

Art History and Visual Culture Studies

Chair: Lisa Uddin (on Sabbatical,
Spring 2020)
Dennis Crockett
Krista Gulbransen
Matthew Reynolds

Affiliated Faculty:
Jessica Cerullo, Theatre (on
Sabbatical, Fall 2019)
Thomas A. Davis, Philosophy
Julia Ireland, Philosophy

Elizabeth Miller, General Studies
Kathleen J. Shea, Environmental
Humanities/Classics
Akira R. Takemoto, Japanese

The discipline of art history and visual culture studies embraces aspects of a broad array of academic areas, including history, politics, philosophy, aesthetics, religion, anthropology, sociology, and literature. The visual culture of various parts of the world is investigated through a variety of perspectives in order to gain insight into human values, beliefs, and self-identity. Whitman College offers major and minor study programs in art history and visual culture studies.

Distribution: Courses completed in art history and visual cultural studies apply to the fine arts or humanities distribution areas, and to cultural pluralism as indicated.

Total credits required to complete the Art History and Visual Culture Studies major: A student who enters Whitman without any prior college-level preparation in art history and visual studies will have to complete 36 credits to fulfill the requirements for the art history and visual culture studies major.

Learning Goals: Upon graduation, a student will be able to:

- **Major-Specific Areas of Knowledge**
 - Demonstrate an ability to critically situate artists, movements, artworks, artifacts, exhibitions and other visual practices within larger historical frameworks.
 - Demonstrate a familiarity with the historiography of the study of visual texts and artifacts.
 - Demonstrate a facility with contemporary cross and interdisciplinary approaches to the study of visual texts and artifacts.
 - Understand the interconnectedness of cultural production across different geographic and historical contexts.
- **Accessing Academic Community/Resources**
 - Retrieve and evaluate relevant resources from libraries, databases, archives and collections.
- **Communication**
 - Express ideas cogently through forms of oral and written communication, including visual analyses, in-class presentations, reviews, curatorial texts, research papers and examinations.
- **Critical Thinking**
 - Synthesize, assess and apply existing scholarship to the study of visual texts and artifacts.
 - Analyze visual texts and artifacts through their socio-political roles, cultural and market values, materiality, iconology, aesthetics and ethics.
- **Research Experience**
 - Generate original analyses of artists, movements, artworks, artifacts, exhibitions and other visual practices based on primary and secondary sources.

The Art History and Visual Culture Studies major: A minimum of 36 credits, including Art History 103, 490, at least one 300-level course and one non-Western course. A maximum of two approved courses from outside the department may be used to satisfy major requirements. This includes credit from off-campus programs, transfer credit, and appropriate Whitman courses that focus on the functions and/or production of visual culture (including all studio art courses). The senior assessment, administered during the student's final two semesters, consists of a written critical review of a piece of art historical scholarship and an oral object analysis of a visual text or artifact.

Honors in the major: Students do not apply for honors. Honors in Major Study will be conferred to students who: 1) receive an A- or higher in Senior Thesis (Arth 493), 2) pass the senior assessment with distinction; and 3) attain a 3.30 cumulative gpa and a 3.50 major gpa by graduation. The department will notify the Registrar's Office of students attaining Honors in Major Study by the third week in April for spring honors thesis candidates, and students' registration will then be changed from Senior Thesis to Honors Thesis (Arth 498). An acceptable digital copy of the Honors Thesis must be submitted to Penrose Library no later than Reading Day.

The Art History and Visual Culture Studies minor: A minimum of 18 credits, including Art History 103. With the approval of the department chair, one course from outside the department may be used to satisfy the minor requirements.

For the art history and visual culture studies major with an art studio minor, no course may satisfy both the major and minor requirements. When the same class is required in both the major and minor, an additional class will be required after it has been approved by the art history and visual culture studies department. The P-D-F option may not be used for the major or minor.

103 Introduction to Art History and Visual Culture Studies

Fall, Spring **Fall: Reynolds, Uddin; Spring: Gulbransen, Miller** **4 credits**

Using a variety of works in various media from antiquity to the present day, this course introduces the historical discipline of art history and the contemporary study of visual culture. Emphasis is placed on historical, social, and interpretive issues relevant to the critical analysis of artistic production and meaning. Topics to be explored include the problem of the canon and the museum; patronage and power; and the visual construction of race, gender, and sexuality. Short papers and/or presentations and exams required. Required for the art history and visual culture studies and studio art major and minor. Closed to seniors. Open to juniors by consent only.

