ARTH 4810.002 – Topics in Art History: The Visual Culture of Science, 1800–Today
Fall 2023, 3 credits
Mondays & Wednesdays, 12:30–1:50 PM, ART 280

Professor Contact Information
Carey Gibbons
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Office hours: Mondays from 2:00–3:00 PM and Wednesdays from 3:30–4:30 PM. Also available by appointment (in-person or Zoom).

Course description
This course investigates connections between science and fine art, illustration, graphic design, and other forms of popular imagery from 1800 to the present. A particular emphasis will be placed on the close relationship between science and visual culture during the nineteenth century. The course will demonstrate how art helps to produce science and science informs art, showing how they are not compartmentalized, separate fields but in continual dialogue with one another. A variety of topics will be explored, including but not limited to landscape painting, botanical and natural history illustration, medical illustration, science fiction illustration and typography, gardening video games, infographics, and astronomical drawings and photography.

Course structure & content
This class meets in person. Readings are from a variety of sources and will be posted on Canvas. Make sure you do your readings and any required work before our class days. Readings will be supplemented by lectures, discussions (both in-person and on Canvas discussion boards), and class activities throughout the semester. I have included a course schedule of topics and readings in this syllabus, but be sure to check your email and Canvas regularly for any adjustments to the schedule.

Course objectives
• Students will investigate various forms of visual culture in connection with different scientific disciplines.
• Students will reach an understanding of the dynamic, fluid relationship between visual culture and science.
• Students will engage in and recognize the value of a cross-disciplinary analysis of art, design, and popular imagery since 1800.
• Students will apply the vocabulary and analytical skills needed to conduct research and present conclusions thoughtfully in verbal and written form.
Course disclaimer
Content in the arts and design can sometimes include works, situations, actions, and language that can be personally challenging or offensive to some students on the grounds, for example, of sexual explicitness, violence, or blasphemy. We might encounter examples of harmful stereotypes, racially insensitive images, and expressions of cultural and racial superiority. As the College of Visual Arts and Design is devoted to the principle of freedom of expression, artistic and otherwise, it is not the college’s practice to censor these works or ideas on any of these grounds. Students who might feel unduly distressed or made uncomfortable by such expressions should consider withdrawing at the start of the term and seeking another course.

Technical assistance
At UNT we have an IT Help Desk that you can contact for help with Canvas or other technology issues.
Email: helpdesk@unt.edu
Live Chat: https://it.unt.edu/helpdesk/chatsupport
Phone: 940-565-2324
In Person: Sage Hall, Room 330
Hours and Availability: Visit https://it.unt.edu/helpdesk for up-to-date hours and availability.

Acceptable Student Behavior
Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct.

Rules of Engagement
Rules of engagement refer to the way students are expected to interact with each other and with their instructors. These rules will be factored into your final participation grade. Here are some general guidelines:
• While the freedom to express yourself is a fundamental human right, any communication that utilizes cruel and derogatory language on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law will not be tolerated.
• Treat your instructor and classmates with respect, even when their opinion differs from your own.
• Speak from personal experiences. Try not to speak on behalf of groups or another individual’s experiences.
• Use your critical thinking skills to respectfully challenge other people’s ideas, instead of attacking individuals.

Student Support Services
UNT provides mental health resources to students to help ensure there are numerous outlets to turn to that wholeheartedly care for and are there for students in need, regardless of the nature of an issue or its severity. Listed below are several resources on campus that can support your academic success and mental well-being:

• Student Health and Wellness Center (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center)
• Counseling and Testing Services (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services)
• UNT Care Team (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care)
• UNT Psychiatric Services (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry)
• Individual Counseling (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling)

Other student support services offered by UNT include
• Registrar (https://registrar.unt.edu/registration)
• Financial Aid (https://financialaid.unt.edu/)
• Student Legal Services (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services)
• Career Center (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center)
• Multicultural Center (https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center)
• Pride Alliance (https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance)
• UNT Food Pantry (https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry)

Academic Support Services
• Academic Resource Center (https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources)
• Academic Success Center (https://success.unt.edu/asc)
• UNT Libraries (https://library.unt.edu/)
• Writing Lab (http://writingcenter.unt.edu/)
• MathLab (https://math.unt.edu/mathlab)

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences
According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic
dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

**ADA Accommodation Statement**
UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one’s specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website at disability.unt.edu.

