

ART 488 Section VA
Visual Culture Syllabus

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:

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Office Hours:

- Appointments by request.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

How does the visual imagery that we are bombarded with on a daily basis influence and manipulate our thinking and our actions—what we eat, what we watch, what we buy, what we believe, and even who we vote for?

This course examines the production and consumption of imagery in an effort to understand how meanings are produced in various historical, political, and cultural contexts, while also questioning what role art-making and human vision plays in our overtly visual, post-industrial society. The class is structured around readings from the textbook and PowerPoint lectures. Students are also responsible for discussing the readings, along with the lectures, through a series of short response essays.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Recognize that the imagery found in our visual culture saturates nearly every aspect of life and is not only found within the realm of the fine arts.
- Formulate an understanding and awareness of what it means to live in a visual culture.
- Develop the capacity to interpret, analyze, and respond to contextually significant imagery in our visual culture.
- Create an active, engaging, and questioning relationship with a multitude of images and media with the purpose of understanding how meanings are produced in different political, cultural, and historical contexts.

COURSE RESOURCES:

Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture

by Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright

Publisher: Oxford University Press, USA; 3rd edition (2018)

ISBN: 9780190265717

Khan Academy: Art History Basics – a great resource containing a glossary of terms, tools for understanding art, and discussions of various materials and techniques

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-history/art-history-basics>

TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS:

- For most units there will be a reading assignment followed by a PowerPoint lecture found on Blackboard.
- Complete each assigned reading and view the lecture before beginning your essay assignment.
- The essay assignments are your personal reflections upon particular images and current subject matter. Specific questions will be posed for each essay.
 - **Essays must be double spaced and formatted with one-inch margins, 12 pt. font size, and Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman typeface.**
- Please note that late assignments **WILL NOT** be accepted.
- Grades will typically be posted within 7 (seven) days after the assignment is due.

EVALUATION AND GRADING:

There are 9 units of study for the 16-week course with essay assignments due on Sundays by midnight CST (with the exception of the last two assignments). Each essay is worth 100 points, with the exception of the final essay (Unit 9), which is worth 200 points—accounting for 1000 total points.

Essays will be graded upon the following:

- originality and clarity of discussion
- personal reflection on the topic / issue of each unit
- followed guidelines
- grammar, punctuation, and spelling

Please submit all essays through SafeAssign on Blackboard.

Grading Scale – 1000 total points for the 16-week course

1000 – 900 = A

899 – 800 = B

799 – 700 = C

699 – 600 = D

599 – 0 = U

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

All assignments must be your own work! Visual and/or written plagiarism will not be tolerated.

Students are encouraged to read FHSU's Academic Honesty Policy, which is found in the University Catalog and online at

https://www.fhsu.edu/academic/provost/handbook/ch_2_academic_honesty/

THE USE OF GENERATIVE AI IS PROHIBITED IN THIS CLASS. IF YOU ARE FOUND TO BE IN VIOLATION OF THIS RULE, YOU WILL RECEIVE A ZERO ON THE ASSIGNMENT.

SPECIAL LEARNING CONDITIONS / ACCOMMODATIONS:

Fort Hays State University, in accordance with The Americans With Disabilities Act, provides assistance and resources for students with disabilities. The Student Accessibility Services office is located within Health and Wellness Services in the Fischli-Wills Center for Student Success, Room 301, 785-628-4401. This is the appropriate office for students, faculty or staff to contact to verify and notify the University of a student's documented disability. After verification of a documented disability, the Student Accessibility Services office will initiate a request for services. Students should contact the instructor within the first two weeks of class if they require special accommodations for test taking, carrying out assignments, or any other need for assistance.

TITLE IX:

FHSU is committed to fostering a safe and productive learning environment. Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex, gender, and gender identity are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. This includes all types of gender and relationship violence, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, domestic and dating violence, and stalking. If you wish to report an incident or have questions about school policies and procedures regarding Title IX issues, please contact Laurie Lerrick, University Compliance Officer and the FHSU Title IX Coordinator, at lelerrick@fhsu.edu or (785) 628-4175.

The Compliance Officer can help connect you to campus and outside resources, discuss all of your reporting options, and assist with any concerns you may have.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES:

- FHSU Tiger Tech: <https://www.fhsu.edu/tigertech/>
- Tebo Library: <http://www.fhsu.edu/library>
- Writing Center: <https://www.fhsu.edu/writingcenter/index>

TIMELINE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

Please note, all assignments will be due by 11:59 pm CST on the due date.

Submit all assignments through SafeAssign on Blackboard.

Grades will typically be posted within a week after the due date.

