

Aesthetics, Values, and Authority
Art as Persuasion¹
IDH 3034-RVF / Class #: 85096
The Honors College, Florida International University
Fully Online Course
Fall 2016, August 22-December 3

Instructor

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Office hours: by appointment/scheduled
Location: DM 233

Insofar as power is a matter of presentation, its cultural currency in antiquity (and still today) was the creation, manipulation, and display of images. - Jas Elsner

In a nutshell, the *Art as Persuasion* fully online course focuses on the cultural and political appropriation of visual and performance art for the purposes of public conformity, propaganda, and dissent (1935-present day).

Course Summary

Art, informed by the human experience, no matter its epoch, focus, or demographic, is wrought with dissension and counterpoint; and while scholars have learned to dig deeper and not allow insufficiency of findings to resolve into indifferent wrongness, they have also learned to not take the contradictions of our history too personally. There is no such thing as perspective-free history since those who write the history are themselves fallible. While one may agree with the words of R.G. Collingwood regarding man's self-knowledge, your 'res gestae,' being the indicator of our incumbent progress, historical accuracy comes only from an honest intention. And honesty is, perhaps, out of reach for us. Keeping this in mind throughout the semester, we will examine how ambitions of power and the development of certain artistic (visual and performance) canons were mutually influenced; what rebel vs. state-sponsored art can tell us about ruling regimes and power relations; how propaganda in art affected society and historical events; and how our own preconceptions and contemporary concerns about propaganda, media, and political manipulation color our own approach to recent history and current culture.

Course Objectives and Outcomes

- Students will gain an understanding of the various filters through which they understand themselves, others, and the interconnected histories of visual and performance art.
- Students will gain insight into the authority of visuals and artifacts – or the lack of – in their understanding or misunderstanding of history, politics and culture.
- Students will gain appreciation of the breadth of the performing / visual arts as cultural mediums (including the limitations) for accessing target populations.
- Students will learn to recognize the influence of Western values on how they perceive themselves and others.
- Students will examine the relationship between art, political power, and identity.
- Students will explore and analyze the different media and techniques of message dissemination through visual/non-verbal means in Western politics.
- Students will improve their analytical writing skills by learning to read, understand, and criticize scholarship.

Required Textbooks or Readings

All required course text and readings will be made available via external website links or embedded .pdf. There is no required textbook purchase. At the end of every lecture is a bibliography, and the student has the opportunity to read further in any module where s/he may seek further knowledge or understanding.

Course Format

The format of this course will consist of mostly discussion with some limited lecture based in film and PowerPoint. At the end of each week, a guide to the readings as well as the Discussion Board assignment for the following week will be handed out. To facilitate discussion, you are expected to complete the assigned reading ahead of time and study any images/video posted on the course website; the weekly Discussion Board assignment is intended to help you keep up with this material and to prepare you for analytical written assignments and your final multimedia project. Readings will be made available on Blackboard.

A note about the Course Documents and Readings

The assigned study material will fall into roughly three categories:

- 1) general background reading
- 2) image and video sources
- 3) scholarly articles and essays

¹ Syllabus and calendar subject to change.

The vast bulk of your readings will fall within these categories; these need to be read carefully. All of them will have been written in order to explicitly argue one or more interpretations, and often will be written from a strong point of view. After reading these essays, it is important that you be able to articulate the author's thesis, the arguments, the evidence, the methodology, and any assumptions or presumptions that underlie the narrative.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Discussion Board (weekly): Brief essays (ca. ½ to 1 page) that respond to a question or set of questions, one of the readings, or an image or images. You must post early enough to allow other classmates to respond to your post. You are required to respond to *two* other posts by classmates. These will be graded for content and style. There will be several of these; I will drop the one with the lowest grade from your average. *Do not* underestimate the importance of these.

