

Syllabus

ART 1900.401: Systems and Transformations

Fall Semester 2026

August 18th - December 11th

University of North Texas (UNT)

College of Visual Arts and Design

Foundations Program

Class Location(s): Art Building, ART 384

Instructor Contact

Lead Instructor: Terry K. Spyker, MFA (he/him)

Lab Instructor: (see “Lab Section Information” heading on pg. 3)

Email: terry.spyker@unt.edu

Office Location: Art Building, ART 220 A

Office Hours: Wednesdays/Fridays, 9:00 - 10:00 am, ART 220A, by email appointment

Course Description (From the UNT Catalog)

ART 1900 critically analyzes multiple (choice- and research-based) perspectives of object- and image-making and challenges students to develop a personal framework in the processes of visual art and design.

Course Structure

Course concepts and project structures will be delivered online via Canvas. Projects, sketchbook requirements, and writing assignments will also be posted to Canvas for assessment.

This class requires a 2-hour and 20-minute lab, which meets twice a week. Friday labs meet once a week for 4 hours and 50 minutes. During lab meetings, you will be given time to work on project requirements and receive critical in-progress feedback.

Although lab time will be given to work on projects, students should expect to work outside of class.

Course Prerequisites

Prerequisite(s): Two of the following: ART 1600, ART 1700, ART 1800

Corequisite(s): One of the following: ART 1600, ART 1700, ART 1800

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Apply materials and processes in a variety of contexts (space, surface, and time).
- Explore, interpret, and create a variety of conceptual frameworks using historical and contemporary approaches.
- Facilitate a fluid workflow between digital and analog tools, materials, and processes.
- Research and analyze a variety of aesthetic concerns.
- Document and present research according to professional standards, work ethic, resilience, and learning from necessary failure.
- Write and speak to draw connections between ideas, explain decisions, and produce new scholarship.
- Recall and explain art terminology to connect aesthetic concerns in an intercultural context.

Expectations

In this class, you will develop your creative voice and critical thinking skills through visual art, as well as discover the way your work is relevant to the world outside the studio and classroom. This course is designed to be rigorous, and you should expect your instructors to challenge and support you throughout the semester. You should also expect the class to be an inclusive community where you will give and receive thoughtful criticism and feedback.

In turn, it is expected that you will be an engaged and active member of the classroom community. This means that you will devote equal attention to online coursework, class activities, and studio projects. Be prepared to spend time outside of lab sessions each week reading, making artwork, and completing other related assignments such as preparatory sketches, writing project reflections, etc.

See “Lab Section Information” chart on the next page.

Lab Section Information

Section	Location	Days	Lab Time	Instructor Name	Instructor Email
401	Online	Online	Online	Terry K. Spyker	Terry.Spyker@unt.edu
101	ART 384	M/W	10:40 am - 1:05 pm	Binod Shrestha	Binod.Shrestha@unt.edu
102	ART 384	M/W	1:20 pm - 3:45 pm	Binod Shrestha	Binod.Shrestha@unt.edu
105	ART 384	T/TR	8:00 am - 10:25 am	Francisco Alvarado Araujo	Francisco.Alvarado@unt.edu
106	ART 384	T/TR	10:40 am - 1:05 pm	Francisco Alvarado Araujo	Francisco.Alvarado@unt.edu
107	ART 384	T/TR	1:20 pm - 3:45 pm	Francisco Alvarado Araujo	Francisco.Alvarado@unt.edu

Your lab instructor will share their office hours with you on the first day your lab meets, and they will post on Canvas the first week of classes.

Course Content Statement

Content in the arts can sometimes include works, situations, actions, and language that may be personally challenging or offensive to some students on grounds such as sexual explicitness, violence, or blasphemy. The College of Visual Arts and Design upholds the principle of freedom of expression, artistic and otherwise, and does not censor works or ideas on these grounds. Students are encouraged to approach such material with openness and critical inquiry. If you find any content personally distressing, please communicate with me so we can discuss strategies for engagement, reflection, or reasonable alternative means of participation that remain consistent with the goals and learning objectives of the course.

Notes on Critique

A critique is a group discussion of everyone's work among your professor or lab instructor and your classmates. Unless the critique is designated as an "in progress critique," the finished, physical work should be brought to class for this discussion. Still-frame digital work should be printed at the CVAD Student Computer Lab, FedEx, etc., before your lab meets to display during critique. Physical work, animations/gifs, installations, and documentation of performances should be thoughtfully displayed during critique based on a plan that you and your lab instructor agree upon.

Course Materials and Textbooks

You are **not** required to buy a textbook for this course; all readings will be provided in an accessible digital format on Canvas.

