Aesthetics is for me like ornithology must be for the birds.  
—Barnett Newman

We have no art; we do everything the best way we can.  
—Balinese saying

The pattern of the thing precedes the thing.  
—Vladimir Nabokov

The discarding of the superfluous is in itself the first cry of poetry.  
—Joseph Brodsky

If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry.  
—Emily Dickinson

Seeing the world anew, as if it were new, is as old as writing. It’s what all painters are trying to do, to see what’s there, to see it in a way that renew it. It becomes more and more urgent as the planet gets worn flat and forest after forest is slain to print the paper for people’s impressions to be scrawled down on. It becomes harder and harder to be original, to see things with an innocent eye. Innocence is much tied up with it. As the planet gets progressively less innocent, you need a more innocent eye to see it.  
—Martin Amis

The Igbo people say, If you want to see it well, you must not stand in one place. If you’re rooted to a spot, you miss a lot of the grace. So you keep moving, and this is the way I think the world’s stories should be told.  
—Chinua Achebe

...the final evaluation of a play has nothing to do with immediate audience or critical response. The playwright, along with any writer, composer, painter in this society, has got to have a terribly private view of his own value, of his own work. He's got to listen to his own voice primarily. He's got to watch out for fads, for what might be called the critical aesthetics.  
—Edward Albee
They’re going to crucify you for staying the same. If you change, they’re going to crucify you for changing. But staying the same is boring. And change is interesting. So of the two options, I’d rather be crucified for changing.

—Joni Mitchell

Painting isn’t an aesthetic operation; it’s a form of magic designed as a mediator between this strange hostile world and us

—Pablo Picasso

The great vice of Americans is not materialism but a lack of respect for matter.

—W.H. Auden

Art, too, is just a way of living...

—Rainer Maria Rilke

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines Aesthetics as a working method: a means of knowing the world and the self, with its attendant possibilities of living in a richer, fuller, more deeply engaged way. The epigraphs from artists that open this syllabus express aesthetic ideas and raise questions that have been the subject of thinking about Aesthetics for millennia. Artists’ disciplined interest in Aesthetics as a mode of inquiry is the subject of this course. We will examine the ways that contemporary art and artists from a variety of disciplines engage with Aesthetics as Research & Development, using artistic practice as a means of advancing aesthetic knowledge.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

- Lawrence Weschler, *Mr. Wilson’s Cabinet of Wonders: Pronged Ants, Horned Humans, Mice on Toast, And Other Marvels of Jurassic Technology* (Vintage, 1996; or any edition)
- Patti Smith, *Just Kids* (Ecco, 2010; or any edition)
- Other reading assignments as listed on the syllabus
REQUIRED VISUAL MATERIALS

Videos and DVDs assigned to be viewed outside of class are available in the Johnson Center Library or through rental services or online.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

• Class attendance is essential as material will be presented that cannot be replicated outside of class. Visual materials presented in class are not available in the library.
• Cell phones and pagers must be OFF in class.
• All internet devices must be OFF during class.
• Completion of assigned readings and videos, and participation in class discussion indicating familiarity with these materials.
• Participation in case studies. See attached guidelines.
• Should students have to miss class for any reason, they are expected to take initiative in obtaining notes, assignments, and handouts from class partners.
• Class communications will be sent via GMU email. You must activate, maintain, and regularly check your GMU email. You are responsible for notices sent via email.

EVALUATION

• 100% PREPARED participation in all aspects of seminar

Grading Standards:
• A grade of A is given only for superlative work that demonstrates a profound commitment to the course material and demonstrates mastery of its content, and further, that goes on to employ this material as a springboard for independent thought and work.
• A grade of B is given for exceptional work that completely fulfills all the requirements of the course in a conscientious and dedicated manner, and further, that demonstrates mastery of the course content.
• A grade of C is given for work that fulfills all the requirements of the course in a satisfactory manner, but that falls short of demonstrating rigor and mastery. This is the average grade.
• A grade of D is given for work that falls short of being satisfactory in terms of completion and/or engagement.
• A grade of F is given for work that fails to fulfill the requirements of the course as listed above.

An Important Note about Grading: Requirements for this course are not graded numerically; rather I will adhere to the Grading Standards listed above, which assess rigor of thought and mastery of the course content, as demonstrated by your verbal and written work. Class participation and completion of assignments are the minimum requirements for a satisfactory (i.e., C) grade.
MUSEUM/ART EVENTS

The week of April 11 has been set aside for museum visits/art events on your own time (in lieu of classes). You may go to these events at any time that is convenient for you before April 18. Present a response to the Renwick show in class on April 18.

