Course Title: Arts & Visual Literacy
Course Number: AAD 251
Credit: 4 credits
Grading Options: Graded for Majors; Optional for all other students

Instructor Contact Information
Michael Bukowski
E-mail: bukowski@uoregon.edu

Course Description
We will attempt to explore hidden assumptions and preconceptions about the visual arts, and lead class participants to more fully experience and interpret visual experience and visual culture. The arts (whatever that means—we will investigate possibilities) rooted in concepts of visual design, will provide a conceptual framework for wider explorations. The goal is to introduce students to a set of conceptual skills for actively shaping and creating meanings in their visual experience, and discovering how other humans express their experience and identity through visual means. The ultimate grounding is not in what we see / look at, but in who we are, what it is to be a Viewer or Maker of visual experience.

We will explore visual culture, look at examples of visual Places, Objects, and Events (POEs—every POE tells a story...many stories, actually), and we will practice interpreting visual experiences (POEs themselves, individual and cultural influences on experience). Students will practice noticing, analyzing and interpreting both 2-D and 3-D worlds of experience, from photos on a screen to physical objects in their (your) everyday world. Along the way we will explore the nature of being a Viewer or Maker of visual experience. We will begin with the commonalities we share as humans (senses, needs, motives, personality, intelligences—the plural of intelligences* is intentional—and more), moving ever outward from self to a plurality of cultural structures and points-of-view. Through an investigation of images and objects--from cave paintings, to consumer products, to the fine arts--this class will examine design and interpretation: structure and meaning, symbols and metaphor, contexts, histories, narrative, models for interpreting, child development & image-making, varieties & definitions of “art” and their many uses, and other aspects of the creation and interpretation of visual culture. Aspects of definition and expectation will also be considered. In short, we will examine: Viewers and Makers, POEs (including Places, Objects, and visual Events), the Context of viewing, History, and the notion of art/Art itself (from historical, cultural, and individual perspectives).

We will also consider / wonder whose voices shape helps determine our interpretations of our visual experiences. We are, as individuals, and members of cultures, with potentially widely disparate points-of-view, here, at this image, this POE. What is it to me? What does it mean to others (gender, race, ethnicity, religion....all the many things that divide us as human beings). What did it mean to the person who created it? How might experience of a POE unite us as human beings in this world of physical existence, verbal/mental constructs, virtual realities, existential/spiritual beliefs...? How is our humanity, in all its rich and glorious diversity, from the individual to the collective voice, identity, issues of society and culture, expressed and encountered through our visual experience of the world?

In the past, this class touched on subjects ranging from Da Vinci’s Mona Lisa to doorlocks made by the Dogon people of Mali to body modifications.

Objectives
1. articulate individual and shared beliefs about visual arts and other visual phenomena;
2. identify and articulate a variety of ideas that shape individual and shared definitions of art and other objects of visual experience;
3. identify multiple social, cultural, psychological, and aesthetic contexts that shape the meanings of visual phenomena;
4. demonstrate ability to understand visual phenomena using interpretation models presented in the course;
5. explore the richness of human diversity and the opportunities and challenges of life in a multicultural society (Multicultural Requirement);
6. gain scholarly insight into the construction of collective identities, the emergence of representative voices from varying social and cultural standpoints, and the effects of prejudice, intolerance, and discrimination (Category B: Identity, Pluralism, and Tolerance); this may include ethnicities, classes, genders, religions, sexual orientations, or other groups whose experiences contribute to cultural pluralism.
Readings

No physical textbook is required. Information will be provided on-line including Blackboard and Web sites for further required reading (think of it as an on-line “textbook”).

See “The Term’s Assignments” in the Assignments folder for a brief overview of all assignments. Instructions for each assignment are also in the Assignments folder.

By the time of the “Exploring an Object” assignment (Assignment #4) you should have finished the “Introduction to Arts and Visual Literacy,” “Viewer & Maker,” and “POEs: Places, Objects, and Events” course documents:

Introduction to Arts and Visual Literacy

- **Viewer & Maker**
  - Child Development with Images
    - Young in Art [.pdf]
  - Human Senses
  - Human Intelligence Domains
  - Human Emotions
  - Needs and Social Motives
  - Personality
  - Biases

- **POEs: Places, Objects, and Events**
  - Design as Text
  - Design: The Elements
  - Design: The Principles [.pdf from The Getty]
  - Design: Judging Design
  - Design Continued [.ppt, .pdf]
  - Practice with the Elements and Principles of Design
  - Dervish Video [Optional]
  - Image Styles
  - Categories of Visual Arts
  - Visual Tactics and Strategies (borrowed from the world of advertising)
  - Moving Pictures
  - Mondrian Series
  - Chair Series
  - Lamp Series
  - Architecture, Landscape, and Space
  - Principles of Landscape Design

READINGS after the “Exploring an Object” assignment (you will be able to make some selections from below):

- **The Question of art / Art**
  - Paintings are art? What are paintings?
  - An Animal Did That: Paintings by Animals
  - History and art
  - Purposes for Designed Images and Objects
  - Philosophical Systems
    - Ideas about Art [.ppt, .pdf]
    - Preface to the Philosophical Systems
    - Overview of Key Issues in the Philosophy of Art
    - Social System – The Institutional Theory of Art
    - A Conservative View of Aesthetics - Michelle Marder Kahmi
    - The Art Instinct – Denis Dutton
    - Form – Clive Bell
    - Formalism After Bell
    - Art as Expressive Emotion
    - Life – John Dewey
- When is Art? – Nelson Goodman
- Visual Culture(s)

