so I can re-open the quiz for you. This should be a rare occurrence. Quizzes close on Sundays at 11:59 PM; if you miss a quiz and don't contact me by close of business (5 PM) on that Tuesday, the quiz will become an automatic zero.

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 <https://ds.gmu.edu>, email ods@gmu.edu 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.

Because this is a fully-online class, I have to code each student's testing accommodations individually in BB. Please give me as much lead time as possible when requesting testing accommodations.

LGBTQ+ Resources

While not a major topic of this course, this syllabus includes 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." <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 images made by creators from diverse backgrounds in 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 <https://ccee.gmu.edu>

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. <https://caps.gmu.edu>

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 chssdean@gmu.edu.

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.

Land Acknowledgement

Land acknowledgement is a starting point to recognize the history of settler colonialism. It does not place blame or shame on contemporary individuals; rather, it recognizes the historical and ongoing processes of displacement that have shaped the modern nations of the US and Canada. Beyond land acknowledgements, we should commit to include and support Indigenous communities in our work.

I recognize my role as a settler, and at the place GMU occupies, I give greetings and thanksgivings

- to the Potomac River life sources,
- to the Doeg ancestors, who Virginia annihilated in violent campaigns while ripping their lands apart with the brutal system of African American enslavement
- to the recognized Virginia tribes who have lovingly stewarded these lands for millennia including the Rappahannock, Pamunkey, Upper Mattaponi, Chickahominy, Eastern Chickahominy, Nansemond, Monacan, Mattaponi, Patawomeck, and Nottaway, past, present, and future, and
- to the Piscataway tribes, who have lived on both sides of the river from time immemorial.

A Glossary of Terms

This glossary is intended to help you feel more confident in your discussion board posts.

Indigenous/Native: These terms refer to the earliest known inhabitants of a region. They are used throughout the world and are not specific to North America. They should usually be used as adjectives (“Indigenous people”; “Native arts”) rather than nouns (“the natives”). In Canada, the term Aboriginal is also used in a similar way. I choose to capitalize these terms, but this is a personal preference.

Native American/American Indian/Indian: In the United States, these are all acceptable terms to refer to the Indigenous peoples of the lower 48 states, excluding Alaska and Hawai‘i. They can be used as adjectives (“Indian leaders”) or as nouns (“Most Native Americans live in cities”).

Alaska Native: This term refers to the Indigenous peoples of Alaska, encompassing several ethnic groups and linguistic families. Almost 40% of federally-recognized tribal entities are in Alaska.

First Nations: This term refers to people of Indigenous heritage who hold formal standing under Canadian law. In Canada, it is preferred over “Indian” or “Native American.” Canada recognizes two additional Indigenous groups, the Inuit and the Métis, that it does not define as First Nations.

tribe/nation/band: If you have taken an anthropology class, you might know these terms have distinct anthropological meanings relating to social organization and leadership structure. However, in US Indian policy, they are mostly interchangeable and refer to an Indigenous group that has been granted legal recognition and autonomy in certain areas of governance. If discussing a specific governing body, use the term they prefer: for example, “Navajo Nation” or “Hopi Tribe.”

white/Euro-American: These terms refer to settlers of European descent. I usually use “Euro-American” since not all Euro-American populations were historically considered “white” in the US.

Words to Avoid

primitive: In many fields, “primitive” just means “not complex.” However, historically it was used to imply that Indigenous societies are backwards and was a justification for policies of extermination, removal, and forced assimilation.

savage/savages: This term was used to characterize Native people as brutal, violent, and ignorant.

tribal: It’s fine to use this term when referring to something or someone specific (“a group of tribal leaders met with President Biden today”), but don’t use it as a synonym for “exotic” or as a generic word to refer to Indian life.

Course Calendar

NNAA refers to our textbook: Berlo and Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 2nd ed. (2015).

Several other short readings are provided as PDFs or links on BB.

