

AI 105 Visual Literacy and Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art Winter 2009

**School for New Learning
DePaul University**

**Course Syllabus: Visual Literacy and Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art
Winter 2009**

1. General Information

Faculty: David McKoski
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773.895.8091
Office Hours: upon request

Location: Loop

Dates/Time: Tuesday, 6:00-9:00

Credit Hours: 4

2. Course Description

Have you ever been confused by the intentions of an artist or at a loss for words when trying to describe a work of art? How many times have you walked through a museum and while looking at a work of art said to yourself, "I could do that!" This course will introduce a series of skills ranging from simple identification to complex interpretation that will help us read both images and text and find meaning in a variety of contemporary art forms, from painting to sculpture, and photography to installation.

The course will focus on the cultural, moral, and aesthetic value of art exhibited in Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA). The course will begin by exploring the MCA's exhibition *Jenny Holzer: Protect Protect*. Holzer's work combines text and installation to investigate emotional and societal realities that shape everyday life. As the course continues we explore the MCA's *USA Today* exhibit that features work created mostly during the 1980s and 90s, but reveals the continuing relevance and complexity of topics such as freedom of expression, militarism, the dynamics of race, human and economic consequences of globalization, and other defining elements of society today.

Art making activities will occur throughout the course to help us explore visual literacy through expressing thoughts and ideas in visual form. Throughout the course students will maintain a visual journal based upon some of the following activities: museum visits, classroom discussions, outside observations, and art making experiences. A culminating group project will investigate a specific cultural, aesthetic, or moral topic that has been addressed by a contemporary artist.

Faculty Biography

David McKoski has his BA in Fine Arts and Chinese Studies from the College of Wooster and his M.Ed. in Teaching and Learning from DePaul University. He is a National Board Certified art teacher currently teaching at the Chicago Academy High School. In his work with Chicago public schools he has conducted teacher workshops and has worked as a school development coordinator for the DePaul Center for Urban Education.

3. Competencies

A-1-B: Can use public or private institutions as resources for exploring arts or ideas.

1. Using the resources of the institution, investigates a question or an issue relevant to this category.
2. Assesses the appropriateness and reliability of an institution for such investigation.

Students will learn how to use art as a tool to analyze and understand the complexity and multiple voices that challenge common perceptions and beliefs about particular contemporary social issues. Students will use the current and permanent collections of the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art as a primary source.

A-2-A: Can create an original work of art, explore its relationship to artistic form, and reflect on the creative process.

1. Produces an original work of art.
2. Describes the elements of the artistic form used.
3. Articulates criteria by which this work may be considered an example of an art form.
4. Discusses the technique and the creative process used to create the original work.

Students will actively participate in art making activities that help develop and expand individual creativity and deepen understanding in how artists create original works of art.

- A-5: Can define and analyze a creative process.
1. Can define the concept of creativity.
 2. Can identify, analyze, and describe the components of a creative process in one or more fields of human endeavor.
 3. Can explain how engaging in a creative process affects one's perception of the world.

Students will identify, analyze and describe various forms of contemporary visual art by using a series of skills ranging from simple identification to complex interpretation. Through museum visits, art critiques, reflective writing, art making and class discussions students will begin to make connections between the creative process and personal value found in the creative process.

- H-1-X: Can understand and explain the ways in which aesthetic worlds confront contemporary social, political and cultural issues.

1. Can identify the conceptual ideas within contemporary images and works of art.
2. Can analyze how contemporary artists use their work to discuss or oppose cultural, aesthetic and moral topics.
3. Can evaluate and value how contemporary images and works of art are used as a means to provoke personal transformations and question social, political and cultural issues.

Students will participate in a variety of formats to view and discuss works of art. A final project will be created that investigates a specific cultural, aesthetic, or moral topic that has been addressed by a contemporary artist. Students will work in small groups and determine the format in which the project will be presented.

4. Outcomes -

During this class students will:

- Participate in individual and group art making exercises in order to challenge and expand how we "read" visual images.
- Deepen individual understanding and appreciation in creative exploration and self reflection.
- Discuss how artists use visual images to address cultural, aesthetic, or moral topics in nontraditional formats.
- Develop an understanding of the terms art, visual culture and visual literacy.

