



Visual Studies Graduate Certificate Course Guide: Spring 2025

Required Courses:

VISS 501: Introduction to Visual Studies: Methods and Debates

Akira Mizuta Lippit

SCB 104

Monday

1-3:50pm

Over the last two decades, visual studies has gained wide currency as a topic of research and teaching in universities both in the United States and abroad. Scholars from disciplines as diverse as art history, American studies, literature, anthropology, film and media studies, history and gender studies have focused attention on both the cultural specificity of vision and on the ever-widening array of images and objects available for viewing. This course will provide a critical introduction to the history, methods and central debates within the field. How have scholars and critics taken up – or in some cases dismissed – the study of visual studies and to what ends? What are the limits and possibilities of the interdisciplinary models on offer? We will explore these questions through a sustained engagement with selected texts about images, vision, visuality and visual objects.

Summer 2025: May 19-June 13, 2025

VISS 599: Special Topics: Images Out of Time: Berlin's Museum Island

Megan Luke and Vanessa R. Schwartz

This graduate seminar is the capstone of the VSRI's NEH funded "Images Out of Time" seminar which considers how images travel through time, dropping in and out of linear histories and reshaping perception, institutions, and social practices along the way. We will study images and objects that are at odds with the moment of their appearance, whether they outlived their initial function or lost contact with their original cultural contexts. Monuments to unjust pasts; icons manifesting fallen gods; ancient ruins in modern structures; replicas and forgeries; old images restored by new technologies: these images force a paradox into view.

Two weeks of intensive reading and seminars via zoom with trips to museums wherever students are located if possible will be followed by an eight-day trip to Berlin where this problematic will be applied to the UNESCO World Heritage Site known as "Museum Island" – a remarkable ensemble of buildings that encompasses five museums built in the 19th century, recently renovated to mark the reunification of Germany, including the on-going Pergamon Museum (with the Roman Pergamon Altar) and the reconfiguration of the ethnographic collections: The Humboldt Forum. The Humboldt Forum, located in the former Berlin Palace on Museum Island, is named after Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt, late 18th century Prussian naturalists, explorers, and scholars. A brief history of ethnographic and archeological museums in Germany will provide an understanding of the origins of the new Humboldt Forum. Constructed on ground that until 1989 had been part of former Eastern German Republic, the Humboldt Forum is a symbol of the new unified Germany but also a target of postcolonial critiques. There will also be visits to other important museums and sites in the city, such as

Alexanderplatz, Potsdamer Platz, Unter den Linden, the Brandenburg Gates, the Jewish Museum and the Holocaust Memorial as well as group lunches and dinners in Berlin.

Lectures, readings and discussion intersect art history, religious studies, history, anthropology, literature, and film, and cuts across divisions separating premodern and modern, as well as European, Atlantic, and Pacific spheres.

Students who wish to enroll must be simultaneously enrolled in the VSGC and will be required to apply for VSRI research support in Spring 2025.

Pre-approved Seminars:

AHIS 520: Seminar in Modern Art: Ornament, Decoration, and the Other

Amy Ogata THH 308 Thursday 2-4:50pm

This seminar explores the place of the Other in the construction of western notions of ornament and decoration. Concentrating on the period from the late eighteenth through the twentieth century, we will study how theories of ornamentation were formed in relation to images of nature and ideas of alterity. Although the discourse on embellishment was established well before this era, it acquired new significance in the context of imperialism and industrialization in the nineteenth century. In addition to a close examination of key primary texts, such as those by Semper, Riegl, Jones, Dresser, and Loos, we will draw on ample recent scholarship to look at how ornament continues to provide a visual and ideological basis for ideas of decoration that is sustained to this day.

ANTH 502: Contemporary Theory in Anthropology

Janet Hoskins OFFICE Tuesday 2-4:50pm

Explores the emergence and transformation of modern anthropology as an empirically based, but theoretically informed, practice of knowledge production about human sociality and culture.

CTCS 517: Topics in Cultural Studies

Laura Isabel Serna SCA 316 Monday 10-1:50pm

Introduction to central concepts, key theories and leading figures in cultural studies, particularly as they relate to issues of popular culture and visual media.

CTCS 518: Seminar: Avant-garde Film/Video

Jennifer Wild SCA 316 Wednesday 10am-1:50pm

Aesthetic, historical and ideological issues in avant-garde film and video.

EALC 509: Transnational Korean Cinema

Youngmin Choe DMC 153 Thursday 2-4:50pm

Korean cinema since the early 20th century, focusing on transnational production, circulation and consumption.

ENGL 620: Literature and Interdisciplinary Studies

Susan McCabe

TBA

Tuesday

2-4:50pm

Issues and theory of studying literature in relation to history, science, politics, psychology, religion, sociology, media, the visual arts, and other disciplines.

Seminars that may be approved for substitution:**AHIS 528: The Seminar in Colonia Latin American Art**

Daniela Bleichmar

THH 308

Wednesday

2-4:50pm

This seminar provides an in-depth introduction to the history of art, visual culture, and material culture in Latin America during the colonial period (ca. 1492–1820). We will investigate the cultural, social, and political history of images and objects with an interdisciplinary approach that draws from art history, history, indigenous studies, and colonial/postcolonial studies. We will analyze a wide range of materials including paintings, drawings, prints, maps, architecture, urban planning, texts, furniture, and textiles. Readings will include classic works as well as recent publications, and both primary and secondary sources. The conversation will be interdisciplinary and students from any field in the humanities and humanistic social sciences are very welcome to enroll regardless of disciplinary affiliation and area or period of specialization. Knowledge of Spanish is not required.

AHIS 540: Transatlantic Art: Land, Landscape, Environment, Eco-criticism 1800-1900 in the art of Britain and the United States

Kate Flint

THH 308

Tuesday

2-4:50pm

This course offers an introduction to the depiction of land, landscape, and the natural world in British and American art of the nineteenth century. It assesses how we might analyze it historically, and in relation to issues that are foregrounded in today's eco-criticism. We will examine conventions for looking at and representing landscape; the impact of human activity on the environment – whether through cultivation, industrialization, extraction, tourism, or the American Civil War; questions of land, labor, access, ownership, occupancy, stewardship and conservation; fascination with the detail and with the vast; the relationship of a landscape to time, scale, and theories of place; and the affective reach of the natural world whether witnessed in person or through representation.

Offered under the rubric of AHIS 540, "Transatlantic Art," the content and structure of this course is designed to lead students to assess differences and similarities in Britain and North America in terms of artistic styles, mediums, modes of exhibition and forms of patronage, art publications and criticism, and the democratization of art practices and access to art. It will consider how both artists and works of art travel; how the transatlantic dissemination of ideas and conventions affected the making and reception of art, and the impact of particular exhibitions and of visual reproduction (engraving, photography, the illustrated book). The course seeks, additionally, to place transatlanticism within a framework of wider global issues and exchanges, including formal and informal imperial expansion, and the environmental impact of global trade and flows of capital.