

**HNRS122 007**  
**Reading the Arts – Spring 2017**

January 23 – May 17, 2017  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12-1:15pm  
Robinson Hall A109

**Instructor:** Savannah Fetterolf

**E-mail:** sfettero@masonlive.gmu.edu

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:30-11:30am, and by appointment

**Office Location:** Mason Hall D205

“Real museums are places where Time is transformed into Space.”  
- Orhan Pamuk, *The Museum of Innocence* (2009)

**Course Overview**

As a site of education and cultural consumption, the museum serves as a fascinating lens through which to consider the codification, preservation, and display of knowledge. Yet, thinking about the museum as an institution is not enough. Discussions of art and aesthetics, as well as vision and ways of looking, will allow us to consider the ways that new (and not so new) technologies are impacting the traditional spaces of, modes of creating, the ethics of display, and ways of engaging with art and other objects.

Along with readings, this class will include trips to museums. Students should expect to engage in creative activities and writing.

Throughout the course of the semester, students will learn to:

- Understand past, current, and emerging theories associated with the art, visual culture, and museum studies
- Acquire, expand, and deploy a precise conceptual vocabulary appropriate for the analysis of complex visual phenomena
- Apply relevant theoretical perspectives to the exploration of visual culture and its functioning within contemporary societies through written and creative composition

**Academic Integrity**

GMU has a clear Honor Code by which all its students agree to abide:

*To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.*

Therefore, all work you do for this class must be your own and must not have been submitted previously. I expect that every student will perform the tasks set before him/her without the use of information, ideas, and writings from other students, scholars, and sources (whether credible or not). Furthermore, you are expected to properly cite sources in any written work. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

For more information on the University's Honor Code, see <http://honorcode.gmu.edu>.

### **Accommodations**

If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: (1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Services (SUB I, Room 2500; 993-2474; <http://ods.gmu.edu/>) to determine the accommodations you need; and (2) speak with me to plan your accommodation needs, especially regarding exams.

### **Classroom Etiquette**

*Timeliness:* I expect you to be in class consistently and on time. Occasionally all of us run late and sometimes you may have to leave early. In either case, please be inconspicuous, and whenever possible let me know of your plans in advance via e-mail. Repeated tardiness, partial attendance, or multiple unexcused absences will be reflected in your participation grade. In-class work cannot be made up.

*Class Discussion:* This class is a seminar, meaning that everyone should come to class prepared to discuss readings, visuals, etc. Discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas and perspectives.

*Electronics Policy:* Cell phones are to remain off/silenced during class. Laptops are permitted; however, you may not be connected to the Mason wifi during class. If electronics become a major distraction, I reserve the right to ask you to leave the class.

*Communication:* I encourage you to establish open lines of communications with me. Office hours are always open to you as a time/space where you can speak with me about your work, etc. E-mail is also a good form of contact when used appropriately and respectfully. All e-mails must be sent from your GMU e-mail address. In the subject line, please follow this format: HNRS122 – last name.

### **Readings and Blackboard**

All other readings, assignments, a calendar of events, weblinks, etc. are available on our course **Blackboard** located at [blackboard.gmu.edu](http://blackboard.gmu.edu). Login using your GMU email username and password. **Your use of the Blackboard system is mandatory.** Please check our course page for any important announcements from me and any class materials when you are preparing for each class session. If you need help, call ITU support 3-8870 and, if you don't get the answers you need, email [courses@gmu.edu](mailto:courses@gmu.edu).

While I support saving paper, you are required to come to class prepared with any readings due for the day. This means that you must not only access Blackboard for many of the class readings, but also print them out or bring an electronic copy with you. You are expected to reference the readings in our discussions during class.

### **Grading & Assignments**

Here is how your grade (totaling 100%) will be portioned:

Tumblr	30%
Museum Write-ups	30%
Final Project	25%
Discussion Lead	5%
Attendance & Participation	10%

Tumblr (30%): As one component of the course, you are to post weekly (sometimes more frequently!) to our Tumblr blog (<https://hnr122-museums-spring2017.tumblr.com/>). This blog will act as a space for us to assemble and write about images, visual events, or visual objects that you encounter. You will be asked to make two types of posts: 1) Periodically, I will assign specific prompts with due dates; and 2) Weekly posts in which you will be considering the week's readings – a visual accompanied by a paragraph is sufficient. You are expected to contribute to our blog starting in Week 3, posts are due by the start of each Thursday class (your discussion lead post fulfills your weekly reading response).