Unit 1

- **View** Introductory PowerPoint lecture found on Blackboard
- **Read** “Introduction” and “Images, Power and Politics” in text
- **View** Unit 1 PowerPoint lecture found on Blackboard
- **Create** an inventory of the various sorts of visual information, visual and mass media, and visual art forms that you observe in the span of 24 hours. It will be a personal catalog of a day’s visual culture experience (from television, movies, advertising, street signs, photography, art forms [both originals and reproductions], architecture, design, and so on). Your inventory can take the form of a list, a compilation of photographs with captions, a PowerPoint, etc.

Due date: Sunday, January 25th, 2026

Unit 2

- **Read** “Viewers Make Meaning” in text
- **View** Unit 2 PowerPoint lecture found on Blackboard
- **Write** a short essay (approximately 2 pages) discussing the processes of interpretation, engagement, and negotiation in relation to images found on Blackboard for Unit 2

Due date: Sunday, February 8th, 2026

Unit 3

- **Read** “Modernity: Spectatorship, the Gaze, and Power” in text
- **View** Unit 3 PowerPoint lecture found on Blackboard
- **Write** a short essay (approximately 2 pages) discussing the ideal viewer/s of this image (what demographic/s is it aiming to reach?) and how these demographics may view this work differently (image found on Bb for Unit 3)

Due date: Sunday, February 22nd, 2026

Unit 4

- **Read** “Realism and Perspective: From Renaissance Painting to Digital Media” in text
- **View** Unit 4 PowerPoint lecture found on Blackboard
- **Write** a short essay (approximately 2 pages) in which you will find and discuss a famous work of art that has been remade, placed in a new context, or parodied and address the implication this has on the work of art and us as viewers of it; please include the image in your essay
- **Refrain** from using the following artworks for this assignment, as they are highly overused:
 - o *Mona Lisa* and *Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci
 - o *Creation of Adam* by Michelangelo
 - o *Girl with a Pearl Earring* by Johannes Vermeer
 - o *The Scream* by Edvard Munch
 - o *The Great Wave Off Kanagawa* by Hokusai
 - o *Starry Night* by Vincent van Gogh
 - o *American Gothic* by Grant Wood
 - o *The Son of Man* by René Magritte

Due date: Sunday, March 8th, 2026

Unit 5

- **Read** “Visual Technologies, Reproduction, and the Copy” in text
- **View** Unit 5 PowerPoint lecture found on Blackboard
- **Write** a short essay (approximately 2 pages) discussing the idea of art appropriation and how it influences your thinking as a viewer when looking at these images (images found on Bb for Unit 5)

Due date: Sunday, March 22nd, 2026

Unit 6

- **Read** “Brand Culture: The Images and Spaces of Consumption” in text
- **View** Unit 6 PowerPoint lecture found on Blackboard
- **Write** a short essay (approximately 2 pages) addressing the following questions:
 - What kind of culture or sub-culture do you belong to or want to belong to?
 - What sorts of images are associated with this type of culture?

Due date: Sunday, April 5th, 2026

Unit 7

- **Read** “Postmodernism: Irony, Parody, and Pastiche” in text
- **View** Unit 7 PowerPoint lecture found on Blackboard
- **Write** a short essay (approximately 2 pages) addressing the following questions:
 - Does the message being depicted actually resonate with the viewer/consumer when it is the central component of the advertisement?
 - Or does the product or service being sold fade to the background while the social issue takes center stage?
 - Do you buy or not buy certain products based on the social issues used/re-appropriated for advertising purposes?

Due Date: Sunday, April 19th, 2026

Unit 8

- **Read** “Scientific Looking, Looking at Science” in text
- **View** Unit 8 PowerPoint lecture found on Blackboard
- **Write** a short essay (approximately 2 pages) discussing how military and war imagery play a part in scientific, factual, legal, artistic, and/or advertising culture using the Unit 8 images on Blackboard as a guide

Due Date: Sunday, May 3rd, 2026

Unit 9

- **Read** “The Global Flow of Visual Culture” in text
- **View** Unit 9 PowerPoint lecture found on Blackboard
- **Final Assignment:**
 - **Write** a short essay (3-4 pages) addressing the following:
Choose an image that resonates with you. It can be a personal photograph, an advertisement, political poster, billboard sign, or work of fine art—it simply must mean something to you or affect you in some way. Where did you find it? What is

the meaning behind the image you chose? Who and/or what type of culture is it aimed at? Does it convey a specific message? Is it effective? How is it circulated? How does it fit into the culture of 21st century imagery? Please include the image with your essay.

Due date: Friday, May 8th, 2026