» Creativity [if believe this is essential for “art” – be sure to see / reference this Reading]
» Skill [if believe this is essential for “art” – be sure to see / reference this Reading]

» Optional Readings
- Marder Kahmi on Fine Art
- The Institutional Theory of Art – Supplemental
- 8 Common Art Myths
- An Artworld Myth: Rudolf Schwarzkogler
- Visual Arts, a Non-“Fine” Example: Food Styling
- Considering Socks...Visual Arts and Education: Problems in Definition
- A Question of art / Art (Supplemental Resource)
- Core Concepts in Understanding the Human Experience

- Contexts and Histories
  » Aesthetic Systems:
    - Aboriginal Aesthetics
    - African Aesthetics (Sub-Saharan)
    - Balinese Aesthetics
    - Black and Post-Black Aesthetics
    - Chinese Aesthetics (traditional)
    - Christian Aesthetics
    - Feminist Aesthetics
    - Indian Aesthetics
    - Islamic Aesthetics
    - Japanese Aesthetics
  » Symbolism - Introduction
  » Symbolic Systems
    - 17th C. Dutch Still-life Codes
    - Alternative Religion Symbols
    - Christian Symbolism
    - Color Symbolism
    - Death Symbolism
    - First Nations Symbolism
    - Flower and Plant Symbolism
    - Gender-related Symbolism
    - Hate Symbolism
    - Heraldric Symbolism
    - Kwanzaa Symbolism
    - Love Symbolism
    - Mystical and Religious Symbols
      • Optional: Axioms for Reading the Landscape
      • Optional: Front Yard Devotions
      • Optional: A Semiotic Analysis of 3 Beer Ads
      • Optional: Modern Memorial
  » Interpretational Perspectives (critical approaches)
    - History of Images & Design
    - Environmental
    - Functionalist
    - Formalist
    - Behaviorist
    - Psychological and Philosophical
    - Gender and Sexual-orientation
    - Community
    - Social History
    - Socio-cultural
  » The Psychological and Philosophical Perspective (a resource)
No physical textbook is required. Information will be provided on-line including Blackboard and Web sites for further required reading (think of it as an on-line “textbook”).

Requirements

Web-based readings and research.
6 written assignments (142 total points)

Typical Grade Distributions

A = Mastery: Distinctive work in synthesis of thinking and making, idea exploration and expression; extraordinary work reflective of high level investment, discovery, and intellectual engagement and achievement; significant personal progress.

B = Success: Well-executed idea exploration and expression reflective of genuine engagement, achievement, and basic comprehension; successful work reflective of strong investment in course concepts and objectives, frequent and thoughtful participation; evidence of personal progress.

C = Competent: Success in meeting minimum course requirements showing adequate investment discovery, and intellectual engagement and achievement; competent, complete work with most assignments and work meets basic objectives, satisfactory grasp of material and participation in course; made some personal growth.

D = Below Average: Course concepts poorly understood and/or articulated, failure to engage with the minimum requirements, lack of sustained engagement in the learning process and intellectual growth; indicates significant problems in more than one area of performance for the course.

F = Inadequate: Does not meet deadlines and basic course commitments; demonstrates an overall lack of academic discipline, intellectual focus, and/or personal growth; indicates either a lack of basic understanding of the material, sustained lack of engagement in the learning process, and/or negative forms of engagement with the course materials and the learning community (e.g. plagiarism, cheating, bullying).

Grading Scale

(percentages)

A = 94-100 A- = 90-93
B+ = 87-89 B = 84-86 B- = 80-83
C+ = 77-79 C = 74-76 C- = 70-73
D+ = 67-69 D = 64-66 D- = 60-63
F = 59 and below

For P/NP students: Please note that undergraduate students must achieve 70% (or a grade of C- or above) to receive a “P” (passing grade) for a course.

Arts and Administration Program faculty are encouraged to follow a strict Incomplete ("I" grade) policy.

Please note that the highest grade to be assigned in an Arts and Administration Program undergraduate course is an "A", which equates to 4.0 grade points.

Accessible Education

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center (formerly Disability Services) in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu or http://aec.uoregon.edu/students/index.html

Academic Misconduct

 Anyone caught plagiarizing (it is unethical and illegal) or otherwise engaging in Academic Misconduct will receive an "F" for the course and be reported to Student Judicial Affairs as per University policy. (I would much prefer that a student ask for help rather than try to cheat.) Judicial Affairs treats the copying of even a single uncredited sentence (from a book, journal, website…) the same as copying an entire paper, and faculty are required to report incidents.
For further information, see Policies and Guidelines (Student Academic Integrity, Policies and Guidelines for Faculty, Instructors and Students, University of Oregon, Policy on Academic Dishonesty).

Note: Instructor retains a copy of every assignment turned in, from every term, on digital file (with backups). Copies are easily searchable. [So please do not turn in an assignment written by another student during an earlier term.]

**Screen Appearance**

Documents are not locked. You may download them and alter their appearance.