You are required to buy materials for each project. You'll be able to purchase some of the general materials at the start of the semester. However, many of your materials will be determined by the

individual nature of each of your projects as you decide them. Please be prepared to buy some materials as needed throughout the semester.

Suggested Supply List:

- For Participation Homework: 5 x 8 inch blank notecards (buy a few packs)
- For Participation Homework (Optional): Acetate Sheets, 9 x 12 inches
- For Participation Homework (Optional): Folder(s) to carry the above
- Sketchbook, 9 x 12 inches or larger
- Sharpies: black, red, and blue, Fine and Ultrafine (or equivalent)
- Drawing pencils, an assortment: 6B, 4B, 2B, HB, 2H, etc.
- Metal ruler
- White synthetic eraser
- X-Acto knife with replacement blades
- Masking tape
- A variety of adhesives: glue stick, PVA glue, and hot glue (as needed)
- Optional: color media of your choice

Where To Purchase Supplies

In addition to the materials above, you will be using various substrates, tools, and materials of your choosing to complete your project. You may choose to purchase traditional art supplies, but students are also encouraged to be resourceful when seeking out materials. Found materials and substrates are acceptable. If you are seeking supplies to purchase, below are a few local and online resources.

- **Voertman's Art Supply** (Denton)
[Foundations Kit is available for purchase online](#)
1314 W Hickory St. | Denton, TX 76201
Note: There are *basic* supplies in the "Foundations Kit." Students are responsible for any project-specific supplies.
- **Thistle Creative Reuse** (Denton)
<https://thistlecreativeuse.com/>
- **Habitat for Humanity Restore** (Denton)
<http://www.habitatdentonrestore.org/>
1805 Cornell Lane | Denton, TX 76201
- **Michaels** (Denton)
<https://www.michaels.com/>
1800 S Loop 288 Ste 340 | Denton, TX 76205
- **Dick Blick** (online)
<https://www.dickblick.com/>
- **Jerry's Artarama** (online)
<https://www.jerrysartarama.com/>

Technology Requirements

The minimum technology requirements are as follows:

- Computer with internal or external mic, webcam, and reliable internet access
 - [For best performance](#), Canvas should be accessed on the current or first previous major release of Chrome, Firefox, Edge, or Safari. The Canvas interface was optimized for desktop displays, so using small form factors such as phones may not be a pleasant experience in using Canvas. For the best user experience, please download the Canvas mobile application.
- Text document software (Word, Pages, or other)
- Microphone and webcam if using Zoom for meetings with instructors
- Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator (accessible via the CVAD Student Computer Lab (SCL) and Willis Library).
- Word processor (recommended: Microsoft Word or Google Docs)
- Slide/presentation software such as PowerPoint or Prezi
- **Optional:** your own DSLR (or mirrorless) camera OR borrow one from CVAD IT
- **Optional:** other digital programs and tools of your choice for projects (Tablets, Illustrator, Corel Draw, GIF makers, Photoshop for your phone, Autodesk, Procreate, etc.)

Adobe Software Access Information

You have several options for accessing Adobe software. Please note that a subscription is not required for this course, as all CVAD computers are equipped with Adobe software. If you wish to have this software on your personal devices, you can find more information about purchasing a subscription at UNT's discounted rate here: [Adobe Creative Cloud](#)

CVAD IT Services Information

[CVAD IT Services](#) has many resources available to students that are paid for by your student fees. You are encouraged to utilize these resources, including the large-format scanner (media up to 12.2" x 17.2"), large-format printers, cameras and accessories, artwork documentation services (also called "photo documentation"), and more. For additional information, click the "Student Resources Documentation" link on the CVAD IT Service webpage. You may be asked to log in via the Microsoft Teams app, so have your UNT credentials handy.

Grading

Grading Scale

A: 90-100% (Outstanding, excellent work. The student performs well above the minimum criteria.)

B: 80-89% (Good, impressive work. The student performs above the minimum criteria.)

C: 70-79% (Average, college-level work. The student meets the criteria of the assignment.)

D: 60-69% (Below-average work. The student fails to meet the minimum criteria.)

F: 59-0% (Sub-par work. The student fails to complete the assignment.)

In this course, **any grade of D or below is considered a failing grade.** If you meet all the course requirements, you will earn a C, which represents a satisfactory performance ("pass"). If you meet the requirements and demonstrate a higher level of work and comprehension, you will earn a grade in the B range, indicating very good performance ("high pass"). If you exceed the course requirements both in quality and quantity, demonstrating exceptional intellectual effort and achievement, you will earn a grade in the A range, signifying "distinction."

Grading Rubrics

Look at the rubrics associated with each project before starting. You may find all rubrics associated with the course by clicking the "Rubrics" link in the Canvas Course Navigation Menu.