210 Museums and The Politics of Display

Spring **Gulbransen** **4 credits**

This course is designed to introduce students to the museum as a social institution that produces value, organizes material culture, and structures knowledge. An exploration of the ways in which museum display can augment and/or alter the meanings and functions of objects will be central to the class. Students will examine the birth of the museum in 18th century Europe as a product of Enlightenment values and imperial ambitions. Using historical and contemporary examples from Britain, France, and the United States, students will research and critique shifting collecting and exhibition philosophies. The class will explore the following topics (and more) as they relate to the rhetoric of display: identity formation, race and gender politics, memory and history, ethnography and social taxonomy, “non-Western” art in Western museums, repatriation of objects, sacred art in secular spaces, narrative constructions and claims of historical veracity, and the modern encyclopedic museum. The course is based on student presentations and discussion, with various written assignments and/or exams. Multiple field trips are required to complete the course. These will take place on Fridays and Saturdays outside of class time. *Prerequisite:* Art History 103 or consent of instructor.

211 London Museums: Making Meaning, Making Art

Summer 2020 A **Gulbransen and Lux** **3 credits**
Fall 2020 B **Gulbransen and Lux** **1 credit**

In this course, students will approach museums and collecting institutions from two overlapping disciplines: art history & visual culture studies and studio art. The course reveals the many (perhaps underrecognized) ways in which artists and scholars work with museums and collections. In addition to displaying work in museums, artists utilize museum collections to create art installations, create work that references or critiques museum spaces and display conventions, and serve as artists-in-residence at museums. Similarly, academics in the fields of art history, architectural history, and visual culture studies explore the Enlightenment and colonial history of the museum institution, examine the politics of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation through the analysis of collections and their methods of display, curate shows, write exhibition catalogues and essays, assess repatriation claims and the authenticity of objects, critique the aesthetics of exhibition design, and determine ethical practices for art conservation. By studying both the institutions themselves, and examples of artists and scholars who work around and within them, students will gain an understanding of the important role of museums to exhibit culture, produce knowledge, and inspire artistic production.

The London Summer course utilizes a unique hybrid of seminar and studio formats combined with museum and gallery site visits and guest lectures from artists and museum professionals. Students will read about, discuss, and write about exhibition practices, the history of museum collections, and artists who make work within them.

Students will also make drawings, photographs, models, and other types of visual creative production in response to individual objects and exhibitions they visit in London.

The Fall course at Whitman seeks to mirror the professional experiences of art scholars and critics, museum staff and gallerists, and practicing artists through the collective production of an exhibition on campus. The exhibition will be accompanied by a student-produced catalogue with short essays, photos, and descriptions of works in the show.

Please note that students must enroll in both summer and fall portions of the course. May be taken for credit as Art 201 A and B *Prerequisite:* One course in Art History and Visual Culture Studies or Art or consent of instructor and acceptance into this Crossroads course (application available in September 2019). *Co-requisite:* Art History 211B-Fall 2020. Distribution area: cultural pluralism, humanities, and fine arts.

224 Powerful Art/ifacts: Greece/Rome

Fall

Davies

4 credits

This course explores the art, architecture, and archaeology of the ancient Greek and Roman worlds. Beginning with the Bronze Age and ending with the Roman Imperial period, we will examine the material evidence for key areas in Greek and Roman society and history, from class and socio-political change, to cultural identity, religious practice, and daily life. We will consider the nature of the surviving archaeological record, from public monuments to works of sculpture and pottery, to coins and other remains. All the while, we will highlight the ways in which the visual heritage of a “classical” and “Greco-Roman” past have been and continue to be exploited in the construction of subsequent self-images and claims to supremacy. In this light, we will not only encounter the histories of “classical” archaeology and art history, but we will also emphasize the ways in which the material cultures of ancient Greece and Rome have been manipulated – both in antiquity and modernity – for a wide array of cultural and ideological aims. May be elected as Classics 224 or History 224.