Dates	Topics	Reading	Turn In/DO
Unit 0: 1/15 – 1/21	Course Policies and Expectations, Introduction	Go over syllabus/BB site <i>NNAA</i> , 3-41	Discussion board post 1 due Thurs. 1/18 at 11:59 PM Response to peers due on Sun. 1/21 at 11:59 PM
Unit One: The Southwest			
Unit 1.1: 1/22 – 1/28	The Ancient Southwest	<i>NNAA</i> , 45-58 Donna Yates, “Mimbres Pottery”	Discussion board post 2 due Thurs. 1/25 at 11:59 PM Response to peers due on Sun. 1/28 at 11:59 PM
Unit 1.2: 1/29 – 2/4	The Modern Southwest	<i>NNAA</i> , 58-83	Unit 1 Quiz open from 12 AM on Thurs. 2/1 through 11:59 PM on Sun. 2/4 Discussion board post 3 due Thurs. 2/1 at 11:59 PM Response to peers due on Sun. 2/4 at 11:59 PM
Unit Two: The Eastern Woodlands, Northeast, and Great Lakes			
Unit 2.1: 2/5 – 2/11	The Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys	<i>NNAA</i> , 85-98 Angus Chen, “1000 years ago, corn made this society big” Talia Ogliere, “Scant evidence that wood overuse at Cahokia caused local flooding”	Discussion board post 4 due Thurs. 2/8 at 11:59 PM Response to peers due on Sun. 2/11 at 11:59 PM
Unit 2.2: 2/12 – 2/18	Northeast and Great Lakes	<i>NNAA</i> , 103-123	Unit 2 Quiz open from 12 AM on Thurs. 2/15 through 11:59 PM on Sun. 2/18 Discussion board post 5 due Thurs. 2/15 at 11:59 PM Response to peers due on Sun. 2/18 at 11:59 PM
Unit Three: The Great Plains and Far West			

Unit 3.1: 2/19 – 2/25	The Great Plains	NNAA, 125-151	Discussion board post 6 due Thurs. 2/22 at 11:59 PM Response to peers due on Sun. 2/25 at 11:59 PM
Unit 3.2: 2/26 – 3/3	The Far West and California; The “White” Image of Native Americans	NNAA, 151-163	Unit 3 Quiz open from 12 AM on Thurs. 2/29 through 11:59 PM on Sun. 3/3 Discussion board post 7 due Thurs. 2/29 at 11:59 PM Response to peers due on Sun. 3/3 at 11:59 PM
<p style="text-align: center;">Spring Break</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Unit Four: The Far North and the Northwest Coast</p>			
Unit 4.1: 3/11 – 3/17	The Boreal Forests and the Arctic	NNAA, 165-203 Bob Weinhold, “Climate Change and Health: A Native Perspective”	Discussion board post 8 due Thurs. 3/14 at 11:59 PM Response to peers due on Sun. 3/17 at 11:59 PM Visual analysis paper due Sun. 3/17 at 11:59 PM
Unit 4.2: 3/18 – 3/24	The Northwest Coast	NNAA, 205-241	Unit 4 Quiz open from 12 AM on Thurs. 3/21 through 11:59 PM on Sun. 3/24 Discussion board post 9 due Thurs. 3/21 at 11:59 PM Response to peers due on Sun. 3/24 at 11:59 PM
<p style="text-align: center;">Unit Five: The 20th Century: Survivance and Modernity</p>			
Unit 5.1: 3/25 – 3/31	Early to Mid 20 th Century Art	NNAA, 243-260, 264- 266, 275-279, 284-291	Discussion board post 10 due Thurs. 3/28 at 11:59 PM Response to peers due on Sun. 3/31 at 11:59 PM
Unit 5.2: 4/1 – 4/7	Postmodern Indians: Art from the 1960s through the 1990s	NNAA, 293-315	Unit 5 Quiz open from 12 AM on Thurs. 4/4 through 11:59 PM on Sun. 4/7 Discussion board post 11 due Thurs. 4/4 at 11:59 PM Response to peers due on Sun. 4/7 at 11:59 PM

Unit Six: The Late 20 th and 21 st Century: New Themes, New Media			
Unit 6.1: 4/8 – 4/14	Curating and Activism; NAGPRA	Kay Walkingstick, “Native American Art in the Postmodern Era” Karen Coody Cooper, “The Long Road to Repatriation”	Discussion board post 12 due Thurs. 4/11 at 11:59 PM Response to peers due on Sun. 4/14 at 11:59 PM
Unit 6.2: 4/15 – 4/21	New Media, Installation, and Performance Art	NNAA, 315-332 Susan Harris, “James Luna: Take a Picture with a Real Indian”	Discussion board post 13 due Thurs. 4/18 at 11:59 PM Response to peers due on Sun. 4/21 at 11:59 PM Ethics paper due Sun. 4/21 at 11:59 PM
Unit 6.3: 4/22 – 4/28	Ecology/Identity	NNAA, 332-340 Robert Enright, “The Tortoise and the Air: An Interview with Brian Jungen”	Unit 6 Quiz open from 12 AM on Thurs. 4/25 through 11:59 PM on Sun. 4/28 Discussion board post 14 due Thurs. 4/25 at 11:59 PM Response to peers due on Sun. 4/28 at 11:59 PM

There is no final exam for this course.