You will also receive verbal feedback in labs from your peers, as well as written feedback from your lab instructor on Canvas. *This feedback is arguably the most important guidance you can receive on your work - rather than a letter or number grade.*

Assessment

You are not expected to be an expert in this class, but you are expected to grow your technical and conceptual abilities over the course of the semester. For each assignment, a portion of your grade will depend on your choice of appropriately challenging subject matter. The remainder of your grade will depend on how well you meet the technical and conceptual challenges you have set out for yourself.

The following table shows how your final grade will be weighted (*see next page*):

Assignment Category	Points Distribution
Participation	25% of Total
Unit 1: Systems	20% of Total
Unit 2: Archives	25% of Total
Unit 3: Transformations	30% of Total
Total:	100%

The following are descriptions of each major unit:

Unit 1: Systems

Major Project: Artist Diagram

In Unit I's project, "Artist Diagram," students will create a system map based on their Artist Research and Annotated Bibliography. They may choose a diagrammatic approach (mapping relationships and processes, e.g., Mark Lombardi) or a pastiche-driven approach (adapting their artist's style, materials, or concepts to reveal the creative system), or combine both. The project begins with three sketches, from which one is selected and developed into a refined 2D or 3D composition that meets size requirements. The final work should be visually compelling, conceptually clear, and grounded in research. Students will submit digital documentation and bring the physical piece for critique.

Unit 2: Archives

Major Project: Wunderkammer

In Unit II's project, "Wunderkammer," students will curate and present a collection of diverse images, objects, or ideas, inspired by the historical Cabinet of Curiosities. The project involves selecting a theme, gathering related items, and arranging them in a thoughtful order, considering the relationships between the objects. Students will then design a 2D, 3D, or digital "frame" that enhances the viewer's understanding of the collection. The final work must be visually or experientially significant and can be submitted as a single high-resolution image or a PDF of multiple images. Students are encouraged to document their work professionally and will present their collections for critique.

Unit 3: Transformations

Major Project: Convergence

In Unit III's final project, "Convergence," students will integrate their making skills, systems thinking, and intercultural knowledge to create significant new work. Building on their research focus, they will develop a project that explores a related question or challenge, starting with a clear problem statement. The work must be thoughtfully displayed and consider the viewer's experience, reflecting the cumulative lessons of the course. Students may use any media and are encouraged to choose materials that best align with their ideas, potentially exploring forms relevant to their future major. The final submission should include a written description, the project's title, medium, dimensions, and high-quality images or media files, presented during an in-class critique.

Extra Credit

There is no guaranteed extra credit in this class.

ART 1900 Policies

Attendance Policy

Attendance at each scheduled lab meeting is expected and is an important part of your participation and success in this course.

For labs that meet twice per week: Students may accumulate up to **6 total absences** during the semester without an automatic reduction to their final course grade. Of these, up to **3 absences may be excused with appropriate documentation** and up to **3 absences may be unexcused**.

For labs that meet once per week: Students may accumulate up to **3 total absences** during the semester without an automatic reduction to their final course grade. Of these, up to **2 absences may be excused with appropriate documentation** and up to **1 absence may be unexcused**.

Excused and unexcused absences both count toward the total number of absences. An **excused absence** indicates that appropriate documentation has been provided; it does not remove the absence from your attendance record or from the total used to determine excessive absences.

Unexcused Absences

Exceeding the number of allotted unexcused absences is considered an **attendance concern**. If this occurs, your lab instructor and/or Lead Instructor may contact you to discuss your attendance and your ability to successfully complete the course. **Exceeding the unexcused absence allowance does not, by itself, result in an automatic letter-grade reduction.**

Excessive Absences

For labs that meet **twice per week**, beginning with the **7th total absence**, each additional absence will lower your final course average by **one letter grade**.

For labs that meet **once per week**, beginning with the **4th total absence**, each additional absence will lower your final course average by **one letter grade**.

These thresholds are based on your **total number of absences**, regardless of whether individual absences are excused or unexcused.

Tardiness and Early Departures

Excessive tardiness and early departures are not acceptable. If you must arrive late or leave early, communicate with your lab instructor as soon as possible. **Repeated or significant tardiness or early departures may be counted as absences**. Your lab instructor should communicate with you before a pattern of tardiness or early departures results in an absence being recorded.

If you are having trouble attending lab sessions, students are encouraged to reach out to their lab instructor as soon as possible to discuss your options or refer you to resources available at UNT. For extenuating circumstances, the [UNT Dean of Students Office](#) has many resources for guiding and helping students, ranging from issues of food/housing insecurity, the CARE Team, the S.O.S. Program, Survivor advocacy, and more. I also encourage you to utilize the [UNT Counseling and Testing Services](#) as needed.

In summary, students should always remain in contact with their lab instructor regarding absences, foreseen or unforeseen.