226 Landscape and Cityscape in Ancient Rome

Not offered 2019-20

4 credits

Despite Rome being one of the greatest cities in the ancient world, its identity was fundamentally rooted in its natural landscape. In this intensive 4-week course in Italy, we will study the ancient city of Rome and its supporting landscape, both through the lens of ancient literary accounts and directly through field trips to major archeological sites and museums. We will explore how the realms of urban, rural, and wild were articulated in Roman culture, conceptually and materially. We will investigate both how the Romans conceived of the relationship between the built environment of urban space and the natural environment that supported and surrounded it and how they dealt with the real ecological problems of urban life. Students will also actively participate in archeological excavation at a Roman coastal settlement. May be elected as Classics 319 or Environmental Studies 319. *Prerequisite:*

228 Mayhem, Machines, Manifestos: Modernism in Art and Architecture

Not offered 2019-20

4 credits

Modernism in the visual arts and the built environment is more than “my kid could paint that” and clean lines on HGTV. In this course, we will study key makers, movements, works, exhibitions and institutions in the canon of modern art and architecture before 1945, as well as scholarship that has called this canon into question. Emphasis will go toward the social, political and material conditions under which modernism emerged and flourished as an aesthetic category, and how modernism articulated different senses of an avant-garde marked by nation, class, gender, sexuality and race. Our ultimate goal is to learn how artistic and architectural modernism was invented, mobilized and modified in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. Students will sharpen their visual and spatial literacy skills and deepen their historical knowledge of art and architecture. Lecture-based with presentations, short papers and exams. *Prerequisite:* Art History 103 or consent of instructor.

229 Art Since 1945**Spring****Reynolds****4 credits**

This course examines some of the issues raised by artists and critics since the end of World War II, including the changing nature of the art object, how Modernism differs from Postmodernism, the influence of technological developments on aesthetic practices and the role of popular culture, mass media and new methods of scholarship in challenging the distinctions between high and low art, the universality of meaning, the genius European male artist, the precious museum work. While the majority of the material is devoted to movements and figures from the United States and Europe, the course also will investigate “the margins” — those artistic practices that may have been overlooked by the mainstream, but which nevertheless have a broad cultural base in their respective communities.

Prerequisite:. Art History 103 or consent of instructor.

230 The Social Life of Photography**Not offered 2019-20****4 credits**

This course will explore the importance of photography to our collective history. Through careful analysis of specific images alongside an overview of the medium's aesthetic, technological and ideological turns, students will be introduced to a broad range of topics, including (but not limited to): the photograph's use as a means of documentary and artistic expression; significant photographic movements, markets and publics; theories and debates surrounding reproduction and truth claims; photography's affiliation with other modes of cultural production. Students will develop a critical toolkit for analyzing the modern world vis-à-vis this vital medium.

235 Forms and Feels: Race and Visual Culture**Fall****Uddin****4 credits**

Race is foundational to modern life and complex in its permutations. How does one go about engaging it in a critical and sensitive way? This course cultivates observation, analysis and response in this direction. We will study how racial meaning, experience and power are produced through practices of visual representation in art, film, education, science and the law, and how the visual field itself is a racial formation. We will also explore the lines between seeing race and feeling race. Topics may include racial identifications, embodiments, caricature, performance, surveillance, spectatorship, and archives. Students develop conceptual vocabularies, historical contexts and interpretive skills for understanding race in and through the visual world. Lecture-based with short papers, projects, presentations and exams. May be elected as Race and Ethnic Studies 235.

237 Theory and Performance**Spring****Petit****4 credits**

What theories have inspired contemporary avant-garde theatre, installation and performance art, tanz-theatre, experimental video/film, and new media? In this interdisciplinary course we will chart the evolution of performance theory from the writings of Bertolt Brecht to the present day. We will explore how artists have embraced and challenged these emerging forms, and examine seminal works from each genre in their historical, political, and social contexts. Designed to bring students from a variety of disciplines (art, art history, theatre, dance, film, and video, etc.) into a collaborative forum; coursework will include outside readings, in-class screenings, class discussions, and short essays, as well as group and individual projects. May be elected as Theatre 357.

