

ARTH200: Introduction to Art History

McGill University, Winter Term 2021

Wednesday and Friday 2:35-3:55pm EST via zoom

All lectures will be delivered live, recorded, and posted to mycourses.

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Office Hours: Friday 4:00-5:00 or by appointment. We will hold office hours using the Zoom waiting room, which allows us to let students in one at a time. We recommend posting any general questions on the discussions page of MyCourses, so that responses can be seen by the whole class.
T.A.:

A note on email etiquette: In addition to being your instructors and TA, we are also graduate students who are navigating the opportunities and challenges of academia's new online platforms. To that end, we are susceptible to "screen fatigue" just as much as you are. We will do our best to respond promptly to emergencies, but in general please allow up to 48 hours to receive a response.

James McGill was a slave owner

McGill University is located on land that has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. McGill honours, recognizes and respects these nations as the traditional stewards of these lands and waters.

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the visual cultures of the world from the ancient to present day with an emphasis on how objects, monuments, and images were made, experienced, and used by groups of people diverse in terms of religious, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds. Rather than offering a sweeping narrative that attempts to account for centuries of changes among a variety of cultures, we instead intensely focus on a set of aesthetic themes, concepts, and challenges that have been taken up by different cultures and adapted over time, such as monumentality, the sacred, embodiment, science, and technology. Through a close study of these themes, the course considers how materials, cultures, and histories were transformed and negotiated through making and viewing works of art, and ultimately challenges the art historical canon by shedding light on marginalized periods, regions, and artworks.

Required Texts

There is no singular way to write the history of art. Rather than a comprehensive textbook with its own biases--whether subconscious or explicit-- we have selected a wide range of scholars in the

hopes of exposing you to different voices, methodologies, and styles of writing. These readings have been posted to our course website under the “content” section.

Evaluation

1 Take-Home Midterm (Visual Analysis) 30%

1 Final Project (Mining the Museum) 40%

1 Take-Home Final Exam (cumulative; 2 essays, 3 pages max per essay) 30%

An assignment sheet with clear expectations and a rubric will be circulated well in advance of each’s deadline.

You will submit all three assignments via mycourses under the “assignments” section.

Work submitted for evaluation as part of this course may be checked with text matching software within mycourses.

Note that in order to pass the course, you must complete all three assignments.

***Please adhere to page limits and proper formatting (double spaced, 1” margins, size 12 font, Times New Roman or equivalent).

Midterm (Take-Home Visual Analysis)-- 24 February by midnight EST

You will be asked to compose a visual analysis (maximum 3 pages, double-spaced) on a work of art related to the themes of the course, but not discussed in lecture or in the readings. Your primary task is not to identify the object by its specific title and date, but instead to draw on key visual evidence and descriptive language in order to situate it within the patterns of exchange and networks discussed thus far. We will provide you with three options to choose from, but your analysis should discuss only one. You cannot discuss *everything*; therefore the most successful answers will have a clear thesis, well-structured presentation, and effective use of evidence. Examples of successful visual analyses will be discussed and posted on mycourses.

Final Project (Mining the Museum)-- 2 April by midnight EST

In 1992, installation artist Fred Wilson designed and staged an exhibition at the Maryland Historical Society that intervened in the established American historical narrative by inserting forgotten black artifacts and heroes (see PDF for installation photos). Wilson’s institutional intervention expressed in material terms that the canon is just a concept, not a truth, that it is ideologically constructed, and most importantly that it is malleable.

Over the course of the semester, we have explored a range of works of art and monuments that convey similar ideas but resist easy categorization. We now invite you to research and create your own canon of works possessing some kind of narrative arc. You will be responsible for selecting 5 objects of your choice, describing each in the form of a catalog entry (no more than 250 words per entry), and providing an introductory overview of their relationship that identifies the key themes or concepts your “canon” expresses (max 750 words). Examples include (but are by no means limited to): queer, Latinx, trans*, Marxism, Capitalism, Radicalism, feminism,

existentialism, surrealism, pandemics, resistance, abilism. If you are feeling unsure about your topic, you can run it by us, but you are not required to. We are happy to help you find a topic, but we will not assign one to you: this assignment is designed to let you research something that interests you. You have free reign in selecting your objects and should not feel limited to material discussed in lectures, nor by what museums and cultural institutions deem to be art. However, whatever objects you select, you must provide an image with identificatory information.

Final Exam (Take-Home)-- Due date will be assigned according to final exam schedule

You will be given a choice of five essay topics, and you will choose two. Your primary objective should be to demonstrate that you have absorbed, understood, and engaged with the material covered in the entirety of the course (not limited to the second half). Each essay should be no longer than 3 double-spaced pages and adhere to the citation requirements given for the question. Again, the strongest essays will have a clear thesis statement in the introduction that you support with organized body paragraphs.

Late marks

Late assignments will be penalized by 1 mark per day (including weekends) after the deadline. According to university regulations, extensions are only granted in the event of medical or analogous situations. Please bear in mind that this policy is strictly enforced out of fairness to all students.