5. Learning Experience

Learning Experience

This course has been designed for students who would like to develop a deeper appreciation and understanding for the wealth of visual culture that exists in our city, both in the museums and on the streets. The Museum of Contemporary Art will be our base for exploring art and uncovering artists' messages, but by no means are students limited to this museum when investigating their own research into visual culture. Each class session will include an art making activity that will primarily focus on the creative process and not the end product. Classes will be centered on small and large group discussions based upon readings, art critiques and short video clips that highlight the creative process of working artists. Visits by local artists during class sessions will help us connect theory to practice. Work outside of class hours will be directly related to the course and will connect to class discussions and presentations. Additional visits to art located in areas surrounding the DePaul Loop campus will be dependant upon weather conditions.

Attendance and Participation:

Attendance and active participation are essential in order to achieve your greatest learning outcome from the course. The course focuses on the following components in order to create a rich and active learning environment and as a result missing sessions will diminish the overall outcome of the course.

1. Course relies heavily on class discussions and art making experiences.
2. Two visits to the Museum of Contemporary Art will occur during regular class sessions.
3. Two sessions will host a local artist.
4. Final project will be a group project and relies on each member of the group to fully participate and contribute to the entire process of creating and presenting the final presentation.

Therefore:

1. Students missing more than two classes will not have met the requirements for a passing grade.
2. Students not completing their section of the final project will not have met the requirements for a passing grade.
3. Students missing the final presentation of their project will not have met the requirements for a passing grade.

In the event of an absence, please let me know ahead of time and contact a classmate ahead of time to be your "tutor" for the missed session. In the event of an absence, please insure that you are ready for the assignments for the next class session.

6. Evidence the Students will Submit

1. Students will keep a visual journal throughout the course. The visual journal will be a collection of images, reflections, and class notes. Students will be guided in creating their visual journals in class and a range of ideas will be provided for students to select from for outside activities. Visual journals will be shared in class and become part of class discussions. The journal will be submitted at the end of the course as part of the overall grade.
2. Reflective writing activities will be required during museum visits, artist visits and in response to videos viewed in class.
3. A series of art making activities will occur during each class. At the end of the course students will have a collection of art. A final reflection/critique of their work will be submitted.
4. A final group project that explores the work of artists and a specific cultural, aesthetic, or moral topic will be presented.
5. Students will abide by the University's guidelines on academic integrity (see policy in addenda below).
6. All work must be original. Please refer to the DePaul Student Handbook for the definition of plagiarism. Non-original work will receive a grade of "F".

The DePaul Student Handbook defines plagiarism as follows: "Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following: (a) The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or in part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's. (b) Copying of any source in whole or in part with only minor changes in wording or syntax even with acknowledgement. (c) Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment which has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency. (d) The paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement." Plagiarism will result in a failure of the assignment or possibly of the course. If you are unsure of how to cite a source, ask!

Final course grade will be based on:

50%	Final Project
30%	Class Participation
20%	Museum Visits and Connected Activities

7. Criteria for Assessment

Student work will be evaluated as follows:

A: designates work of high quality; reflects thorough and comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand; reflects a clearly identifiable thesis and argument that demonstrates cogent and creative development and support of idea.

B: designates work of good quality; reflects clearly organized and comprehensive understanding of issues at hand; presents substantive thesis and argument with evident development and support of ideas.

C: designates work which minimally meets requirements set forward in assignment; reflects some organization and development of ideas but develops argument in superficial or simplistic manner; may only address part of the assignment or be otherwise incomplete.

D: designates work of poor quality which does not meet minimum requirements set forth in the assignment; demonstrates poor organization of ideas and/or inattention to development of ideas, grammar, and spelling; treatment of material is superficial and/or simplistic; may indicate that student has not done reading assignments thoroughly.

Late work during the course:

Students will have one week from the due date to submit late work or complete unfinished work. Work submitted after the extended due date will receive a lower grade and work not submitted will be marked as incomplete.