Your grade for the blog will be based on your continued participation, the quality of your participation, and completion of the assigned tasks. You must have your Tumblr blog established by Thursday, January 26 (our second class).

Museum Write-ups (30%): You will write 3 short (4 page) papers responding to a museum visit. Hard copy due at the beginning of class only. Each paper is worth 10% of your total grade. Detailed instructions will be made available on Bb.

Final Project (25%): Each student will produce a review of a museum exhibition in the DC area. This review will engage with a theory on the visual/museum studies that we have discussed and critically assess an exhibit of your choice (you will have to conduct *some* outside research). This assignment requires you produce a site proposal (5%), write a review essay (15%), and present your findings to the class (5%). Further guidelines, requirements, etc. will be made available on Bb.

Lead discussion (5%): Each student will be required to lead a discussion of the assigned readings in one class. Leading the discussion entails presenting a clear and concise outline of one of the assigned readings and preparing 2-3 questions for discussion based on or in response to the readings. The questions should not elicit a yes/no answer, but rather provoke thoughtful response.

To be eligible to receive full credit, you must do the following: 1) Post the discussion questions along with a visual (image, film clip, etc.) to Tumblr by 10:00am on the day of the presentation; 2) Submit a hard copy of the presentation outline.

*\*\*The discussion lead post "counts" as your Tumblr for the week.\*\**

Attendance & Participation (10%): Attendance is mandatory and grades will suffer if students do not attend class regularly. Tardiness and leaving class early will not be permitted as it disrupts class. Absences are unexcused unless you see me prior to your absence and can provide necessary documentation. In case of absence, it is a good idea to exchange contact information with another classmate so that you can arrange to get information/notes missed in class. I do not post lecture notes on Blackboard or give hard copy of notes. I am, however, happy to meet with students to go over material that they missed or are struggling with.

You will be evaluated at the midterm and the end of the semester based on your active participation in this class. You and your colleagues benefit from your active participation in this learning community. Through class discussions and group/individual assignments, you

will have the opportunity to discover new perspectives and examine ideas that were previously unchallenged. Open discussion depends on the development of trust and safety among participants, as well as risk-taking and effective facilitation. I encourage you to bring to class relevant materials for discussion from other classes, the media, or other learning experiences.

***Grading scale:***

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

***Submitting late work***

*If not handed in at the start of class:* -3 points

*Each day late:* -1/3 letter grade; no work accepted more than 1 week after due date

I will consider requests for extensions in advance of assignment deadlines if they are made in person (preferably during office hours).

## **Tentative Course Schedule**

This is a tentative schedule and subject to change. Check Blackboard frequently for amendments.

## **Unit I: Visual Culture and Looking Critically – Our Theoretical Foundation**

### **Week 1: Introduction**

*Tuesday, January 24*

- Review syllabus and course expectations
- Discussion leader sign-up
- Introduction to Tumblr

*Thursday, January 26 – What is Visual Culture?*

- Mirzeoff, Nicholas. 1998. "What is Visual Culture?" In Nicholas Mirzeoff, ed. *The Visual Culture Reader*, 3-13. London: Routledge.
- Rogoff, Irgit. 1998. "Studying Visual Culture." In Nicholas Mirzeoff, ed. *The Visual Culture Reader*, 14-26. London: Routledge.
  - *Introduction Tumblr posted by the start of class*

### **Week 2: The Act of Looking**

*Tuesday, January 31 – Physical Vision and Socially Constructed Vision*

- Berger, John. "Chapter 1." In *Ways of Seeing*, 7-31. New York: Penguin.
- Listen to Radio Lab's "Seeing in the Dark" (10/22/12):  
<http://www.radiolab.org/story/245482-seeing-dark/>

Thursday, February 2 – *Interpreting What We See*

- Barthes, Roland. 1977. "Rhetorics of the Image," 152-163. Originally published in *Image - Music - Text*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Bamford, Anne. 2003. "The Visual Literacy White Paper."

