AVT-204 Visual Thinking  
Course Syllabus - Fall 2015  
George Mason University

T-Th 1:30-2:45  
Room: 1007  
Instructor: Stephanie Booth  
Contact: sbooth@gmu.edu  
Office Hours: By Appointment

Prerequisites: There are no prerequisites are required for this class.

DESCRIPTION:

Visual Thinking is a course about seeing and about how images are constructed to work with and against the way we see. It is especially designed for people who want to share their personal artistic vision with others through image making (still or moving), but it can benefit anyone with an interest in expanding creativity (especially poets, writers, visual artists, and theater artists).

Course Learner Objectives

- Evaluate visual perception and its influences on the visual arts  
- Dissect and interpret works of art and writings on the visual art field  
- Communicate ideas visually through photographs and moving images  
- Discuss and defend their work verbally and give constructive feedback to others in group critiques.

Course Requirements and Grading

To be successful in this class, you must:

- Be prepared to participate fully in all aspects of the course  
- Attend class on time, stay for its entirety, and come to class prepared  
- Be committed to spending time outside of class hours to complete readings and assignments.  
- Participate in class discussions and critique. The more you participate in the discussion or your and work and your peer’s work, the easier it is to communicate your own ideas. Receiving constructive criticism is crucial in the artistic process  
- Follow the requirements of the assignment and complete it on time. Failure to turn in an assignment on time will result in the grade being dropped one grade for each class it is late.  
- Satisfactory completion of visual, written, and presentation assignments. Solutions to visual problems will be discussed and evaluated in class critiques.

Criteria for Evaluation and Grading

- Idea development and creativity  
- Risk taking, ambition, and engagement with the assignment  
- Participation in class discussions and critiques

Grade Breakdown:

- Photo Assignments: 50pts  
- Photo Documentary: 50pts  
- Critiques: 70pts  
- Written Assignment: 50pts  
- Blackboard Journals and Class Discussions: 130pts  
- 1 Minute Video: 100pts
Final Assessment

A--Excellent: Work far exceeds the expectations for the assignment. Shows exceptional grasp of technique, concept, and creative expression.

B--Very Good: Work is of a high standard that shows a firm understanding of technical considerations and individual creative expression.

C--Average: Meets the expectations of the assignment and shows technical competency.

D--Poor: Does not meet the expectations of the assignment. Work is uninspired and does not show a technical understanding.

F--Fail: Failure to complete the assignment in the time allotted.

A: 93%-100%
A-: 90%-92%
B+: 87%-89%
B: 84%-86%
B-: 80%-83%
C+: 77%-79%
C: 74%-76%
C-: 70%-73%
D+: 67%-69%
D: 64%-66%
D-: 60%-63%
F: <59%

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 case of an unavoidable absence, please contact me immediately (email is best).

- Arriving late or leaving early counts as half an absence
- Arriving late or leaving early twice counts as a full absence
- On your third absence your grade will automatically drop a letter grade
- On your fifth absences your grade will drop two letter grades
- The grade will continue to drop as absences accrue
- Missed critiques will result in a dropped project grade and a zero on critique participation for that project.

Plagiarism/Cheating

Only students’ own photos and images are permitted for use in projects. The unauthorized use of images and compositions that are not your own is considered plagiarism and will result in a zero for the project. Any type of plagiarism, artistic or written, can result in a zero for the assignment and will negatively impact your final grade in the course.

CLASS POLICIES

EMAIL / Blackboard POLICY
You must check e-mail and Blackboard on a regular basis. Assignments and course communications will be dispersed via email and/or posted to Blackboard.
Be professional in your emails. Open them with a greeting, be respectful, write in complete sentences and avoid all caps. Before asking a question, first thoroughly read the syllabus, course documents, assignments, and announcements on Blackboard. Allow at least 24 hours for a response during the work week, and at least 48 hours for emails sent on the weekend (Friday-Sunday).

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 full name and the course number (example: Jane Doe, Art 100) in the subject line.

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.

Student Expectations and Behavior
Classroom Expectations
Students are expected to show respect to each other, the teacher, and each other’s artwork at all times. In conjunction with this, students are expected to:
- Arrive in class on time
- Always be prepared with supplies
- Begin work immediately
- Participate in class discussions and critiques

Notes on Course Content
In this course we may experience some content that can be, or has in the past, been considered provocative. People can be potentially offended by what we’re about to see. Have respect for how other people in the room may feel, even if you don’t share those feelings. Though provocative art might not be directly offensive, it can remind you of difficult experiences. Part of the course is to discuss difficult issues and put them into a historical and artistic context. You can also communicate with me via email or during office hours if you feel you need additional space or information to process course content.