Recommended:
Robert Irwin: All the Rules Will Change, Hirshhorn Museum. opens April 7
http://hirshhorn.si.edu/collection/robert-irwin/#detail=/bio/robert-irwin/&collection=robert-irwin

GUIDELINES FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

NOTE: There are varying comfort levels with speaking extemporaneously in a group. If you are reluctant to speak in class, please challenge yourself to offer oral commentary. Your insights and questions are vital to our collective success.

Class discussion will be structured around the idea of a seminar, i.e., each member of the class is responsible for contributing to discussion of the readings, films, and assignments. (Note: Participation is worth 70% of your final grade.) Each class member is responsible for the success or failure of the discussion. The following guidelines will be followed in class discussion:

• You must bring assigned readings to class, as well as something to write with and on.
• You must come on time and come prepared.
• You must discuss carefully and be prepared to listen as well as to talk.
• Discussion will be grounded in readings and videos, and will remain focused and structured.
• Respect for the opinions of other class members forms the basis of class discussion.
• If, for some reason, you have come to class unprepared, identify yourself as such and listen to the discussion.

Use the following guidelines for class preparation:

• Mark your books when reading to note passages of interest or curiosity or confusion.
• Make a list of questions about the reading, noting relevant page numbers.
• Come to class prepared to discuss the reading and videos in detail, focusing on specific passages from the texts and videos.
• Come prepared with written assignments for each reading, video, or outside assignment.
• After each class, write again about the reading, video, or discussion. Note how the discussion has affected your thinking about the subject.
IMPORTANT NOTE: The grade for class discussion is cumulative, reflecting the quality of your discussion over the course of the semester.

University and School of Art Policies

In accordance with George Mason University policy, turn off all beepers, cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices at the start of class. The instructor of the class will keep his/her cell phone active to assure receipt of any Mason Alerts in a timely fashion; or in the event that the instructor does not have a cell phone, he/she will designate one student to keep a cell phone active to receive such alerts.

Commitment to Diversity

This class will be conducted as an intentionally inclusive community that celebrates diversity and welcomes the participation in the life of the university of faculty, staff and students who reflect the diversity of our plural society. All may feel free to speak and to be heard without fear that the content of the opinions they express will bias the evaluation of their academic performance or hinder their opportunities for participation in class activities. In turn, all are expected to be respectful of each other without regard to race, class, linguistic background, religion, political beliefs, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, veteran’s status, or physical ability.

Statement on Ethics in Teaching and Practicing Art and Design

As professionals responsible for the education of undergraduate and graduate art and design students, the faculty of the School of Art adheres to the ethical standards and practices incorporated in the professional Code of Ethics of our national accreditation organization, The National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD).

Open Studio Hours

SOA teaching studios are open to students for extended periods of time mornings, evenings and weekends whenever classes are not in progress. Policies, procedures and schedules for studio use are established by the SOA studio faculty and are posted in the studios.

ArtsBus - Dates for Spring 2016: February 20; March 19; April 9

ArtsBus Credit

* Each student must have up to 5 AVT 300/Artsbus credits before graduation. For credit to appear on your transcript you must enroll in AVT 300. This also applies to anyone who intends to travel to New York independently, or do the DC Alternate Assignment.
* If you plan/need to go on multiple ArtsBus trips during a semester and need them towards your total requirement, you must enroll in multiple sections of AVT 300. Please go to the ArtsBus website: http://artsbus.gmu.edu "Student Information" for additional, very important information regarding ArtsBus policy.
* Non-AVT majors taking art classes do not need Artsbus credit BUT may need to go on the Artsbus for a class assignment. You can either sign up for AVT 300 or buy a ticket for the bus trip at the Center of the Arts. Alternate trips must be approved by the instructor of the course that is requiring an ArtsBus trip.