### Week 3: The Gaze

Tuesday, February 7 – *The Gaze*

- Berger, John. "Chapter 3." In *Ways of Seeing*, 45-64. New York: Penguin.
- Snippets from Freud and Lacan

*Additional reading if interested:*

- Olin, Margaret. 2003. "The Gaze." In Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, eds. *Critical Terms for Art History*, 318-329. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Thursday, February 9 – *The Right to Look*

- Foucault, Michel. 1977. "Panopticism." In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 195-228. New York: Random House.
- Said, Edward. 1978. "Introduction." *Orientalism*, 1-28. New York: Vintage Books.

## Unit II: What is a Museum?

### Week 4: What is a Museum?

Tuesday, February 14 – *Setting a Baseline Definition*

- Dillenburg, Eugene. 2011. "What, if Anything, Is a Museum?" *Exhibitionist* Spring:8-13.
- Weil, Stephen. 2007. "The Museum and the Public." In Sheila Watson, ed. *Museums and Their Communities*, 32-46. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Alpers, Svetlana. 1991. "The Museum as a Way of Seeing." In Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, 25-32. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Review the AAM infographic

Thursday, February 16 – *The Earliest Museums*

- Chapters 3 and 4 in Hooper-Greenhill, Eilean. 1992. *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. London and New York: Routledge.

### Week 5: Museums and their Visitors

Tuesday, February 21 – *Museums as Purveyors of Knowledge*

- Bennett, Tony. 1988. "The Exhibitionary Complex." *New Formations* 4(Spring):73-102.

Thursday, February 23 – *The Visitor Experience*

- Doering, Zahava D. 1999. "Strangers, Guests, or Clients? Visitor Experiences in Museums" Institutional Studies Office, Smithsonian Institution.
- Lindauer, Margaret. 2006. "The Critical Museum Visitor." In J. Marstine, ed. *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction*, 203-225 Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

## Unit III: The Natural History Museum

### Week 6: How to Collect and Display the World Around Us

*Tuesday, February 28 – The Foundations of Natural History Museums*

- Peale, Charles Willson. 2004 [1792]. “To the Citizens of the United States of America.” In Bettinna Messias Carbonell, ed. *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, 129-130. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- Agassiz, Louis. 2004 [1863]. “Letter of 1863 to Mr. Thomas G. Gray.” In Bettinna Messias Carbonell, ed. *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, 131-132. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- Grognet, Fabrice. 2001. “Ethnology: A Science on Display.” *Museum International* 53(1):51-56.
- Selection from Stephen C. Quinn’s *Windows on Nature*

*Thursday, March 2 – Capturing the Natural World*

- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 1991. “Objects of Ethnography.” In Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, 386-444. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

### Week 7: National Museum of Natural History

*Tuesday, March 7 – NO CLASS*

*This gives you some extra time to visit the NMNH and complete the Museum Write-up and Tumblr post (due in class on 3/9). Be sure to read the following before your visit:*

- Read about the [history of the NMNH](#)
- Read about [Fénykövi Elephant](#) and glance at the materials in the [accession folder](#)
- Read about the [African Voices](#) exhibit

*Thursday, March 9*

- Discuss NMNH visit and readings assigned to be completed by March 7
  - *NMNH Tumblr post due before class, Museum Write-up hard copy due at start of class*

*Friday, March 10*

- *Site Proposal for Final Project due to Bb by 11:59pm*

### Week 8: Spring Break – NO CLASS

## Unit IV: The Art Museum

### Week 9: Aesthetics and Art

*Tuesday, March 21 – Art and Aesthetics*

- Williams, Raymond. 1976. “Aesthetics.” In *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, 31-33. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Williams, Raymond. 1976. “Art.” In *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, 40-43. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dissanayake, Ellen. 1990. “What is Art?” and “What Does Art Do for People?” In *What is Art For?*, 34-73. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

- Tolstoy, Leo. 1994. "What is Art?" In Stephen David Ross, ed. *Art and its Significance*, 177-181. Albany: State University of New York Press.
  - *Art vs. not-art Tumblr post due by 10am*

