ART 4392-002 – VISUAL CULTURE

SUMMER 2012 SYLLABUS* 3 CREDIT HOURS

* This syllabus is subject to minor revisions. Any changes will be announced.

Dr. Amanda Alexander
Assistant Professor of Art Education, Department of Art + Art History

E-mail: amandaa@uta.edu
Office: Fine Arts Bldg., Room 296
Office Phone: (817) 272-2810 (Art Office)

Office Hours: During Class or By Appointment

Students are encouraged to meet with the professor regarding concerns about the course before or after the class or at an agreeable time.

Course Meetings:
1:00-3:00p, Monday through Thursday in FA 358
Attendance is required

Course Description:
In this course, we will critically investigate personal, national and global identities. Personal and communal narratives surrounding visual culture define and construct meaning in our everyday lives. Visual culture is investigated as a site through which social and cultural definitions, norms and values, and expectations are reinforced, constructed as well as challenged. The goals for this course are to develop students' skills in critical thinking that revolve around studio artwork, writing, reading, and oral expression and foster an understanding of the pluralistic nature of institutions, society, and culture(s) of the United States and beyond.

Rationale:
In this country, due to social, political, historical, and cultural inequities, many individuals and/or groups are disenfranchised or empowered on the basis of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, and geographic location to name a few. This form of inequity or privilege is influenced by and influences construction, production and consumption of visual culture (which includes both visual art and popular media). This course has been constructed to confront and address the issues raised through the exploration of visual culture in the hope of challenging our biases and discriminatory practices within our society, which hinders democracy and social justice. This course provides opportunities for students to focus and communicate their learning and development to increase their multicultural competencies as national and world citizens.

Course Objectives:
This course is designed to facilitate student learning and meet the goals and objectives by providing opportunities to:

- Analyze personal identity (through its many components) and its construction as it determines everyday behaviors and choices.

- Identify and examine ideas and issues, values and beliefs found in visual media.
- Interpret contemporary social and political views influencing the production and the consumption of visual culture.
- Investigate conditions of change impacting visual culture: education, technology, economics, political and more.
- Improve critical thinking skills through careful description, analysis, interpretation and evaluation of readings, videos, presentations, and fieldtrips.
- Refine skills in inquiry methods, studio artwork, expository writing and oral communication.

Instructional Activities:
The syllabus, assignments, calendar, and reading lists are available on Facebook and through Email. Students are responsible for maintaining a UTA email account for professional communication (STUDENTS **MUST** USE UTA EMAIL ACCOUNT FOR COMMUNICATION WITH PROFESSOR). Students should frequently check their email and announcements on Facebook. It is necessary to be self-motivated and open-minded.

Instructional activities will include the following:
- Reading Assignments – 4Qs: Qualms, Questions, Quotes & Quality Ideas
- Art Projects
- Writing Assignments
- Facebook Discussions

Required Reading:
Silverman, J & Rader, D. (2009). *The world is a text: Writing, reading and thinking about visual and popular culture*. 3rd edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Students' Digital Hardware
Each student needs to own a digital camera to be used for this course.

Americans with Disabilities Act:
The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

Attendance Policy:
Class meets Monday through Thursday for only five weeks. With that in mind, attendance is necessary (punctuality is even more important). More than three absences or continual tardiness will constitute a lower grade by one letter (see attendance policy of the university). Students should notify professor of absence via email at least an hour before class.

Drop Policy:
Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance**. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (http://wweb.uta.edu/ses/fao).

Academic Integrity:
At UT Arlington, academic dishonesty is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated in any form, including (but not limited to) "cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts" (UT System Regents' Rule 50101, §2.2). Suspected violations of academic integrity standards will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

Student Support Services:
UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may contact the Maverick Resource Hotline by calling 817-272-6107, sending a message to resources@uta.edu, or visiting www.uta.edu/resources.

Student Feedback Survey:
At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as lecture, seminar, or laboratory will be asked to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS) about the course and how it was taught. Instructions on how to access the SFS system will be sent directly to students through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback data is required by state law; student participation in the SFS program is voluntary.