Attendance and Participation

Given our current situation, facilitating large discussions on zoom is difficult but it is not impossible. We will endeavor to ask questions often and strive to facilitate a sense of community as much as possible.

As we are all in different time zones and have our own responsibilities, we are fully aware that many of you will be watching the recorded lectures rather than attending the live sessions. We will not be taking attendance at any point in the term, and we trust that you will keep up with the lectures and the readings to the best of your abilities.

Additional Resources

- Sylvain Barnett, *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*, 11th edition (Pearson, 2014).
- Christina Maranci, *A Survival Guide to Art History Students* (Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005).
- Jean Wyrick, *Steps to Writing Well*, 10th edition (Cengage, 2016).
- Oxford Art Online (Grove Art Online), encyclopedia. Access via McGill Library
- Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Electronic access: (www.metmuseum.org/toah/).
- Chicago Manual of Style Online, available through McGill Library.

- Sharon Marcus, Heather Love, and Stephen Best, “Building a Better Description,” *Representations* 135, no. 1 (2016): 1-21.

These resources are all freely available through either the internet or the McGill Library.

If you're having a hard time this term, there are mental health resources at McGill: <http://www.mcgillmentalhealthhub.ca/>. If you're not finding the help you need, come talk to us.

University Policies

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. *Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).*

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information). *L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).*

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Reading Schedule

N.B.: Assigned readings are largely intensive case studies on a single object, site, image, or related group. However, they are by no means representative of the entire lecture material. We will typically use these readings as conceptual anchors to ground us in each lecture's theme and gradually broaden our scope outwards.

Session 1 (8 January) Jacqueline Atkin and peter boudreau

Overview and introduction to the course

FIRST HALF: Ancient World to Early Modernity (peter boudreau)

Unit 1: The Monumental

What is the role of the monument? What does it signify? How do rulers choose to express their empires through large scale constructions? Are these monumental identities as permanent as their edifice or do they crack as power changes hands? What is remembered and what is forgotten in these transitions?

Session 2 (13 January): Sacred Space: Transformations and Conversions of the Ancient Temple to Church, Synagogue, and Mosque

Christina Maranci, "The Monument and the World: Zuart'noc' and the Problem of Origins," in *Convivium: Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean*, spec. issue: *The Medieval South Caucasus: Artistic Cultures of Albania, Armenia, and Georgia*, edited by Erik Thunø and Ivan Foletti, (2016): 70-87.

Session 3 (15 January): Imperial Space: Ruling Time and Space from the Palace

Cynthia Robinson, "Locating the Alhambra: a Fourteenth Century 'Islamic' Palace and its 'Western' Contexts" in *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, edited by Finbarr Barry Flood and Gülru Necipoğlu (Hoboken: Wiley Publishers, 2017), 712-732.

Session 4 (20 January): Monumentality on the Move: Strategies Beyond Brick and Mortar

Bernard O'Kane, "From Tents to Pavilions: Royal Mobility and Persian Palace Design," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 249-268.

Session 5 (22 January): The Public Monument

W.J.T. Mitchell, "The Violence of Public Art: Do The Right Thing" *Critical Inquiry* 16, no. 4 (1990): 880-899.

Unit 2: The Portable

How do objects change how spaces are experienced? Why do we feel the need to bring objects with us and what motivates the desire to take what is not ours? How does the movement of objects unsettle geographic and temporal divisions in the study of art history? What new opportunities and dangers are posed by portability?

Session 6 (27 January): Material Girls, Material Worlds: Experimentations in Ivory, Coral, and Other "New" Media

Sarah M. Guerin, "Ivory and the Ties that Bind," in *Whose Middle Ages?*, edited by Andrew Albin, Mary C. Erler, Thomas O'Donnell, Nicholas L. Paul, and Nina Rowe. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 140-153.

Session 7 (29 January): The Borders of Art History: Looking at the Kharga Oasis

Andrea Myers Achi and Seeta Chaganti, "Semper Novi Quid ex Africa: Redrawing the Borders of Medieval African Art and Considering Its Implications for Medieval Studies" in *Disturbing Times*:

Medieval Pasts, Reimagined Futures, edited by Catherine E. Karkov Anna Kłosowska, Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei (New York: Punctum Books, 2020), 73-85.

Session 8 (3 February): The Pitfalls of the Portable: Looting and the Black Market

Carolyn Dean, "The Trouble with (the Term) Art," *Art Journal* 65, no. 2 (2006): 24-32.

Session 9 (5 February): Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery: Appropriation, Authenticity, and the Copy

Alicia Walker, "Patterns of Flight: Middle Byzantine Appropriation of the Chinese Feng-Huang Bird," *Ars Orientalis* 37 (2010): 188-216.

Unit 3: The Traveler

What do we want from objects? What do they want from us? What drives us to seek them out? What motivates us to destroy them?

Session 10 (10 February): Pilgrimage, Part I: Santiago de Compostela

Cynthia Hahn, "The Voices of the Saints: Speaking Reliquaries," *Gesta* 36 (1997): 20-31.