Visual Voices Lecture Series Spring 2016

Visual Voices is a year-long series of lectures by artists, art historians and others about contemporary art and art practice. Visual Voices lectures are held on Thursday evenings from 7:20- 9:00 p.m. in Harris Theater: http://soa.gmu.edu/visualvoices

Important Deadlines:

Monday, January 18—Martin Luther King Day, no classes
Tuesday, January 19—First day of classes; last day to submit Domicile Reclassification Application; Payment Due Date; full semester waitlists removed
Monday, January 25—Summer 2016 Graduation Intent available via Patriot Web
Tuesday, January 26—Last day to add classes—all individualized section forms due; last day to drop with no tuition penalty
Tuesday, February 22—Last day to drop with a 33% tuition penalty
Friday, February 19—Final Drop Deadline (67% tuition penalty)
Friday, February 19—Last day to file your Spring 2016 Graduation Intent
Tuesday, March 1—Immunization Record Deadline
Monday, February 15-Friday, March 18—Midterm progress reporting period (100-200 level classes)—grades available via Patriot Web
Monday, February 22-Friday, March 25—Selective Withdrawal Period (undergraduate students only)
Monday, March 7—Sunday, March 13—Spring Break
Friday, March 25—Incomplete work from Fall 2015 due to Instructor
Friday, April 1—Incomplete grade changes from Fall 2015 due to Registrar
Friday, April 29—Dissertation/Thesis Deadlines
Monday, May 2—Last day of classes
Tuesday, May 3—Reading Day
Wednesday, May 4-Wednesday, May 11—Exam Period (beginning at 7 a.m.)
May 14—Commencement and Degree Conferral date

Once the add and drop deadlines have passed, instructors do not have the authority to approve requests from students to add or drop/withdraw late. Requests for late adds (up until the last day of classes) must be made by the student in the SOA office (or the office of the department offering the course), and generally are only approved in the case of a documented university error (such as a
problem with financial aid being processed), LATE ADD fee will apply. Requests for non-selective withdrawals and retroactive adds (adds after the last day of classes) must be approved by the academic dean of the college in which the student’s major is located. For AVT majors, that is the CVPA Office of Academic Affairs, Performing Arts Building A407.

Students with Disabilities and Learning Differences
If you have a diagnosed disability or learning difference and you need academic accommodations, please inform me at the beginning of the semester and contact the Disabilities Resource Center (SUB I room 234, 703-993-2474). You must provide me with a faculty contact sheet from that office outlining the accommodations needed for your disability or learning difference. All academic accommodations must be arranged in advance through the DRC.

Official Communications via GMU E-Mail
Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason e-mail account, and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.

Attendance Policies
Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class participation is important not only to the individual student, but also to the class as a whole. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of nonparticipation. Students who miss an exam with an acceptable excuse may be penalized according to the individual instructor's grading policy, as stated in the course syllabus.

Honor Code
Students in this class are bound by the Honor Code, as stated in the George Mason University Catalog. The honor code requires that the work you do as an individual be the product of your own individual synthesis or integration of ideas. (This does not prohibit collaborative work when it is approved by your instructor.) As a faculty member, I have an obligation to refer the names of students who may have violated the Honor Code to the Student Honor Council, which treats such cases very seriously. No grade is important enough to justify cheating, for which there are serious consequences that will follow you for the rest of your life. If you feel unusual pressure about your grade in this or any other course, please talk to me or to a member of the GMU Counseling Center staff.

Using someone else’s words or ideas without giving them credit is plagiarism, a very serious Honor Code offense. It is very important to understand how to prevent committing plagiarism when using material from a source. If you wish to quote verbatim, you must use the exact words and punctuation just as the passage appears in the original and must use quotation marks and page numbers in your citation. If you want to paraphrase or summarize ideas from a source, you must put the ideas into your own words, and you must cite the source, using the APA or MLA format. (For assistance with documentation, I recommend Diana Hacker, A Writer’s Reference.) The exception to this rule is information termed general knowledge—information that is widely known and stated in a number of sources. Determining what is general knowledge can be complicated, so the wise course is, “When in doubt, cite.”

Be especially careful when using the Internet for research. Not all Internet sources are equally reliable; some are just plain wrong. Also, since you can download text, it becomes very easy to inadvertently plagiarize. If you use an Internet source, you must cite the exact URL in your paper and include with it the last date that you successfully accessed the site.

Writing Center
Students who are in need of intensive help with grammar, structure or mechanics in their writing should make use of the services of Writing Center, located in Robinson A116 (703-993-1200). The services of the Writing Center are available by appointment, online and, occasionally, on a walk-in basis.

The Collaborative Learning Hub Located in Johnson Center 311 (703-993-3141), the lab offers in-person one-on-one support for the Adobe Creative Suite, Microsoft Office, Blackboard, and a variety of other software. Dual monitor PCs make the lab ideal for collaborating on group projects, Macs are also available; as well as a digital recording space, collaborative tables, and a SMART Board. Free workshops are also available (Adobe and Microsoft) through Training and Certification; visit ittraining.gmu.edu to see the schedule of workshops and to sign up.