

Sculpture I Syllabus

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Spring 2018
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Objectives

Sculpture I is an elemental introduction to the skills required to make 3D sculptural objects. Through building, design, techniques, basic contemporary sculpture history and theory, and studio assignments that introduce new concepts and materials, this class examines the historic position of sculpture and builds a working, personalized knowledge of how it exists today as a 21st century art practice. Together our aim is:

To broaden our perceptions within nature, our built environment, and with each other so that we may be fully attentive when experiencing one another's work.

To understand how sculpture has evolved through civilization into its position within today's contemporary culture.

To carefully consider how an object, the materials of which it is made, how it is crafted, and the context within which it exists affect our understanding and experience.

To locate meaning within the formation of work, understanding that the making process can be used as a means to generate ideas.

To examine the value of ambiguity in visual design in relation to the familiar and functional.

To experience the physical and psychological possibilities of scale in sculpture: the intimate which can physically relate to the hand, but also head as a conceptual model; the bodily scale to which we physically relate, and the architectural in which the body fits.

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Safety

Safety is a primary concern. Every assignment will have a related safety demonstration on how to work with tools and materials. It is very important to attend these demonstrations. The studio is shared by several classes and it is normal for things to need occasional repair. If you feel something isn't working properly, if something breaks, or you need extra instruction before using a tool or machine, that's OK. Please see me, the studio supervisor or TA and we can get things repaired, refreshed, and running again.

Readings

Assignments are accompanied by related readings/ research, followed by peer-to-peer group discussions in class. There may be a quiz. The readings have been especially selected because they are important to understanding, in depth, your current evolution within the place of sculpture; and they are quite enjoyable to read. When you are invested in the subject, have done the reading, and are thoroughly involved, it will make for exciting and memorable classroom discussion.

Sketchbook

Use your sketchbooks and fill them with all kinds of thoughts, writings, pictures, lists, and loose ideas. They are an index of engagement through your journey as a human being and an artist from which you may continuously draw. Your sketchbook(s) should be with you in class. When discussing ideas for new work, we will need to see drawings of the forms taking shape.

Bring your sketchbook, pencil, and working materials to class every day and be ready to work at the beginning of class.

Critique

A critique is the group discussion and assessment that takes place as a group when your projects are finished and are shown to the class. Similar to an exam, it is absolutely integral to the creative process and counts as an important part of your semester grade. To get full credit for your project, you must:

- Have your finished project ready to present by the *beginning of class* on the day we will be critiquing it
- Be prepared to talk about your own project in an intelligent and thoughtful manner and
- Be prepared to talk about everyone else's project in an intelligent and thoughtful manner.

If you or your project is not present at the critique, your project immediately drops a letter grade. Every project will culminate in a critique. In this course there are no tests; just critiques.

Participation

Open discussion is very important to the course and expected. Students are always encouraged to voice their opinion, even if it might seem unrelated.

In this class, you must confer the ability to speak up in public and to debate rationally. We work to create a safe environment in which each student practices the vital skill of arguing a point in front of a group of semi-strangers. It isn't enough to have done the work. Some of you may be used to talking and advocating your point of view, defending your ideas and expressing yourselves. Others may have learned to sit quietly at the margins and let others run the show. Why is this? We are here to address the safe practice of not only new projects and skills, but new behaviors as well. Experimenting is safe. School is a laboratory in which we experiment with ideas. We learn to debate rationally and respectfully, without losing our tempers, looking for common ground on which to build.

Attendance/ Presence

Each absence will affect your grade. A student's final grade will be lowered when absent for more than two sessions and each time afterward. An absence on a critique day will automatically lower your grade by one grade mark for the semester. Students are expected to be in class on time, ready to work. Frequent lateness will count as an absence.

Your presence is mandatory during critique, lecture, and discussion. Use the restroom, text your lover, etc. before class. We always take a break halfway through.

I teach this course at the assigned times and will not relay the missed information to an unexcused student. Therefore if you miss class or come to class late, you will need to get the information you missed from one of your classmates. Take a moment and exchange contacts with two new colleagues.

