

# PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE AMERICAN WEST

Honors 122 | Reading the Arts

Spring 2011 | TR 9:00-10:15am and R 10:30-11:20am | Eastern Shore Multipurpose Room

Instructor: Heather Anderson | Enterprise Hall 303 | handers4@gmu.edu

Office hours: By appointment (email me to set up an appointment)

## **Texts (Required):**

- Online Reading Assignments as assigned (please see class schedule for readings)

## **Costs (Required):**

- Printing (standard stuff like readings and papers)
- Art Supplies as needed (paper, adhesives, writing/drawing implements, scissors/x-acto, etc)
- Final board printing and construction costs (16"x 20", color, mounted)
- Final pamphlet printing costs (8.5" x 11" tri-fold, color, at least five copies)
- Sketchbook (8.5"x 11" and at least 80 sheets)

## **Course Description:**

This experimental course is a hybrid, including both a lecture/classroom component and recitation/studio component (students are required to sign up for both sections). The course will take a historical look at photography, including some key moments in landscape photography in the western United States. Specifically, we will look at the work of the geological surveys, transcontinental railroad photographers, Ansel Adams, and the work of the New Topographics artists. Each student in the course will be asked to create an exhibition proposal on a contemporary topic of their choosing. The recitation/design studio portion of the course will be dedicated to learning about design and designing the exhibition proposal and poster. If you have any questions about the course, please email me.

## **Course Objectives:**

During this course students will:

- Develop and demonstrate knowledge of visual art, specifically photography of the American West, and its historical context
- Develop and demonstrate knowledge of 3-4 contemporary visual artists and their historical/artistic context
- Develop and demonstrate knowledge of design language
- Develop and demonstrate research, writing, discussion and presentation skills
- Develop and demonstrate critical thinking skills

## **Readings:**

Students will be given specific reading assignments which they will be expected to have read before class; failure to do so will greatly compromise students' ability to comprehend lecture material and, consequently, to do well on class writings, quizzes, papers and in-class activities.

## **Email Access:**

Be sure to access your GMU account and to have your GMU email forwarded to any other email account you might use. I will only send information about this course to your official GMU email account.

## **Late Work:**

Late work will be accepted, but the grade for the assignment will be dropped one full letter grade for every business day it is late. Work is always due at the beginning of class. If it is not turned in at the beginning of class it is considered one business day late.

## **Attendance:**

Attendance is of utmost importance if you wish to do well in this course. The ability to comprehend, analyze, and summarize lecture material (as well as visual and written material) will be crucial for the creation of critical analysis of the artwork we will review in class. It will not be possible to reconstruct lectures from the assigned readings. Students are expected to come to class prepared to work during in-class studio sessions.

Students are responsible for all information given during class meetings. I recommend that you exchange contact information with a fellow student so that if you need to miss class for some reason you will be able to get an update on due dates and the lecture and discussions for that day. If you do have a medical or family emergency or feel that you are having difficulty keeping up with course requirements please contact me as soon as possible.

## **Participation:**

Participation is a vital part of this course. It is not only part of your grade, but also an important part of the learning experience. Students are expected to come prepared to discuss the courses readings and subjects covered in class with well thought out and examined questions and comments. Students will also be expected to bring materials to class on studio days so that they can work for the entire course period.

**Class Conduct and Course Content:**

This class will include material that some students may find controversial or offensive. If you have concerns about the content of the course please see me during the first two weeks of the semester. If you do not come to see me about your concerns within the first two weeks of the semester I will assume you are comfortable with the course content and are prepared to complete all assignments, do all readings, and attend all lectures as laid out in the syllabus, readings, and course schedule.

Because of the sensitive nature of the course contents it is important that in-class discussions and any work generated for the course be respectful and conducted in a professional manner.

**Honor Code and Academic Honesty:**

When submitting work under your own name, please keep in mind that plagiarism is a violation of the GMU Honor Code. Plagiarism means using words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. If you use another person’s ideas or information you must cite, using standard citation format, all sources that your own writing draws on, either directly or indirectly.

Also note that un-cited sources will constitute plagiarism even if they ended up in your work without your conscious knowledge (for example, you forgot you read the material; you confused your own notes with notes on a source), since part of the scholarly responsibility that comes with using secondary sources is keeping track of which words or ideas were yours and which came from another source.

The George Mason University Honors Code will be followed for this course. Please see the University Catalog for a full description of the Code.