Analytical Paper: A paper (ca. 5-6 pages + bibliography/works cited) analyzing a given work of art, intended to get you thinking about how to look at art, images, and performance footage. You'll have various options, including monument/object comparisons, an analysis of a movie adaptation of an event/person, or a response to some scholarship.

Analytical Paper will be paired with Video Blog #2 – an oral summary of your research. This helps you speak informally (but succinctly) about your research, as a way of sharing with your fellow classmates.

Multimedia 'Ekphrastic' Project: Guidelines and recommendations to be made available online. Choose any artwork from 1930-present day and any country of origin. The artwork can be any medium – performance, musical, theatrical, visual, graphic, editorial, literature, etc. Translate the message of that artwork into a new medium (something that is different than the original artwork). Make sure that both the original artwork and your art translation are 'saying' the same thing, using propaganda and visual rhetoric learned in the course.

Multimedia 'Ekphrastic' Project will be paired with Video Blog #3 – an oral summary of the 'hows' and 'whys' of your project, the choices made in adapting the artwork and your decision making process.

Final Reflection Paper: A looser written assignment than the prior analytical papers (ca. 2-4 pages). This serves as a reaction to course material presented, so that the professor may have evidence of objectives met. This also serves to express how the student has assimilated the course material into a framework for critically observing and understanding contemporary examples of the coursework presented within the students' own lexicon of daily experience.

Extra Credit: If an exhibit or performance is available that focuses on some aspect of this course, the student may ask permission to attend and write a brief (ca. 2 page) reflection of the work they witnessed. Please note, further proof of attendance at the exhibit must be submitted along with the reflection paper (i.e. image of student with art work, or scanned ticket/admission).

Grading Breakdown

Discussions (9) = 25 Points
Analytical Paper (1) = 15 Points
Multimedia Project (1) = 25 Points
Final Reflection Paper (1) = 10 Points
Quizzes (3) = 15 Points
Video Blogs (3) = 10 Points

Total: 100 Points

Extra Credit: 5 Points (max, at the discretion of the professor)

Grading Scale

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
93	89	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	<45

Attendance

This is a fully online course. As such, no attendance will be taken. The *only* barometer for assessing student participation will be in the *timely* submissions of assignments and discussions throughout the semester.

Policies

Physical, Mental and Sensory Challenges

Every effort will be made, where feasible and practical, to accommodate students who are so challenged. Should you require accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center, if you have not done so already.

Honors Citizenship Requirements

All members of the Honors College are expected to be active citizens of the College, the university, and the community at large. To be a committed Honors College student is to take advantage of enhanced learning opportunities and to assume a leadership role in the world. All College members are expected to participate in the community-building activities listed below:

1. Attend one Honors Excellence Lecture per academic year and one Honors Colloquium per semester (fall and spring). (Attendance will be taken).
2. Participate in the Honors College Convocation each fall. (Attendance will be taken).
3. Attend at least three Honors Hour sessions per semester or enrichment events specified by the Honors College as satisfying this requirement. (Attendance will be taken).
4. Perform at least ten hours of Community Service per semester either through the Honors College service partnerships (Sweetwater, Overtown Youth Center, etc.) or through other community service projects and/or events. If you want to apply this service to your graduation portfolio, be sure to document your hours.

Academic Misconduct Policy

Registration in this course implies an acceptance of and compliance with the Honors College policies for students and the FIU Code of Academic Integrity. Please refer to the following documents for additional information:

FIU Code of Academic Integrity: <http://www.fiu.edu/~dwyere/academicintegrity.html>

FIU Honors College Student Handbook: <http://honors.fiu.edu/handbook0910.html>

FIU Honors College Plagiarism Policy: http://honors.fiu.edu/current_policy_plagiarism.html

Student Portfolios

The Honors College will be using a portfolio method to assess students' learning outcomes. The portfolio method allows for maximum flexibility in gauging student learning. You will decide (with instructor consultation) what "artifacts" or assignments to include for consideration in your portfolios to demonstrate successful achievement of each of the student learning outcomes.