240 Heidegger and Architecture**Not offered 2019-20****4 credits**

With their emphasis on place-making, Martin Heidegger's later essays, “Building Dwelling Thinking,” “Poetically Man Dwells, and “The Thing,” have informed the work of a generation of architects. This seminar uses Heidegger as a touchstone for exploring the relationship between space and dwelling, placing these essays into dialogue with Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows*, and Rybczynski's *The Most Beautiful House in the World*, as well as the work and writings of contemporary architects. The seminar is writing intensive and highly collaborative, and will include biweekly papers and responses, and a final portfolio design project and seminar presentation. May be elected as Philosophy 302. *Prerequisite:* Philosophy 202 or consent of instructor.

243 Buddhist Art in Asia**Not offered 2019-20****4 credits**

This course presents an overview of Buddhist art and architecture, beginning with its origins in South Asia and tracing its dissemination into East and Southeast Asia. A variety of media will be examined and interpreted within the context of Buddhist religious practice, regional artistic traditions, and shifting religious doctrine. Topics including the origin of the Buddha image, pilgrimage and modes of worship, Buddhist iconography, and the intersection of Buddhist religion and politics will be discussed. Several short papers, presentations, exams, and class participation are required.

246 The Art of India**Not offered 2019-20****4 credits**

This course presents an overview of the art and architecture of the Indian subcontinent spanning roughly 5,000 years of history, from the Indus Valley Civilization to the 21st century. Particular emphasis will be placed on the study of objects and sites in their religious, cultural, political, and historical contexts. Topics addressed in the class include (but are not limited to) the origin of the Buddha image, the function of erotic sculpture in religious contexts, ritual practice and sacred space, trends in patronage, cultural exchange between Muslim and Hindu courts in the medieval and early modern era, methods of art collecting and display, the impact of British imperialism on artistic production in India, the importance of visual culture in the Indian nationalist movement, and the tension between tradition and globalization in the contemporary art of South Asia. Several short papers, presentations, exams, and class participation are required.

248 Ways of Seeing: Japanese Art and Aesthetics**Fall****Takemoto****4 credits**

This class on Japanese aesthetics will focus on the literary, visual, and performing arts of Japan. As we survey the traditional arts of Japan, we will ask questions about what it means to be a craftsman, an artist, a performer, an archer, a monk/poet, or any person who has developed the skill “to see.” More specifically, this class will address the relationship between two subjects — Japanese Buddhism and the arts of Japan, and in particular, the arts related to the serving and receiving of tea. We will pay special attention to the relationship between the artistic process and Buddhist spiritual disciplines. Classes will meet for slide lectures, discussions, and demonstrations of the Japanese tea ceremony in “Chikurakken,” the Whitman College tea room. Two examinations, oral presentations, and several short essays will be required. Two periods a week. May be taken for credit toward the Japanese minor.

249 Aesthetics**Not offered 2019-20****4 credits**

After developing a critical vocabulary through an examination of Hume’s notion of taste, Kant’s “reflective judgment,” and Heidegger’s reconceptualization of the work of art in “Building Dwelling Thinking,” we apply this vocabulary to architecture using Karsten Harries’ *The Ethical Function of Architecture* to help us critically assess the “aesthetic” governing Whitman’s Penrose Library renovation project. Then moving from the “public” to the “private,” we consider the sense of “aesthetics” at work in building your own home, using as a guide Witold Rybczynski’s *The Most Beautiful House in the World*. May be elected as Philosophy 239.

250 Architectural History of Walla Walla**Spring****Reynolds****4 credits**

This course will focus on the physical development and transformation of the city of Walla Walla, including the Whitman campus, since the 1850s. Students will conduct primary research on individual buildings and plans, and present their findings to the class throughout the semester. Two project reports and presentations.

253 Transnational Interplanetary Film & Video Consciousness**Not offered 2019-20****4 credits**

This course takes its title from underground director George Kuchar’s irreverent approach to making low-budget, low brow movies that helped situate film and video as a legitimate artistic media. Topics will explore experimentations with technologies of the moving image that exist outside of mainstream commercial moviemaking

practices, histories of individual artists, groups and collectives experimenting with film and video, “expanded cinemas,” and how new forms of image production and distribution in the digital era challenge traditional hierarchies of taste and value. A weekly screening, typically no more than 1 hour, is required. The class will agree on a set screening time during our initial class meeting. Requirements include short papers and presentations and one longer research project chosen in consultation with instructor. May be taken for credit toward the Film and Media Studies major.