R-Rating Disclaimer:
Some materials in this course may be of controversial nature and deal with images or words that some people find offensive. Such material may be covered occasionally in class and in the readings. The percentage of this material to more acceptable material in this class is very low, but it is a necessary component of the course. If you are easily shocked and/or offended by such material, this course may not be appropriate for you.

Grading:
Your grade in this class will be determined by considering a number of factors and performance. In all aspects of this course, sincere effort counts and gradual improvement is expected. Strong academic skills including research and communication are necessary for successful completion of assignments. Attendance and classroom participation is also a factor. In-class and homework

projects and activities are evaluated in part on the amount of work involved and the care and concern with which they are done. There is NO ALLOWANCE for the late submission of papers or other assignments.

Grading Scale:

A	90 to100
B	80 to 89
C	70 to 79
D	60 to 69
F	below 60

Paper Style and Format

All written assignments completed outside of class must be typed, meet required length, and should include:

- Your name, course title, assignment title and date.
- A descriptive title for the paper.
- Page numbers on all pages
- Left and right margin: no larger than 1.5"; Top and bottom margin: no larger than 1.0"
- Use 12 point Times or Times New Roman font
- Double-space all lines
- Spell check, proof read, and **staple.**
- For Final Project: Please follow the *American Psychological Association's* citation style

Assignments:

1. **Papers (20%)**
   - **Site Paper/Presentation:**
     We (or the student) will visit (in person) a cultural site or program, observe its characteristics, gather information (brochures, photos, etc), and write a 2-page typed, double-spaced paper. The paper will demonstrate how visual images contribute to a sense of "place" and should explain how these images relate to the individuals who visit the site, the immediate community and the larger social/cultural conditions.
   - **Event Paper/Presentation:**
     Students will attend 1 event that is pre-approved by instructor. This event can be a gallery exhibition, concert, lecture, and/or celebratory event that **is not** of one's cultural group. The student will write a 2-page paper that includes a description of the event (5Ws: Who, What, When, Where & Why), inferences from the description and a summary that includes what the student learned from the event.

2. **Artwork(s) (40%)**
   - **Identity Collage**
     Who are you? Create an identity collage using different images that visually represent you and tells viewers about your identity. The size, medium and images are up to you, but think creatively because this collage could be used in your overall portfolio when you graduate. After completion of the collage, you will take a high-resolution photo of it, and post it on our course Facebook page.
   - **Photographic Phenomenon**

How is society damaging the world? Pick one theme and take five photos that represent that theme. I want you to critically think about what these images mean to you and what they might mean to others. The images need to be a body of work. You will post these on our course Facebook page.

- **Consumerism Video**
  What does consumerism look like? You will pick 1 of the 5 consumption steps (this will be your theme) from the Story of Stuff website and create a 1:30-2:00 minute video about this theme. Please be creative. Again, if done well, these could be part of your overall graduating portfolio. Post this to our course Facebook page.
- **App Art**
  What might you do to change the way people stereotype? Thinking about your answer to this statement, you will download an App to create a piece of artwork that demonstrates your answer or represents stereotyping in society. These will be posted to our course Facebook page.

With each project, you will be required to write a statement in class that will prompt your thinking about the topic and project. Each project will be posted to our course Facebook page by midnight Saturday, and each student will post 2 comments on other people's work by midnight Sunday.

3. Final Project (30%)
For this project, students will work in groups of four to complete a visual culture project by picking one topic from the course and researching it more in depth. Students will write a 3-5-page research paper on the topic (using formal, legitimate sources – citing them correctly), create an artwork to accompany the research (size and medium of your choice), and present the work to the class (20 minute presentation). Students will also need to incorporate a social action component to the project. What can you do to make people aware of this issue, how can you take action, and what does that look like?

4. In-Class & Online Discussions, Activities & Participation (10%)
Class participation includes attendance, class discussion, in-class writing, and homework activities. Students are expected to willingly participate in all of these activities with serious enthusiasm. Please approach all class related activities with a fresh and non-judgmental mind while being open to possibilities.