Phones and Computers

Phone use, specifically during lectures, demonstrations, or discussion, will irritate your teacher and fellow classmates and result in a lower grade. Silence them completely including their vibration. There are breaks during class for your phone and restroom needs. While this technology during studio time can be helpful, make sure it's use is focused directly to your research such as looking up artists and designers, researching materials and techniques, etc.

Grading

Grading is based on the quality of work produced and upon the quality of the process the student has undergone in making that work. The working process will affect grades. A good studio practice demands regular work habits, i.e., not consistently last minute work. An A for example would mean that all the work is completed, it is consistently of excellent quality, that the student participated in critical discussions of artworks and readings, and engaged in an exemplary work process. This is to say that the student would take charge of their own work process, be passionately involved in it, respond to criticism, and maintain a high level of discourse with others.

A Outstanding: Consistently exceptional work that raises the standards for one's entire peer group. No tardiness or absences. Expresses and advocates opinions thoughtfully and rationally. Head is always in the game. Craft is appropriate. Projects, working process, and discussion are always at, or very close to full professional

potential.

- B Above Average: Exceeding the requirements/expectations of the class. No tardiness or absences. Head is mostly in the game. Good projects and ideas, but could be even better
- C Average: Meeting all class requirements. No tardiness or absences. Succumbs to occasional cell phone addiction. Work is complete, but not to its fullest potential.
- D Below Average: Completion of most, but not all, course requirements including absences and/or a pattern of tardiness.
- F Fail: Failure to meet the requirements of the course.

Materials

The following YOU MUST HAVE for this class (additional Materials per assignment.)

safety glasses or goggles

break-off retractable razor knife EVERY DAY

pencils and erasers EVERY DAY

Sketchbook

Clay tools

Field Trip

Together we will determine a group outing to experience important events and exhibitions in the DC area.

Organize and Clean Up

We work in a studio shared by other classes, students, and faculty. To help each out, please clean up all workspaces and dispose of any scraps/debris you may have produced while working. If you are leaving any materials or works-in-progress in the classroom, they must be clearly labeled and stored out of the way of the other students who share the room. It is true that one person's trash is another person's treasure, but the converse is doubly true in an art school. If you don't want to lose your work, make sure you keep track of it. There is a mandatory cleanup day at the end of the semester. This day will be

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This Syllabus is subject to change!

LECTURE AND RESEARCH CALENDAR

Timeline of projects working in materials such as clay, plaster, wood, steel, 3D printing, the found object, and more will vary and be announced accordingly. The reading/lecture schedule is as follows and may include recent reviews/articles not listed below.

- Week 1 Introduction, Syllabus, Project 1 introduced, clay demo
- Work in studio
Homework for next Tuesday: Read *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Rosalind Krauss, Introduction
Research Laocoon and His Sons, Michelangelo Buonarroti
Consider these questions for discussion: Why do you think Michelangelo's work seen as the culmination of the Renaissance and western art in general?
- Week 2 Lecture: The Figurative Roots of Sculpture, The Emerging Kouros, Renaissance Humanism, perspective and the representation of nature.
Work in Studio
- Work in studio-
Homework: Research Baroque sculpture, Francois Rude's La Marseillaise, Rodin
For discussion next class, be able to point out an observation and consider this question: Rodin often left tool marks, finger impressions, and evidence of the making process as part of his sculptures. Why is this important?
- Week 3 Lecture: Baroque, Rodin and contemporary artists who embody the body
Work in studio
- Work in studio
Homework: Read "Forms of Readymade: Duchamp and Brancusi" in Rosalind Krauss *Passages in Modern Sculpture*. Outline chapter according to <http://www.albany.edu/eas/170/outline.htm>.
Hardcopy outline due beginning of next class. And read
[*Hank Willis Thomas: Why does America's great protest artists think things are better under Trump?*](#) by Tim Jonze, the Guardian, October 10, 2017
- Week 4 Lecture: Duchamp, Brancusi, and the Found Object Today
Homework: Bring in materials to work next class.
- Work in studio
Homework: Read [*The shape We're In: The timely Sculpture of Rachel Harrison*](#), Peter Schjeldahl, New Yorker, Dec 22 & 29, 2014
Make observations and be able to answer from lecture, What have these artists borrowed from Rodin? Brancusi? Duchamp?
- Week 5 Lecture: The Figure, the Object, the Figurative Object and discussion
Work in Studio
Critique of clay work in progress.
- Work in Studio. Last day to work on clay assignment.
Homework: Read [*The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism*](#) by Filippo Marinetti, pp 49-53, in *Futurism: An Anthology*, Yale, 2009.
[*Coco Fusco and Planet of the Apes*](#) and the video. Elia Alba, Art21 Magazine, Aug 2, 2014.
And [*Juliana Huxtable*](#) <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2015/9/4/1418478/-Juliana-Huxtable>
Make observations and be able to answer questions:

Let's say Dr. Zira studies Marinetti partying with his fellow futurist friends. What would her findings be?
Given what we've learned thus far in class regarding humanism and futurism, how do you see Juliana Huxtable and her sculptural likeness as significant?

Week 6 Lecture: Futurism: Is the Future as Good as It Used to Be?
Project 2 announced. Plaster demo.

Work in studio
Homework: locate materials for project and bring them in.

Week 7 Work in Studio

Work in Studio
Homework: Read Louise Bourgeois Interview with Donald Kuspit
[Jim Shaw's subconscious runs amok at Mass MoCA](#), Sebastian Smee, Boston Globe, April 16, 2015.
Research Surrealism, Joseph Cornell, Yayoi Kusama
Why is it important to connect contemporary artistic practices with those of the past?

Week 8 Lecture: Surrealism and the Contemporary Subconscious, discussion
Films: Rose Hobart by Joseph Cornell, The Hole by Jim Shaw, Western Song by Marnie Weber
Work in studio

Work in studio
Homework: Read "David Smith Makes a Sculpture" by David Smith, "Noah Purifoy" by Christopher Knight, Los Angeles Times, June 8, 2015. For discussion next week: How would you describe the making process within their work? The forms within the works of these artists can be ambiguous. What is the value of ambiguity in these works and art in general?

Week 9 Lecture and discussion: Deciphering Process and Ambiguous Forms
Work in Studio

Work in studio
Homework: finish projects

Week 10 Critique of project two
Homework: please bring safety glasses and closed-toe shoes for next class

Continue crit. Project three announced. Woodshop demo (as time allows)
Homework: locate materials. Work in sketchbook.

Week 11 Wood demo (cont.)

Work in studio
Homework: Read "Wheatfield— A Confrontation" by Agnes Denis, Michael Heizer's Big Work and Long View, Michael Kimmelman, New York Times, May 13, 2015, and "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey" by Robert Smithson, Art Forum, Dec, 1967. What do you see as important regarding the land/ landscape as a Virginian, the place you are from or have lived that you find important? What are some feelings you have about being in nature?

Week 12 Lecture: Land Art
Work in Studio

Work in studio

Homework: read [Three Artists Who Think Outside the Box: How Theaster Gates, Mark Bradford and Rick Lowe are Changing What Art Can and Should Do for the World](#), and [Timely Lessons from a Rebel, Who Often Created By Destroying](#), by Nicolai Ouroussoff, March 3, 2007. By Nikil Saval, New York Times Magazine, Dec 3, 2015. For discussion: What is the role of the sculptural object and how has it evolved regarding the work of these artists? What is the value of community involvement in the arts? What might be some potential problems?

Week 13

Lecture: Art of the City and Social Engagement

Work in studio

Homework: Read [Notorious Possession: Occupying Foreclosed Homes With Art](#), about Olga Koumoundourous, Artbound, KCET, Dec 2, 2012; The focus is the same as last week. Recall earlier this semester, we covered Duchamp. What is the relationship between past issues surrounding the found object and how is the found object understood today regarding the work of these artists? What is the value of community involvement in the arts? What may be potential problems?

