Visual Thinking AVT 204  
Course Syllabus, Spring 2018  
George Mason University  
Instructor: Katie Kehoe  
Contact: mkehoe4@gmu.edu  
www.katiekehoe.com

“The picture that you took with your camera is the imagination you want to create with reality.” — Scott Lorenz

Prerequisites: There are no prerequisites required for this class.

Description:
Visual Thinking is a course about seeing – quite literally, in this course, you will be doing a lot of that – of looking and seeing and thinking about what it is you’re seeing and thinking about why you form specific ideas about what you see; while also nurturing an awareness that there is more to what you see than what you think of it. In doing this, we will explore ways contemporary artists use principles of design and perception to frame and challenge our perception of the world physiologically, psychologically, or socially. Examples will be drawn from film, photography, new media art, and other contemporary artistic media. Class content includes slide lectures, readings, films, in class exercises, and discussion. Finally, the objective of this class is not to provide you with a succinct “boxed set” of products; instead, think of this semester as an opportunity to explore, challenge and experiment with your own perception.

Learning Objectives:
To evaluate visual perception and its influences in the visual arts
To dissect and interpret works of art and writings on the field of visual art
To learn strategies and practice techniques for communicating ideas visually
To expand your awareness in the “what’s, whys & wherefores” of your own perception
To discuss and defend your work verbally and give constructive feedback to others in group critiques

Course Requirements:
• Attend class on time, stay for its entirety, and come to class prepared
• Be committed to spending time outside of class on course work.
• Complete work on time. All projects, assignments and presentations must be completed on time: failure to complete work on time will result in being downgraded one full letter grade for each week it is late.
• Participate in class discussions and critiques.

Criteria for Evaluation and Grading:

Timely completion of all work

Demonstrated consideration of the image as it speaks to & of our culture

Evidence of risk taking, ambition and engagement with the assignments

Willingness to engage openly in class discussions and respond to constructive criticism from the class

Technical proficiency and presentation are judged by fine art standards; technique should be appropriate to the image and idea.

Attendance and participation in class discussions & activities

Assessment:

A (90 – 100%): Work far exceeds the expectations. Shows exceptional grasp of technique, concept and creative expression.

B (80 - 90%): Work is of high standard that shows a firm understanding of technical considerations and individual creative expression.

C (70 - 80%): Meets the expectations of the assignment and shows technical competency

D (60 - 70%): Does not meet the expectations of the assignment, is uninspired and does not show technical understanding.

F (0 - 60%): Failure

Assignments

Students will demonstrate their mastery of the course learning objectives by completing the following:

1. Blog Reports. We will use selected online resources that you will choose images from and discuss in class.

2. Photo Assignments: Must be uploaded to Blackboard by 6 p.m. on the Monday before which it is due. During the Tuesday class following, we will typically select the work of 5 students to review and critique in class; each student will come prepared to present. You can expect to have your work selected for presentation at least once.

3. Book Assignment: you will prepare a photo essay that presents your artistic vision as expressed in the photographs you took. The final book must be uploaded to Blackboard in PDF form.

4. 1-minute film: You will create a one-minute film based on an assigned topic.

5. Trips to Virginia area and DC galleries and museums (all accessible by public transit).

Grade Breakdown:

50% Individual Assignments
10%  Video Assignment

30%  Book Assignment / Presentation

10%  Class Participation

**Course Reading:** I will be assigning required and optional readings on a weekly basis.

**Statement on Materials of a Potentially Objectionable Nature:**
For FAVS majors in the College of Visual and Performing Arts, this is a required course that investigates a range of contemporary themes and practices in still and moving image-making. We may from time to time be viewing or reading materials that some students may find distressing or objectionable for religious, cultural, or personal reasons. These materials are presented as objects of study and analysis and as part of the educational process, without any intent to cause offense or distress. If you are concerned that your religious or cultural beliefs would make it impossible for you to participate in part or in whole in this class, please see me at the beginning of the term so that we can discuss ways to manage your concerns.

“The true mystery of the world is the visible. Not the invisible.”  
Oscar Wilde

**Class Policies:**

**EMAIL POLICY:** You must check email on a regular basis. Assignments and course communications will be dispersed via email and/or posted to Blackboard. Please be professional in your emails, allow at least 24 hours for a response during the week and at least 48 hours on the weekend. Because of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), I will only respond to emails sent from your school-assigned address: please include your last name and the course number in the subject line.