**Disability Accommodations:**

Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. Please contact Disability Services if you require accommodations:

Office of Disability Services  
Student Union Building 1, Room 222  
Phone: 703.993.2474

**Grading:**

**Grade Breakdown:**

- 10% Class Participation
- 10% Quizzes
- 10% In-Class Exercises
- 10% Mid-Term
- 05% Paper Proposal
- 10% Paper, Poster, and Pamphlet Drafts (Design and Content)
- 05% Sketchbook
- 25% Final Paper (Design and Content)
- 15% Presentation (Design and Content)
- Self-Assessment (required to receive final grade)

**Grading Scale:**

A+	100%	
A	93-99%	Given for excellent work that demonstrates a commitment and thorough understanding of course material. Written work has almost no grammatical, citation or structural errors. All requirements for assignment are fulfilled and extra focus has been given to an aspect of the assignment that goes beyond the assignment requirements. For research papers the thesis is clear and appropriate material is cited to support the thesis of the paper. For design work the intended content (concept) is clear and communicated via the design of the visual work (using the design principles covered in class).
A-	90-92%	
B+	87-89%	
B	83-86%	Given for work that demonstrates a commitment and general understanding of course material. Written work has very few grammatical, citation, or structural errors. All requirements for assignment are fulfilled. For research papers thesis is clear and appropriate materials are generally used to support thesis of paper. For design work the intended content (concept) is generally clear and communicated via the design of the visual work (using the design principles covered in class).
B-	80-82%	
C+	77-	

	79%	
C	73-76%	Given for work that demonstrates a general understanding of course material. Written work has grammatical, citation, and/or structural errors. All requirements for assignment are fulfilled. For research papers thesis is mostly clear and appropriate materials are generally used to support thesis of paper. For design work the intended content (concept) is mostly clear and communicated via the design of the visual work (using the design principles covered in class).
C-	70-72%	
D	60-69%	Given for work that does not satisfy the requirements of the assignment. Written work has severe grammatical, citation, and/or structural errors. For research papers thesis is generally unclear and/or appropriate materials not used to support thesis of paper. For design work the intended content (concept) is generally unclear and not communicated via the design of the visual work (using the design principles covered in class).
F	50-59%	Work fails to fulfill the requirements of the assignment or is not complete.

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**\*This schedule is subject to change. Students are responsible for keeping up with any changes announced during class.**

### Tuesday, January 25<sup>th</sup>

Class Introduction and Pre-Test  
Due

### Thursday, January 27<sup>th</sup>

Class Photography: The Beginning  
Introduction to Design Elements  
Due

### Tuesday, February 1<sup>st</sup>

Class Photography: The Beginning  
Due Readings:

- Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Daguerreotype." *Classic Essays in Photography*. (text on Blackboard)
- Baudelaire, Charles. "The Modern Public and Photography." *Classic Essays in Photography*. (text on Blackboard)

Note: Most readings for this course will be available on Blackboard. Do not wait until the last minute to download and/or print the readings. You will be expected to have read the text before class starts even if Blackboard was not working the day of or the day before class.

### Thursday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>

Class Photography: What Happened Next?  
Design Exercise: 2D Design  
Due Bring to Class (in your sketchbook):

- Five examples (images/fabrics/prints/etc.) of an item that successfully uses 2D design elements (point, line, shape, etc) to communicate content/concept. Think about how each element is used to communicate in and of itself and in the context of the other design elements. Write an analysis for each of your five items on why you think the item you have selected successfully 2D design elements to communicate concept.

### Tuesday, February 8<sup>th</sup>

Class Photography: What Happened Next?  
Due Note: Last day to add courses is February 8<sup>th</sup>

### Thursday, February 10<sup>th</sup>

Class Photography and the Western Frontier  
Introduction and Discussion: Semester Project(s)  
How to do: Research in the Arts  
Due Readings:

- Twain, Mark. *Roughing It*. (selected sections, see Blackboard)
- Thoreau, Henry D. *Walden*. (selected sections, see Blackboard)
- Grey, Zane. *Riders of the Purple Sage*. (Chapter I and Chapter VIII, text on Blackboard or available via Google books)