Session 11 (12 February): Pilgrimage, Part II: *Hajj*

Simon Coleman and John Elsner, "The Centre in the Desert: Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca" in *Pilgrimage: Past and Present in World Religions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 52-73.

Session 12 (17 February): Iconoclasm

Aaron Tugendhaft, "Videos" in *The Idols of Isis: From Assyria to the Internet* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2020), 75-96.

Session 13 (19 February): Wrapping up First Half and Transitioning to Second Half: Narratives of Modern Pilgrimage

No assigned readings (catch up on any reading you may be behind on). This class is reserved for an informal discussion of material and themes covered thus far. Should we collectively find ourselves behind in lecture material, this will provide a "safety net." If not, we will have an informal discussion comparing two accounts of pilgrimage: Conrad Rudolph's modern memoir of walking the Santiago de Compostela as a retired historian of medieval art, and Helen Morales's journey to Dollywood.

Session 14 (24 February): NO CLASS, work on midterm

*****Midterm due to mycourses by midnight, EST (Montreal)*****

SECOND HALF: Renaissance to Contemporary (Jacqueline Atkin)

Unit 4: Women in Art

How have women figured as both subjects and creators of art? What can representations of women tell us about their experiences? What can they tell us about how women were perceived and treated by those who painted them? What challenges have women artists faced historically?

Session 15 (26 February): Women Artists in the Renaissance and Early Modern World

Mary D. Garrard, "Here's Looking at Me: Sofonisba Anguissola and the Problem of the Woman Artist," in *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After Post-Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 26–47.

No class 3-5 March: STUDY BREAK

Session 16 (10 March): Guest Speaker - Adrienne Johnson, McGill University

Readings TBD

Session 17 (12 March): Women Artists and Working Women in 19th-Century France

Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and Spaces of Femininity," in *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and the Histories of Art*. London: Routledge, 1988.

Mary Hunter, "White Collars and Working Bodies in the Age of Industry," in *Impressionism in the Age of Industry*. Edited by Caroline Shields. Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario; Prestel, 2019.

Session 18 (17 March): Women in Avant-Garde Spaces

Tamar Garb, "The Portrait in Pieces: Cubism's Corpus," in *The Painted Face: Portraits of Women in France 1814-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007): 181-209.

Carol Duncan, "The MoMA's Hot Mamas," *Art Journal* 48, no. 2 (Summer 1989): 171-78.

Unit 5: Modernism and the Project of Colonization

How did colonialism shape modernist art practices? How were European artists influenced by non-Western cultures? How did they represent cultures and spaces that were not their own?

Session 19 (19 March): Picasso's "African Period" and the Origins of Cubism

Patricia Leighton "The White Peril and L'art Nègre: Picasso, Primitivism and Anticolonialism" *The Art Bulletin* 72, no. 4 (1990): 609-630.

Session 20 (24 March): Gauguin's "Primitive" Sojourn

Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Going Native: Paul Gauguin and the Invention of Primitivist Modernism," in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*. Edited by Norma Broude, Mary D. Garrard et al. (New York: Icon Editions, 1992): 313-328.

Session 21 (26 March): A Vision of Elsewhere

Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," in *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society*. New York: Harper and Row, 1989.

Session 22 (31 March): Displaying, Capturing, and Manufacturing "Other" Identities

Anne Maxwell, "Preface," "Introduction," and "A Lens on the Other: Photographs of Non-Western Peoples by Anthropologists and Travelers," in *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions: Representations of the "Native" and the Making of European Identities* (London: Leicester University Press, 2000): ix–xi; 1–14; 38–72.

Unit 6: Photography, Science, and Art

How did the advent of photography affect how people made, perceived, and used images? What roles has photography played in the sciences? How have scientific ideas and images informed artistic practices?

Session 23 (2 April): Photography's Promise of Objectivity

Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," in *Image/Music/Text*. Translated by Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977): 32–51.

Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, "Epistemologies of the Eye," in *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2007): 17–54.

Session 24 (7 April): Recording the Pathological

*****Final Project due by midnight, EST (Montreal)*****

Chris Amirault, "Posing the Subject of Early Medical Photography." *Discourse* 16, no. 2 (1993): 51–76.

Susan Sidlauskas, "Inventing the Medical Portrait: Photography at the 'Benevolent Asylum' of Holloway, C. 1885–1889." *Medical Humanities* 39, no. 1 (2013): 29–37.

Session 25 (9 April): When Science and Art Meet

Anthea Callen, "Physiognomy and Difference," in *The Spectacular Body: Science, Method, and Meaning in the Work of Degas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995): 1–35.

Session 26 (14 April): Contemporary Responses

Martin Kemp and Marina Wallace, "Part III: New Bodies," in *Spectacular Bodies: The Art and Science of the Human Body from Leonardo to Now* (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017): 148–210.

Session 27 (16 April): Tying up loose ends (Jacqueline Atkin and peter boudreau)

Concluding remarks on the course

FINAL EXAM due TBD (will be scheduled according to university's exam period)