**Students are required to make use of the Blackboard system at GMU:**
It can be found at [https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu](https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu). Due to budget constraints, the professor will not be providing paper copies of assignments. It is the student's responsibility to seek and keep track of this information once assigned. If there are any technical difficulties you are experiencing with this system please refer all queries to courses@gmu.edu

**Attendance:** Attendance is an essential part of the course. This is an experience based class and artistic growth comes only through continued active participation. In the case of an unavoidable absence, please contact me by email as soon as you can. You are responsible for finding out what you missed and catching up with course material.

- You are permitted two unexcused absences
- Absences due to illness will only be excused by a doctor’s note.
- Arriving late or leaving early counts as 1/3 an absence
On your third absence your grade will drop a letter grade: this is university policy, please see the George Mason Catalog for more information.

**Electronic Devices:** Cell phones and any other electronic devices should be on silent during the class time and used for personal or social purposes only during class breaks. Students should use the lab computers for editing work in class and not personal laptops. Students who are not intellectually present in class because they are glued to a screen will be counted absent for the class and their grade will be adjusted accordingly.

**Classroom Expectations:** Students are expected to show respect to each other, the teacher, and each other's work at all times.

**Photo Cage:** There are resources than can be rented from the cage including, cameras, lenses, Wacom tablets, tripods, etc. You must pay a rental fee and a security deposit for most items. This must be paid for using Mason Money. For more information on pricing see the cage in LO11.

**Computer Hard Drives:** Are cleaned regularly – anything you have saved to the desktops or hard drive folders will be erased. When working on school computers, please save your work directly to your external drives or copy them to your drive.

*I expect and appreciate good student/teacher communication – PLEASE let me know if you feel you are experiencing problems!*

**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).
**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 must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code. Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

**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.

**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 Credit**: ArtsBus Credit and Policies: You are responsible for knowing and following Artsbus policies and rules. Please go to the ArtsBus website: http://artsbus.gmu.edu "Student Information" for important information regarding ArtsBus policy. 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* 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 Professional Lecture Series:** Spring Semester: 2018
January 25, 2018 – Brian Noyes “Recipe for Change: If you can’t stand the heat, get into the kitchen”
February 1, 2018 – Teresa Jaynes “Talking to the Fingers in the Language of the Eyes: Haptic Interpretations of the Archive”
February 22, 2018 – Dr. Sharif Bey “Artist, Researcher, Teacher: Problems, Paradigms, and Processes”
March 1, 2018 – Juliet Bellow “Performing Stillness: Rodin’s Nijinsky”
March 8, 2018 – John R. Henry “The Quest for unintended consequences”

**Important Dates:** Dates listed on this page are for full semester courses only. For add/drop deadlines for courses that meet less than a full semester, see [Non-standard Sections Dates](#).

For graduation deadlines, please go to the [Graduation Timelines](#) page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Martin Luther King Day (no classes)</td>
<td>Mon Jan 15</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>First day of classes:</strong> last day to submit Domicile Reclassification Application; Payment Due Date; full semester waitlists removed</td>
<td>Mon Jan 22</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Last day to add classes</strong>—all individualized section forms due Last day to drop with no tuition penalty</td>
<td>Mon Jan 29</td>
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<td><strong>Last day to drop with a 33% tuition penalty</strong></td>
<td>Mon Feb 12</td>
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<td><strong>Final Drop Deadline (67% tuition penalty)</strong></td>
<td>Fri Feb 23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immunization Record Deadline</td>
<td>Thu Mar 1</td>
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<td>Midterm progress reporting period (100-200 level classes)—grades available via <a href="#">Patriot Web</a></td>
<td>Mon Feb 19 – Fri Mar 23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selective Withdrawal Period (undergraduate students only)</td>
<td>Mon Feb 26 – Fri Mar 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring Break</td>
<td>Mon Mar 12 – Sun Mar 18</td>
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<td>Event</td>
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<td>Incomplete work from Fall 2017 due to Instructor</td>
<td>Fri Mar 23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incomplete grade changes from Fall 2017 due to Registrar</td>
<td>Fri Mar 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dissertation/Thesis Deadline</td>
<td>Fri May 4</td>
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<td>Last day of classes</td>
<td>Sat May 5</td>
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<td>Reading Days</td>
<td>Mon May 7 – Tue May 8</td>
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<td>Reading days provide students with additional study time for final examinations. Faculty may schedule optional study sessions, but regular classes or exams may not be held.</td>
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<td>Exam Period (beginning at 7:30 a.m.)</td>
<td>Wed May 9 – Wed May 16</td>
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<td>Commencement</td>
<td>Fri May 18</td>
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<td>Degree Conferral Date</td>
<td>Sat May 19</td>
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*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, College Hall C211.
COURSE SCHEDULE* Visual Thinking – AVT 204
Professor Katie Kehoe, mkehoe4@gmu.edu
*This schedule is subject to change