### Tuesday, February 15<sup>th</sup>

Class Photography and the Western Frontier  
Due

### Thursday, February 17<sup>th</sup>

Class	Ansel Adams: Recording the Western Landscape Design Exercise: Color
Due	Bring to Class (in your sketchbook): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five examples (images/fabrics/prints/etc.) of an item that successful uses color to communicate content/concept. Think about color combinations (harmonious/disharmonious), value, focal point, and the cultural meaning of the color used. Write an analysis for each item on why you think the item you have selected successfully uses color to communicate concept.</li> </ul>

**Tuesday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Class	A Changing Landscape: <i>New Topographics</i>
Due	Readings (these can be accessed via Art Full Text (by Wilson) in the library research databases): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Belz, Emily. "Western Expansion." <i>Art New England</i> Aug/Sept. 2002: 18-19.</li> <li>Schuman, Aaron. "Lewis Baltz: The Tract Houses/The Prototype Works/ The New Industrial Parks Near Irvine, California." <i>Aperature</i> Summer 2006: 77-78.</li> <li>Boulanger, Susan. "Accommodating Nature: The Photographs of Frank Gohlke." <i>Art New England</i> Aug/Sept. 2008: 44.</li> </ul>

**Thursday, February 24<sup>th</sup>**

Class	A Changing Landscape: <i>New Topographics</i> Design Exercise: Bringing it together
Due	Bring to Class (in your sketchbook): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five examples (images/fabrics/prints/etc.) of a complete design that you think communicates content clearly. Think about how the entire structure of the design works to convey the concept. Write an analysis for each item on why you think the design you have selected is successful in communicating its concept.</li> </ul> <p>Note: Last day to drop courses is February 25<sup>th</sup></p>

**Tuesday, March 1<sup>st</sup>**

Class	Mid-Term Exam Discussion and Assignment
Due	

**Thursday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Class	Movie Day
Due	

**Tuesday, March 8<sup>th</sup>**

Class	Overflow Day
Due	Mid-Term Exam Due

**Thursday, March 10<sup>th</sup>**

Class	Projects: Content, Research and Design How to: Write about Art
Due	

**Tuesday, March 14<sup>th</sup> –  
March 20<sup>th</sup>**

**Spring Break**

**Tuesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Class	Design Exercise: Practice Makes (Almost) Perfect
Due	

**Thursday, March 24<sup>th</sup>**

Class	Project Proposal and Individual Meetings
Due	Project Proposal

**Tuesday, March 29<sup>th</sup>**

Class Project Proposal and Individual Meetings  
Due Project Proposal

**Thursday, March 31<sup>st</sup>**

Class In-Class Critiques: Project Proposals  
Due "Elevator Speech"

**Tuesday, April 5<sup>th</sup>**

Class Desk Critiques  
• Check in re: project research/content as well as poster/pamphlet design.  
Due Come prepared to work on the following:  
• Project research

**Thursday, April 7<sup>th</sup>**

Class Desk Critiques  
• Check in re: project research/content as well as poster/pamphlet design.  
Due Come prepared to work on the following:  
• Poster/Pamphlet design. Bring to class (in your sketchbook) color, text, and design samples that could influence your poster/pamphlet design. This should fill at least two pages in your notebook. Also bring (not attached to your sketchbook) images of the work of your artists.

**Tuesday, April 12<sup>th</sup>**

Class Desk Critiques  
• Check in re: project research/content as well as poster/pamphlet design.  
Due Come prepared to work on the following:  
• Poster/Pamphlet design or Paper research

**Thursday, April 14<sup>th</sup>**

Class Desk Critiques  
• Check in re: project research/content as well as poster/pamphlet design.  
Due Draft Due (paper)  
Come prepared to work on the following:  
• Poster/Pamphlet design or Paper research

**Tuesday, April 19<sup>th</sup>**

Class In Class Critique  
Due Drafts Due (poster and pamphlet)

**Thursday, April 21<sup>st</sup>**

Class In Class Critique  
Due

**Tuesday, April 26<sup>th</sup>**

Class Desk Critiques  
• Check in re: project research/content as well as poster/pamphlet design.  
Due Come prepared to work on the following:  
• Poster/Pamphlet design or Paper research

**Thursday, April 28<sup>th</sup>**

Class Last Minute Editing and Design  
Post-Test

Due

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**Tuesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>**

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Class    Final Presentations  
Due      Presentation and Pamphlet  
            Sketchbook

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**Thursday, May 5<sup>th</sup>**

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Class    Final Presentations  
Due

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**Thursday, May 12<sup>th</sup>**

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Due      Final Paper (in the Honors College Office by 5pm)