**Emergency Notification & Procedures**
UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

**Survivor Advocacy**
UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Federal laws (Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act) and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, and therefore prohibit sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking, and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. UNT’s Survivor Advocates can assist a student who has been impacted by violence by filing protective orders, completing crime victim’s compensation applications, contacting professors for absences related to an assault, working with housing to facilitate a room change where appropriate, and connecting students to other resources available both on and off campus. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565-2648. Additionally, alleged sexual misconduct can be non-confidentially reported to the Title IX Coordinator at oeo@unt.edu or at 940-565-2759.

**Course Requirements & Grade Distribution**
- Attendance: 10%
- Participation: 15%
- Midterm Multiple Choice Exam: 15%
- Midterm Short Essay: 20%
- Final Group Oral Presentation: 10%
- Final Project: 30%
**Attendance**
Students are expected to attend class meetings regularly and to abide by the attendance policy established for the course. Your Attendance grade will be lowered by one full letter grade for more than 2 unexcused absences. An excused absence is granted if you are ill or have an urgent reason for being unable to attend class. Appropriate documentation is required (i.e. a doctor’s note or proof of a positive Covid test) unless I tell you otherwise. It is important that you communicate with me prior to being absent so we can discuss and mitigate the impact of the absence on your attainment of course learning goals. Excessive tardiness will count as an absence (3 late arrivals=1 unexcused absence). Do not leave the class while it is in session unless you have an urgent reason.

**Participation**
It is required that each student come to class having completed the required reading and any assignments. You are also expected to participate in class discussions and any in-class or asynchronous activities that are assigned. Additionally, discussion board responses will factor into your participation grade. There will be 10–15 discussion board questions posted to Canvas, and you should aim to contribute to at least 1/3 of the total number of posts in order to maintain an “A” for Participation. If you are not regularly contributing in person to class discussions, you are encouraged to participate more to the Canvas discussion posts. No cell phones shall be visible or audible in the classroom after class begins unless there is an emergency. If you are seen using a phone repeatedly during class without permission, your participation grade will suffer.

**Midterm Multiple Choice Exam + Short Essay**
You will have a midterm multiple choice exam on Canvas during class time on Wednesday, October 11. The exam will cover important topics from the readings and lectures. You will also complete a short essay of at least 800 words and no more than 1500 words. You will be provided with a choice of questions a week in advance and will need to choose one question to answer. You are allowed to refer to readings and notes for both the multiple choice exam and essay.

**Final Group Oral Presentation**
I will assign groups of 3–4 students each, and you will be expected to give a 10 minute presentation on a particular scientific image you found significant and/or meaningful this semester. It can be a work of art, design, or other form of visual culture (i.e. video game, film). More details to follow.

**Final Project**
For your final project, you will have the option of completing a research paper (8–10 pages), exhibition proposal, art/design project, or podcast episode. I will provide you with more detailed instructions on Canvas. You must review your topic with me during office hours or email your topic to me for approval by 11:59 PM on Wed., Nov. 15. The assignment is due by Wed., Dec. 13 at 5:00 PM. A letter grade will be deducted from the final project grade for each day past the deadline if you are late.
Grading
A: 90% course average or above. Excellent work produced throughout the semester.
B: 80% course average or above. Good work produced throughout the semester.
C: 70% course average or above. Fair work produced throughout the semester.
D: 60% course average or above. Passing work produced throughout the semester.
F: Failure

COURSE SCHEDULE & READINGS (subject to revision)

Monday, August 21: Introduction + Syllabus Review

Wednesday, August 23: Framework for Studying Science + Visual Culture

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

Monday, August 28: The Arctic & Geology

Required readings:
https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph176546/#top