Portfolios provide a rich context for students to show what they have learned and to explain their learning process. Because the Honors curriculum is thought provoking and reflective, student self-assessment through portfolios will facilitate learning and provide in-depth assessment.

Each Honors College course includes at least one assignment that could potentially fit portfolio requirements.

Global Learning Objectives

This course has been certified as meeting the university's Global Learning requirement. This semester's major component, Reacting to the Past, satisfies all three of the Honors College Global Learning Objectives.

Global Awareness: Through your engagement in writing analytical papers, you will demonstrate knowledge of the interrelated dynamics (social-cultural, political, economic, etc.) that shape the diverse thinking of multiple figures in diverse cultural contexts.

Global Perspective: Through your engagement in the "reacting" game and writing the research paper, you will be able to analyze the multiple causal forces that shape the perspectives of historical individuals — economic, political, sociological, technological, cultural, etc.

Global Engagement: Through your engagement in the Discussion Board and multimedia project, you will demonstrate a willingness to engage in evidence-based negotiation in order to solve a global issue.

Changes will be announced in class or by FIU email: pwinter@fiu.edu

No tardy assignments accepted. No emailed or late responses accepted.

Schedule of Modules²

Introduction to Course Material

Week 1 (Aug 22-Aug 26): Introduction to the Course (Video Blog #1)

Week 2 (Aug 29-Sep 2): The Power of Images: Defining 'Propaganda' (.ppt) (Discussion Board #1)

Philosophies of Art and Politics

Week 3 (Sep 5-Sep 9): Post-Modernism and Modernism (vid lecture) (Quiz #1)

*September 5 is Labor Day. Blackboard will still be available in case you'd like to work on assignments.

Week 4 (Sep 12-Sep 16): Historiography (vid lecture), Post-Colonialism + Cultural Appropriation (.ppt) (Discussion Board #2)

Week 5 (Sep 19-Sep 23): Nature, Object, Method, and Value (.ppt) (Discussion Board #3)

Week 6 (Sep 26-Oct 30): Identity, Performance, and Aesthetics (vid lecture) (Discussion Board #4)

World War II, Nazism, and *Ausdruckstanz*

Week 7 (Oct 3-Oct 7): Laban, Jooss, and Wigman (.ppt) (Discussion Board #5)

Week 8 (Oct 10-Oct 14): Degenerate Art, Fighting for Modernism (film) (Quiz #2)

Week 9 (Oct 17-Oct 21): Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Birth of Butoh (film) (Discussion Board #6)

American Dreams, American Realities

Week 10 (Oct 24-Oct 28): Racial Tensions and Rise of Rock and Roll (Discussion Board #7 + Analytical Paper + Video Blog #2)

Week 12 (Oct 31-Nov 4): The Grand Narrative in Visual Art + Norman Rockwell (Discussion Board #8)

Week 13 (Nov 7-Nov 11): Korean War and Joseph McCarthy(ism): Allegory and *Inherit the Wind* (film) (Quiz #3)

*November 11 is Veterans Day. Blackboard will still be available in case you'd like to work on assignments.

Week 14 (Nov 14-Nov 18): First Televised Presidential Debates: The Public Image (Discussion Board #9)

Week 15 (Nov 21-Nov 25): Wrap-Up and Looking Forward 1961-present (No Assignments Due)

*November 24 and 25 is Thanksgiving Holiday. Blackboard will still be available, but there are no assignments due this week.

Week 16 (Nov 28-Dec 2): Work on Multimedia Project (Ekphrasis Project + Video Blog #3)

Week 17 (Dec 5-Dec 9): Final Submissions (Reflection Paper + Extra Credit)

*Final Week of the semester. Reflection Paper and Extra Credit are due this week, but you can submit earlier if you are able.

² To be revised as the semester progresses. See separate handouts in Course Documents for assigned readings, guide to these readings, and discussion topics.