Incomplete work at end of course:

Unfinished work or work requiring revision at the end of the course will be given an Incomplete (IN) grade. In order to qualify for an Incomplete, students must have attended no fewer than nine (9) classes and must have completed the final project and in-class presentation. Work submitted for incompletes are due within 2 weeks of the final class session.

Please Note:

In order for a student to have an incomplete (IN) grade granted in this course, there must be a significant extenuating circumstance evidenced by the student (e.g., medical and/or significant personal issues). The student will need to initiate and file an SNL Incomplete grade contract before the final session of the course to receive an incomplete grade. Students are strongly advised to review the university deadlines for withdrawal without tuition refund and the implications for financial aid and grades.

8. Class Schedule

Week 1 - January 6: Course Overview

1. Visual culture and identity

Week 2 - January 13: Finding Meaning In Aesthetics

1. Multiple levels of aesthetic experience

2. Foundations of modern aesthetics

3. Meaning and visual culture

4. Aesthetics and construction of meaning

Week 3 - January 20: Museum of Contemporary Art Visit

- 1. Jenny Holzer exhibition**

Week 4 – January 27: Art and Cognition

- 1. Approaching visual culture**
- 2. Social ways of knowing art**
- 3. Developing conceptions and misconceptions about art**

Week 5 – February 3: Interpreting Visual Culture

- 1. Interpretation, contexts and extending meanings**
- 2. Postmodern concepts and visual culture**
- 3. Artist visit**

Week 6 – February 10: Museum of Contemporary Art Visit

- 1. USA Today exhibition**

Week 7 – February 17: Interpreting Visual Culture

- 1. Cultural and personal interpretations**
- 2. Artist visit**

Week 8 – February 24: Group Meetings

- 1. Discuss group presentation outlines**

Week 9 – March 3: Project Presentations

Week 10 – March 10: Project Presentations

Week 11 – March 17: Making Connections

- 1. Final critique of visual journals**
- 2. Next steps in exploring Visual Literacy**

Addenda

DePaul University Academic Integrity Policy

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic

Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html> for further details.

DePaul University Incomplete Policy

Undergraduate and graduate students have two quarters to complete an incomplete. At the end of the second quarter (excluding summer) following the term in which the incomplete grade was assigned, remaining incompletes will automatically convert to "F" grades. In the case of the Law School incompletes must be completed by the end of the semester following the one in which the incomplete was assigned. Ordinarily no incomplete grade may be completed after the grace period has expired. Instructors may not change incomplete grades after the end of the grace period without the permission of a college-based Exceptions Committee. This policy applies to undergraduate, graduate and professional programs. NOTE: In the case of a student who has applied for graduation and who has been approved for an Incomplete in his or her final term, the incomplete must be resolved within the four week grace period before final degree certification.

n.b. The SNL student who wishes to receive the grade of IN must formally request in writing that the instructor issue this grade. This request must be made before the end of the quarter in which the student is enrolled in a course.

For Students Who Need Accommodations Based on the Impact of a Disability

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential.

To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter, preferably within the first week of class, and make sure you have contacted:

- PLuS Program (for LD, AD/HD) at 773-325-4239 in the Schmidt Academic Center, room 220 or;
- The Office for Students with Disabilities (for all other disabilities) at 773-325-7290, DePaul University Student Center, room 307.

Chronic Illness Initiative

The Chronic Illness Initiative (CII) provides access to higher education for students disabled by chronic illnesses that unpredictably increase and decrease in severity such as chronic fatigue syndrome, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus or illnesses requiring frequent hospitalizations. At SNL, staff and faculty are compassionate and committed to helping CII students achieve their educational goals. Contact CII at CII@depaul.edu.

Writing Help

For help with organizing your ideas, grammar, citing sources, avoiding plagiarism, sample SNL assignments and much more, see the [Writing Guide for SNL Students](http://snl.depaul.edu/writing/index.html) at <http://snl.depaul.edu/writing/index.html>. For on-campus and online tutoring, see the [DePaul University Writing Centers](http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/) at <http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/>.

[In addition, consider adding the Writing Centers' syllabus supplement available here <http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/html/fac/supplements.html>]