Recommended readings/viewings:
• Caitlin Condell, “After Icebergs at Cooper Hewitt,” YouTube video, May 28, 2020:  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQdLf-Gbdto

**Wednesday, August 30: The Pre-Raphaelites**

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

**Monday, September 4: LABOR DAY – No Class!**

**Wednesday, September 6 – Wednesday, September 13: Darwin & Visual Culture**

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

**Monday, September 18: Flowers and Plants**

Required readings:
• Alison Syme, Ch. 1, “La Vie en Rose,” *A Touch of Blossom: John Singer Sargent and the Queer Flora of Fin-de-Siecle Art* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 23–69.

Recommended readings/listenings:
• John Ingram, *Flora Symbolica; or, the Language and Sentiment of Flowers* (London: Frederick Warne and Co.; New York: Scribner, Welford and Co., 1869).
  https://archive.org/details/florasymbolica00ingr/mode/1up
  https://archive.org/details/languageofflower00gree/mode/1up
• Drawing Blood podcast with Emma Merkling and Christy Slobogin, season 2 episode 4, “Vegetal Agents, Plant-Human Entanglements, and Julia Margaret Cameron’s Photography”: https://open.spotify.com/episode/0XpN4POaWssPzNZo1Vm3qW7si=1db933d32ee74d9d&nd=1

**Wednesday, September 20 – Wednesday, September 27: Botanical Illustration**

**CLASS VISIT TO MEDIA LIBRARY – DETAILS TBA**

Required readings:
• Elliot Krasnopoler, "Anna Atkins and the Cyanotype Process," *Smarthistory*, March 17, 2021:
https://smarthistory.org/anna-atkins-cyanotype/


Recommended readings:

**Monday, October 2: Animals**

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

Wednesday, October 4: Medical Illustration

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

Monday, October 9: The Sensate Body

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

Wednesday, October 11
MIDTERM EXAM (Multiple choice on Canvas from 12:30–1:50 PM)
Monday, October 16: Frankenstein
MIDTERM ESSAYS DUE

Required readings:

Recommended readings:
• Christopher Frayling, Frankenstein: The First Two Hundred Years (London: Reel Art Press, 2017).
• Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, or, the Modern Prometheus (London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley; Edinburgh: Bell and Bradfute, 1831).
https://archive.org/details/ghostseer01schuoft

Wednesday, October 18 – Monday, October 23: Frankenstein
FILM VIEWING & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS VISIT – DETAILS TBA

Wednesday, October 25: Sci-Fi

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

Monday, October 30: Waves

Required readings:
• Robert Michael Brain, Ch. 4, “Protoplasma: Huxley, Haeckel, and the Vibratory Organism in Late Nineteenth-Century Science and Art,” in Art of Evolution: Darwin, Darwinisms, and Visual

Recommended readings:
• Philip Ball, Patterns in Nature: Why the Natural World Looks the Way It Does (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

Wednesday, November 1: Information Graphics & Graphic Design

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

Monday, November 6 – Wednesday, November 8: Astronomy

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

**Monday, November 13 – Wednesday, November 15: Visualizing the Microscopic & Indeterminate**

Required readings:

Recommended readings:
• Kate Flint, Ch. 2, “‘The Mote Within the Eye,’” *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 40–63.
• Stephen Eisenman, “Ecology and Air Pollution in Nineteenth-Century British Art and Literature,” *Venti* 1, no. 3 (Fall 2020).

**Monday, November 20 & Wednesday, November 22 – THANKSGIVING BREAK!**

**Monday, November 27: Modern Art & Science**

Required readings:
• Charles Sirato, “Dimensionist Manifesto” (Paris, 1936)

Recommended readings:
Wednesday, November 29: Contemporary Art & Science

Required readings:

Recommended readings:

Monday, December 4: FINAL GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Wednesday, December 6: FINAL GROUP PRESENTATIONS. LAST DAY OF CLASS!

Wednesday, December 13: FINAL PROJECTS DUE by 5:00 PM!