MATERIALS:

Netflix Subscription: Many of the required viewings are available on Netflix. You will need access to the streaming service throughout the semester.

SoA Print: It is highly recommended that you do your photographic printing for class at SoA Print. Images turned in must be color managed, high quality prints. For some assignments you will be given a choice between inkjet and laser prints.

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.

Envelopes for Turning in Prints: You will need to purchase an 11 x 14 envelope for the transport and grading of your projects.

Tripod: Tripods are available to rent from the cage.

University and School of Art Policies
In accordance with George Mason University policy, turn off all 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 outside the studios.

**School of Art Print Studio**
**School of Art Print Studio (SOAP)** is located in the School of Art Building on the Fairfax Campus. As a non-profit studio, SOAP offers a variety of services including printing and production services to students, faculty and staff. All jobs are processed with high quality materials on state-of-the-art equipment, specifically for graphic design portfolios, mixed-media paintings and reproductions, posters, handmade books, student assignments and proof sheets. More information can be found at soaprint.gmu.edu or 703-993-7203.

**ArtsBus Dates and Credit**
**Fall 2015**
- September 26th
- October 24th
- November 21st

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 Fall 2015**
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.

- September 3rd  Jon Rubin  “Art in Public Life”
September 10th Helen Zughaib “Arab Song – Arab Spring”
September 24th Catherine Kehoe “It’s Not What You Think”
October 1st SOA Grads “Loading Content”
October 8th Steve Badanes + Linda Beaumont “Speak of the Devil”

Important Deadlines
Last Day to Add - Tuesday, September 8
Last Day to Drop (No Tuition Penalty) - Tuesday, September 8
Final Drop (67% Tuition Penalty) – October 2
Selective Withdrawal Period – October 5 - October 30
Incomplete work from Spring/Summer 2015 due to instructor - October 30

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.

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. Class participation may be a factor in grading, therefore 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.
### Course Schedule for ART-204

*Subject to change based on the needs of the class*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9/1</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9/3</td>
<td>Class discussion on Visual Perception</td>
<td>Week 1 Viewings and Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9/8</td>
<td>Continue Discussion on Visual Perception</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9/10</td>
<td>Discussion Week 2 Readings</td>
<td>Week 2 Viewings and Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9/15</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Photo Critique: Composition</td>
<td>Photo Assignment #1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9/17</td>
<td>Class Discussion on Color</td>
<td>Week 3 Viewings and Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9/22</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Photo Critique: Color and Psychology</td>
<td>Photo Assignment #2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9/24</td>
<td>Class discussion on Context</td>
<td>Week 4 Viewing and Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9/29</td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; Photo Critique</td>
<td>Photo Assignment #3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10/1</td>
<td>Class Discussion on Memory</td>
<td>Week 5 Viewing and Readings</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>10/6</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Photo Critique</td>
<td>Photo Assignment #4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10/8</td>
<td>Class discussion on Fiction and Characters</td>
<td>Week 6 Viewing and Readings</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>10/13</td>
<td><em>MONDAYS MEET ON TUESDAY. NO CLASS</em></td>
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<td>10/15</td>
<td>Class discussion on Documentary</td>
<td>Week 7 Viewings and Readings</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>10/20</td>
<td>Working Critique on Photo Essay</td>
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<td>10/22</td>
<td>Class discussion on Week 8 Viewings and Readings</td>
<td>Week 8 Viewings and Readings</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>10/27</td>
<td>Introduce 1 Minute Film Project</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10/29</td>
<td>Class discussion on Week 9 Viewings and Readings</td>
<td>Week 9 Viewings and Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11/3</td>
<td>Critique on Photo Essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<td>11/5</td>
<td>Critique Continued</td>
<td>Week 10 Viewings and Readings</td>
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<td>11/10</td>
<td>Continue discussion on Week 10 Viewings and Readings</td>
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<td>11/12</td>
<td>Class discussion on Week 11 Viewings and Readings</td>
<td>Week 11 Viewings and Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/17</td>
<td>Brainstorming secession on 1 Minute videos</td>
<td>Storyboards due</td>
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<td>11/19</td>
<td>Class Discussion on Week 12 Viewings and Readings</td>
<td>Week 12 Viewings and Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/24</td>
<td>Work Period for One Minute Video</td>
<td>Happy Holidays. Watch a film of your choosing for weekly journal.</td>
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<td>11/26</td>
<td>Thanksgiving No Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/1</td>
<td>In progress critique for 1 Minute Videos</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/3</td>
<td>Class discussion on Week 14 readings and viewings</td>
<td>Week 14 Viewings and Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/8</td>
<td>Start viewing 1 Minute Videos</td>
<td>1 Minute Videos due</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/10</td>
<td>Final Critique</td>
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