257-260 Topics in Visual Cultural Studies
2 or 4 credits

Any current offerings follow.

257 ST: Inventing Egypt

Fall

Miller

4 credits

This course examines the various ways in which ancient Egypt has been imagined in the European, Egyptian, and American nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with an emphasis on visual culture. Egyptology, the scientific discipline that studies Ancient Egypt, emerged in the nineteenth century in tandem with “Egyptomania,” a Western obsession with all things (ancient) Egyptian. At the same time, Egyptians were struggling against European colonial intervention and vying for control over Egyptian archeology. With particular focus on the ways in which people, imagery, and discourses circulated across three continents, the course will introduce students to the history of Europe’s “discovery” of (ancient) Egypt, the use of Pharaonic imagery in the construction of Egyptian nationhood, the place Egypt occupies in museum collections and art historical narratives, the role of ancient Egypt in American racial politics, and Egypt in European and American pop culture. Lecture and discussion-based with short response papers and a longer final paper. May be taken for credit toward the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies or Race and Ethnic Studies major. Distribution area: humanities or cultural pluralism.

291, 292 Individual Projects

Fall, Spring

Staff

2 or 4 credits

Projects designed by the student and under supervision of a professor that expand upon a completed 200- or 300-level course. *Prerequisites:* a 200- or 300-level art history course in the area of the project, and consent of the supervising instructor.

351 Los Angeles: Art, Architecture, Cultural Geography

Not offered 2019-20

4 credits

This seminar will study the emergence of Los Angeles as a center for cultural production since 1945. It will assess the relationship between urban space and the visual arts — including painting, photography, architecture, film, and video. And it will investigate the role of representation in shaping the social topography of the city. This course will ultimately seek to answer a series of questions: How has Los Angeles established itself as one of the most important global art centers? How do the city’s history and landscape create the conditions for certain artistic movements and styles? And how do Los Angeles’ ethnically and economically diverse communities use the arts to address issues of social justice and marginality? *Prerequisite:* Art History 103 or consent of instructor.

352 Art/Environment

Fall

Reynolds

4 credits

This class will explore contemporary artistic responses to climate change. Whether we call this period “Anthropocene,” “Capitalocene,” “The Sixth Extinction,” or “The Dithering” we are now forced to confront a new era of human-generated global warming and rapidly vanishing biodiversity. How are artists and other cultural producers helping us to rethink and reimagine our relationship to the planet? From the Land Art movement of the 1960s and 70s to more recent experiments in so-called “Third Nature” digital domains, this course will explore how creative individuals and collective actions are helping to envision human adaptability, cross-species justice, and new modes of collaboration to halt—or at least slow—ecological disaster. Likewise, the class will explore how art is

often implicated in the same cycle of overconsumption that threatens our shared habitats. Lectures, in-class screenings, guest speakers and fieldtrips will be used to supplement course readings. This is a writing intensive course open to students from all disciplines but rooted in the capacity for the Arts and Humanities to generate creative responses to complex problems. *Prerequisite:* Art History 103 or Environmental Studies 120 or consent of instructor.

353 Blues, Blood, Bruise: Blackness in Art

Not offered 2019-20

4 credits

What does blackness look and feel like? To whom does it belong? When and how has it generated value, reinforced power structures, or remade the world? Riffing on Glenn Ligon's 2015 installation that featured three words in white neon tubing, "blues," "blood," and "bruise," this course investigates racial blackness through the lens of modern and contemporary art. By moving between archives, expressive objects, and critical scholarship in black studies, art history and visual culture, we will study how visual art across multiple media has emerged from Afro-diasporic communities since the early 20th Century. We will ask how these practices have negotiated Euro-American canons, state violence, industrial and post-industrial capitalism, and the politics of gender and sexuality. And we will explore and assess the possibilities of art as a channel for black expression and liberation. Topics may include: the Harlem Renaissance, art and Black Power, Afrofuturism, Afropessimism and Afropolitanism. Discussion-based classes with presentations, short papers and projects. May be taken for credit toward the Gender Studies or Race and Ethnic Studies major. *Prerequisite:* Art History 103 or consent of instructor.