January

Week 1

Tues. 23  **Course Introduction: What is Visual Thinking?**
Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

Thurs. 25  **Discussion on Visual Perception**
Required Readings (RR): *Practices of Looking*, chapter 1 sections: "Images, Power and Politics" and "Representation" pgs: 10-16
RR: “Sudden Clear Images”
Optional Reading (OP): Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, Chapter 1

Week 2

Tues. 30  **Cont. Discussion on Visual Perception**
Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of the Mechanical Reproduction”
RR: “I am for an Art” Claes Oldenburg
*In Class Writing Exercise: I am for an Art*

Thurs. 1  **Visual Elements**
RR: “Discovering Form in Photography”
RR: “6 Elements of Design for Striking Photographs” 12pgs
OP “The Visual Story: Creating the Visual Structure of Film, TV and Digital Media”, Chapter 4

February

Week 3

Tues. 6   **Color**
RR: “Color Readings”: reading pack of selected short writings on color
RR: “On Critique”
*Photo Assignment #1 Critique; PDFs due to blackboard the day before by 6pm*

Thurs. 8  **Composition Strategies**

Week 4

Tues. 13  **Semiotics**
RR: “Introducing Semiotics” short excerpt
RR: “Looking at Photographs”
RR: Barthes, “The Poor and The Proletariat” *Mythologies*
OP: This is not a PIPE. Foucault chapters 1 and 2
*Photo Assignment #2 Critique; PDFs due to blackboard the day before by 6pm*

Thurs. 15  Screening and Discussion: *Robert Irwin’s The Beauty of Questions*

Week 5

Tues. 20  **Gallery Visit**; I will assign an exhibition in the Virginia or D.C. Area (it will be accessible via public transit)
RR: TBD – assigned readings will complement the exhibition
Thurs. 22 Discussion on Galley Visit
RR: *Letters to a Young Artist*, read letter by Thomas Nozkowski’s; pgs: 8-10

*Blog Report #1* Discussion (item selected for discussion will be taken from gallery visit); PDFs due to blackboard the day before by 6pm

**Week 6**

Tues. 27 **Appropriation**
RR: “Detoured Painting”
RR: “Taking Pictures”
RR: “Media Haunted Humans”

*Photo Assignment #3 Critique; PDFs due to blackboard the day before by 6pm*

Thurs 1 **Appropriation Continued**

**March**

**Week 7**

Tues. 6 **Chance**
RR: “Chance Aesthetics” Introduction and Excerpts
RR: “Statement” by Paul Auster

*Blog Report #2 Discussion; PDFs due to blackboard the day before by 6pm*

Thurs. 8 **Chance Continued**
Introduce 1 Minute Film Project & D.C. Museums

**** Spring Break ****

**Week 8**

Tues. 20 **Conceptual Art**
RR: “The Dematerialized Object”
RR: “Who Were the Brain Police”

*Photo Assignment #4 Critique; PDFs due to blackboard the day before by 6pm*

Thurs. 22 **Conceptual Art Continued**

*Sketch of your idea for the 1 minute film Due*

**Week 9**

Tues. 27 **The Everyday**
RR: “Configuring the Everyday”
RR: “Outings in the Visible World”

*Blog Report #3 Discussion; PDFs due to blackboard the day before by 6pm*

Thurs. 29 **The Everyday Continued**
InDesign demo / discussion of book project
RR: “Photography and Seeing”
RR: “Contemplative Photography”
RR: “Thinking and Dreaming”

**April**

**Week 10**

Tues. 3 **Institutional Critique**
RR: “The Silent Message of The Museum” Fred Wilson
RR: “Art Museum Activities” Guerilla Girls

*Photo Assignment #5 Critique; PDFs due to blackboard the day before by 6pm*
Thurs. 5  **Institutional Critique Continued**  
*Rough Draft DUE, Book Project: pages 1-6*  

**Week 11**  
Tues. 10  **Contemporary Sublime**  
*RR: “Andreas Gursky and the Contemporary Sublime”*  
Thurs. 12  *RR: Baldesarri, “What Thinks Me Now”  
*Rough Draft DUE, Book Project: pages 7-13*  

**Week 12**  
Tues. 17  **Forms of Visual Narrative**  
*In Class Writing Exercise: What Thinks Me Now*  
Thurs. 19  **Forms of Visual Narrative Continued**  
*Rough Draft DUE, Book Project: pages 14-20*  

**Week 13**  
Tues. 24  Open time to work on final projects based on class critique  
Thurs. 26  *Present Videos*  

**May**  

**Week 14**  
Tues. 1  *Present Artist Books*  
Thurs. 3  *Present Artist Books*  

Thursday, May 10 All Book Projects Due - NO exceptions!!!