*Additional reading if interested:*

- Preziosi, Donald. 2009. "Aesthetics." In Donald Preziosi, ed. *The Art of Art History*, 55-61. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

*Thursday, March 23 – A Site for Art*

- Alexander, Edward P. and Mary Alexander. 2008. "The Art Museum." In Edward P. Alexander and Mary Alexander, eds. *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*, 23-51. Lanham: AltaMira Press.
- Gilman, Benjamin Ives. 2004 [1909]. "Aims and Principles of the Construction and Management of Museums of Fine Art." In Bettinna Messias Carbonell, ed. *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, 419-429. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- Bataille, Georges. 2004 [1930]. "Museum." In Bettinna Messias Carbonell, ed. *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, 430. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

## **Week 10: A Critical View**

*Tuesday, March 28 – Viewing Art*

- Solso, Robert. L. "Context, Cognition, and Art." In *Cognition and the Visual Arts*, 101-127. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Duncan, Carol. 1991. "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship." In Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, 88-103. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

*Thursday, March 30 – Whose Art?*

- James Clifford, "On Collecting Art and Culture." *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988: 215-251.

## **Week 11: Art in situ**

*Tuesday, April 4 – NO CLASS*

*This gives you some extra time to visit the National Gallery of Art and Hirschhorn as well as complete the Museum Write-up and Tumblr post (due 4/6). Be sure to read the following before your visit:*

- ["About the Gallery"](#) page on the National Gallery of Art of website.
- Read about the [history of the Hirschhorn](#)
- Hooper-Greenhill, Eilean. 2000. "Changing Values in the Art Museum: Rethinking Communication and Learning." *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 6(1):9-31.
- [Kotz](#), Deborah. 2013. "Cure for a Distracted Mind: Stare at a Painting." *Boston Globe*, May 27.

*Thursday, April 6*

- Discuss NGA and Hirschhorn visit and readings assigned to be completed by April 4
  - *NGA & Hirschhorn Tumblr post due before class, Museum Write-up hard copy due at start of class*

## Unit V: Culture on Display

### Week 12: Looking Beyond the “West”

*Tuesday, April 11 – In the Art Museum*

- Davalos, Karen Mary. 1998. “Exhibiting Mestizaje: The Poetics and Experiences of the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum.” In Antonio Rios-Bustamante and Christine Marin, eds. *Latinos in Museums: A Heritage Reclaimed*, 39-66.
- Marzio, Peter C. 2007. “Minorities and Fine-Arts Museums in the United States.” In Sheila Watson, ed. *Museums and Their Communities*, 330-334. Abingdon: Routledge.

*Thursday, April 13 – What do Cultural Museums Offer?*

- Clifford, James. 1997. “Museums as Contact Zones.” In *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, 188-219. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

### Week 13: Giving Voice to the Community

*Tuesday, April 18 – NO CLASS*

*This gives you some extra time to visit the National Museum of the American Indian as well as complete the Museum Write-up and Tumblr post (due 4/6). Be sure to read the following before your visit:*

- Read about the [mission of the NMAI](#)
- Rosoff, Nancy B. 1998. “Integrating Native Views into Museum Procedures: Hope and Practice at the National Museum of the American Indian.” *Museum Anthropology* 22(1):33-42.
- Cobb, Amanda J. 2005. “The National Museum of the American Indian as Cultural Sovereignty.” *American Quarterly* 57(2):485-506.

*Thursday, April 20 – The National Museum of the American Indian*

- Discuss NMAI visit and readings assigned to be completed by April 18
  - *NMAI Tumblr post due before class, Museum Write-up hard copy due at start of class*

### Week 14: Final Thoughts and Presentations

*Tuesday, April 25 – Wrapping Up*

- Boon, James A. 1991. “Why Museums Make Me Sad.” In Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, 255-277. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

*Thursday, April 27 – Presentations*

### Week 15: Presentations

*Tuesday, May 2 – Presentations*

*Thursday, May 4 – Presentations*

**\*\*Final Paper due to Bb by 12:00pm (noon) on Wednesday, May 10\*\***