Week 14

Lecture: Civic art. Christo, Olga Koumoundourous, Andrea Bowers, Adam Frelin, Ben Ashworth's Finding a line

Work in studio

Week 15

Work in studio

Work in studio

Final

Final critique

Assignment 1 The Reliquary

This project focuses one of the most ancient materials of sculpture and builds upon our bodily perceptions beginning with touch.

Part 1: Make four tiles 4 inches square (exactly) using these methods:

1. a “press mold” taken from a textured surface.
2. the “additive” method in which you create texture by adding more clay to the surface. The clay must stay on the surface for full credit.
3. the “subtractive” method creating texture by removing material and carving into the clay form.
4. Combination tile using all of the above methods.

Begin by making several sketches of what your tiles may look like. Be inventive. DO NOT use imagery with which you are already familiar.

Part 2: Research reliquaries. Create several thumbnail sketches of your own reliquary. These sketches must contain more than one idea. Move beyond the most obvious, simple solution into something less traditional. Then create your reliquary out of clay that will later be fired in the kiln. With your project there will be one major difference– the object of which you are creating the reliquary for must remain secret. The form of your sculpture should create a relationship with the secret object you choose.

Parameters

- Scale should be the size of a your head or larger
- No long, protruding forms.
- Limit loose pieces (there may be a detachable lid or door)
- Creative use of balance, negative space, texture, and surface design
- Your sculpture should be “in the round”

You will be graded on

- Dynamic use of design, moving beyond comfortable, familiar imagery
- Craft– Tiles are exactly 4” square, projects should not crack and surfaces must be resolved and free of crumbs, bits, particles; your demonstration that you learned clay
- Creativity of idea– project is not overly conventional and does not fall into cliché

Assignment 2 Geometric/ Organic Transformation

For this project we will be creating a *negative space* out of cardboard that will be filled with plaster. When your cardboard forms are filled, the wet plaster will soften the cardboard and the forms will expand outward.

You will use glue guns and tape to create your cardboard forms. Think of these forms as somewhat box-like, but also funky, elaborate, architectural, etc. Your forms can be as complex as you want, but they must contain the following:

1. Three or more chambers of different shapes, connected with tunnels for the plaster to fill. The tunnels should be thick enough to allow the plaster to flow through.
2. Creative use of *negative space*, surface *textures*, and *balance* (cantilevered, asymmetry, how your work meets (or doesn't meet) the ground, floor, or whatever surface you choose to present these works).
3. The sculpture must be *in the round*, meaning viewable from all angles, rather than having a front and back or relief.
4. Keep in mind the weight of liquid plaster. The bottom portion of your work will be under a lot of pressure so it is important that the seams not burst open. Long protruding forms will also break.

Consider all of the **design principles** and how these considerations can help you create extraordinary compositions. While narrative and psychological experience may play a role in your work, you will be graded on your making process, ambition, design, and balance—



Home Writing Assignment/Oral Presentation: Read Pablo Neruda’s “Ode to Common Things.” Write a one page ode to your sculpture. You can be purely descriptive or you can use poetic language. Your ode should clearly express the nature of the object you created, how it relates to your body, and how these experiments could be of value in real life. For project 2 critique, we will read our odes while presenting our sculptures for discussion and thoughtful feedback.



Student Field Trip, National Gallery

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Sculpture I

Assignment 3

“Hardware Fun!”

Wood & Hardware

This project is an introduction to woodworking and associated tools and machinery. Students will learn the basics of wood and how to cut, glue, sand, fasten, and paint safely,

Using wood as primary material, create a form that emphasizes hardware fastener usage. Since a lot of hardware will be used in the projects, the function of the hardware may fall out of its traditional uses. Thanks ok. The goal here is to discover hardware as a fun design character that plays a role in your woodworking compositions.

Materials:

Wood (untreated), wood related composites, any kind of hardware (fastening, modular), any additional material

Parameters:

- At least 5 different pieces of wood
- At least 5 different kinds of hardware
- A section of your project must be able to come apart and be put back together
- Design must suggest volume and negative space
- Work must weigh 8 pounds
- No pressure treated lumber

Grading:

- Craft 33 (hairy edges sanded, hardware attached appropriately, no distracting errors)
- Ambition 33
- Uniqueness of hardware use 33

Due:

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Turn Your Interest Into Art

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I Want To...