354 Race, Ethnicity, and the Urban Imaginary

Not offered 2019-20

4 credits

This seminar examines how differences of race and ethnicity have shaped the urban American imagination, from the nineteenth century to present day. Our studies will approach U.S. cities as visual cultures by considering a range of visual forms and practices that are familiar to urban space and its experience (e.g., realist painting, documentary photography, architecture and planning, crime film and TV, surveillance, advertising). Combining readings in urban studies with art, architectural and film history, and primary historical and visual texts, we will investigate how cities have become visual sites of racial and ethnic identity formation, and how cities themselves have become "racialized" through specific representations. Particular attention will be paid to the politics and aesthetics of urban decline and renewal in various industrial and postindustrial contexts, and how race and ethnicity have intersected with class, gender and sexuality in cityscapes. Discussion-based, with presentations/papers. *Prerequisite:* Art History 103 or consent of instructor.

356 The Taj Mahal and Beyond: The Art and Architecture of Mughal India

Not offered 2019-20

4 credits

This class explores the art and architecture of the Mughal dynasty in South Asia, from the origins of the empire in the sixteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, when British forces exiled the last Mughal ruler. Manuscript and album paintings, palace and tomb architecture, jewelry, enameled weaponry, and elaborate textiles will all be interpreted within the context of Mughal politics, Islamic doctrine, art workshop structures, and pre-existing aesthetic traditions in South Asia and the broader Islamic world. Topics examined include (but are not limited to) public space and imperial propaganda, art objects in networks of gift exchange, artistic and cultural exchange between Mughal and contemporary Rajput courts in Rajasthan and the Himalayan foothills, and the impact of the British presence on Indian visual culture. Various written assignments, presentations, and class discussion are required. May be taken for credit toward the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies major. *Prerequisite:* Art History 103 or 246, or consent of instructor.

357 Art of Colonial India

Spring

Gulbransen

4 credits

This seminar examines the impact of European colonial expansion on the art and architecture of South Asia between 1750 and 1947, when India and Pakistan gained independence from British control. Although multiple colonial

powers were present in India beginning in the early sixteenth century, a study of the British Empire in South Asia will be the primary focus of this course. Paintings, photographs, buildings, monuments, and other objects produced by both indigenous and European artists will be considered. This course explores the ways in which visual forms engaged with imperial ideologies, either promoting or resisting Western presence in India. Issues including race, gender, religion, class/caste, and the politics of display will be addressed as they relate to artistic production in this period. Various written assignments, presentations, and class discussion are required. May be taken for credit toward the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies major. *Prerequisite:* Art History 103 or 246, or consent of instructor.

358-360 Seminar in Visual Culture Studies

4 credits

Special studies not generally considered in other courses offered by the department. The specific material will vary from semester to semester and may cover various subjects from early times to contemporary developments in art. Any current offerings follow.

421, 422 Individual Projects

Fall, Spring

Staff

2 or 4 credits

Projects designed by senior Art History & Visual Culture Studies majors under the supervision of a professor.

Prerequisite: consent of supervising instructor.

490 Senior Seminar In Art History

Fall

Uddin

4 credits

Weekly discussions and critical papers based on: 1) selected primary and secondary readings in the history of western art theory (ancient, medieval, renaissance, the academy); 2) primary and secondary readings in the methodology of modern art history; and 3) primary readings in contemporary approaches to art. Emphasis will be placed on the role of the art theorist/historian in the history of art. Required for the major.

493 Thesis

Fall

Staff

4 credits

Open only to senior art history and visual culture studies majors except those registered for Art History 498. Taken during the spring (or final) semester of the senior year. Devoted to the completion of a substantial written project under the supervision of at least one faculty member. *Prerequisite:* approval of a proposal submitted to the Art History and Visual Culture Studies department.

498 Honors Thesis

Spring

Staff

4 credits

Designed to further independent investigation leading to the preparation of a written thesis or research project in art history. Taken during the spring (or final) semester of the senior year. Required of and limited to senior honors candidates in art history and visual culture studies. *Prerequisite:* admission to honors candidacy.