Art is a very accepting discipline that allows its participants to incorporate activities from other fields into creative outcomes. Equally, art can be used as an excuse to do things, go places, meet



people, or learn skills that you can use in your own art projects. Artist Janine Antoni wanted to learn how to tightrope walk so she came up with a project that required her to learn this skill, resulting in her performance art piece, *Touch*. Theaster Gates wanted to collaborate with his father, a retired roofer, so they used his old roofing equipment and tar to create a series of paintings and sculptures. Photographer Taryn Simon wanted to have a reason to travel to restricted areas throughout the country, so she created *An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar*, a series of photographs, which compile an inventory of what lies hidden and out-of-view within the borders of the United States.

For this project, you will come up with a list of places, people, and/or activities with which you would like to have the opportunity to somehow be involved. From there, you will direct your interest toward the most applicable creative outcome. For critique, write a statement about how you came up with your project and why, the formal and conceptual concerns, and how your current understanding of sculpture is located within your work.

(Rubén Ortiz Torres, Theaster Gates, Janine Antoni, Taryn Simon, Gillian Wearing, Chris Burden, Pierre Huyghe...)

Class 1

Work on drawings/ research and plan your project for presentation next class. Use the Ways of making list as a helpful reference.

Class 2

Each student presents to class their lists of possible interests places activities, etc you began with, and the proposed project you have you have then decided upon to the class. Presentation must include visual aids such as drawing, internet/ library research, maps, slideshow on thumb drive, etc. Class will provide feedback. Presentation is considered part of the project and will be part of final grade.

(1) MASON CORE CLASSES:

This class fulfills a Mason Core requirement for Arts. Arts goal: Courses aim to achieve a majority of the following learning outcomes: students will be able to identify and analyze the formal elements of a particular art form using vocabulary appropriate to that form; demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between artistic technique and the expression of a work's underlying concept; analyze cultural productions using standards appropriate to the form and cultural context; analyze and interpret material or performance culture in its social, historical, and personal contexts; and engage in the artistic process, including conception, creation, and ongoing critical analysis.

Important University Dates:

Martin Luther King Day (no classes)	Mon Jan 15
First day of classes ; last day to submit Domicile Reclassification Application; Payment Due Date; full semester waitlists removed	Mon Jan 22
Last day to add classes —all individualized section forms due Last day to drop with no tuition penalty	Mon Jan 29
Last day to drop with a 33% tuition penalty	Mon Feb 12
Final Drop Deadline (67% tuition penalty)	Fri Feb 23
Immunization Record Deadline	Thu Mar 1
Midterm progress reporting period (100-200 level classes)—grades available via Patriot Web	Mon Feb 19 – Fri Mar 23
Selective Withdrawal Period (undergraduate students only)	Mon Feb 26 – Fri Mar 30
Spring Break	Mon Mar 12 – Sun Mar 18
Incomplete work from Fall 2017 due to Instructor	Fri Mar 23
Incomplete grade changes from Fall 2017 due to Registrar	Fri Mar 30
Dissertation/Thesis Deadline	Fri May 4
Last day of classes	Sat May 5
Reading Days 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.	Mon May 7 – Tue May 8
Exam Period (beginning at 7:30 a.m.)	Wed May 9 – Wed May 16
Commencement	Fri May 18
Degree Conferral Date	Sat May 19

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.

ArtsBus - Dates for Spring 2018:

February 24

March 24

April 14

Visual Voices Lecture Series Spring 2018: 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/>

January 24 – Brian Noyes

February 1 – Teresa Jaynes

February 22 – Sharif Bey

March 1 – Juliet Bellow

March 8 – John Henry

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 your instructor 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.

Cell Phones: 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.

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, and are responsible knowing the rules, as stated on the George Mason University website's Academic Integrity page (<http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/>). "To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, trust, and fairness among all members of the Mason 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.

Mason's Commitment: To create an environment that is innovative, diverse, entrepreneurial, and accessible-helping you avoid accidental or intentional violations of the Honor Code.”

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.