Late Work & Resubmission of Work Policy

On-Time Submission Requirement

All assignments must be submitted to Canvas by the posted due date and time. Even if the work feels incomplete or does not meet your expectations, **you must submit an original attempt by the deadline** to remain eligible for the Resubmission of Work policy.

Late Submissions

Assignments submitted after the Canvas deadline without prior approval are considered late. Late penalties are calculated by **calendar day**, including weekends and holidays.

- **Major Assignments:** 5-point deduction for each calendar day late.
- **Participation Assignments:** 1-point deduction for each calendar day late.

The late penalty is based on the date of the **original submission**. If a late assignment is revised or resubmitted, the penalty assessed on the original submission **will still apply but will not increase based on the resubmission date**.

Critiques

In-class critiques cannot be made up. If you miss a critique, you must speak with your lab instructor as soon as possible to discuss next steps.

Resubmission of Work Policy

At any time **until Sunday, December 6th at 11:59 PM**, you may rework or redo any of the **major studio assignments** and resubmit them to your lab instructor for re-grading. This policy does **not** apply to weekly Participation points.

To make the most meaningful improvements, carefully review critique feedback and your lab instructor's guidance before resubmitting.

Submitting something on time—even if it is unfinished—preserves your opportunity to revise and improve the work later. Not submitting removes that option.

Extenuating Circumstances

If a serious, unforeseen circumstance beyond your control is affecting your ability to submit work on time, you must contact your lab instructor **before the deadline**. In rare cases, an alternate deadline may be arranged at the instructor's discretion. Instructors reserve the right to reduce final grades due to excessive absences.

Academic Integrity

According to UNT Policy 18.1.16, 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 a warning to expulsion from the university.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools Policy

Students enrolled in ART 1900 may use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT, DALL·E, Gemini, Grammarly, or similar platforms) **for limited purposes during the brainstorming, ideation, and research phases** of an assignment. Appropriate uses include generating ideas, exploring directions, defining unfamiliar terms for personal understanding, or organizing early thoughts.

AI tools may not be used to complete an assignment in full, including written work, visual work, or conceptual development. Final submissions must reflect the student's own thinking, decision-making, and creative labor.

Transparency Requirement

If you use AI at any point in your process, you must clearly document:

- **Which AI tool(s)** were used
- **How and when** the tool was used in your process
- **What decisions you made independently** after using the tool

This documentation may take the form of process notes, screenshots, supporting images, or a brief written reflection, as specified by the assignment.

Critical Use & Limitations

Students should be aware that AI-generated content is often inaccurate, incomplete, biased, or misleading. Overreliance on AI may also limit the development of your own critical thinking, visual language, and creative voice—skills that are central to this course.

Restrictions & Academic Integrity

- You may not submit unaltered or undocumented AI-generated material as your own work.
- Any assignment (written or visual) completed primarily or entirely through AI may receive a failing grade.
- Misrepresentation of AI-generated content constitutes academic dishonesty and will be addressed in accordance with university policy.

Instructor Review & Exceptions

The use of AI will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. If you have questions about whether a particular use of AI is appropriate—or would like to propose an exception—you must consult your lab instructor **before submitting the assignment**.

ODA Policy

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. Students needing a reasonable academic accommodations must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the student will request their letter of accommodation. ODA will provide faculty with a reasonable accommodation letter via email to begin a private discussion regarding a student's specific needs in a course. Students may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable 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 reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding their accommodations during office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access website](#).

Use of Student Work

A student owns the copyright for all work (e.g., software, photographs, reports, presentations, and email postings) they create within a class, and the University is not entitled to use any student's work without the student's permission unless all the following criteria are met:

- The work is used only once.
- The work is not used in its entirety.
- Use of the work does not affect any potential profits from the work.
- The student is not identified.
- The work is identified as student work.

If the use of the work does not meet all the above criteria, then the University office or department using the work must obtain the student's written permission.

Health & Safety

Students are required to follow all CVAD Health and Safety guidelines and complete the required Health and Safety training for each Foundations course in which they are enrolled. These requirements are designed to protect the health and safety of all students, faculty, and staff and are consistent with guidelines established by the University of North Texas Office of Risk Management.

When working at home or in Foundations labs, please follow our best practices:

- Always get the required training to use the FabLab or other CVAD facilities.
- To avoid injury, use care when using X-Acto knives, including using them away from the body, using cutting mats, and cutting at waist level.
- Use designated spray booths for aerosol materials (fixative and paints). Note: your lab instructor needs to give you a demonstration of how to use this facility beforehand.
- Read all ingredients and research.
- Use personal protective equipment when applicable and use tools and materials (such as resin and plaster) in appropriate facilities.
- Keep food and drink away from materials.
- Think about not only yourself but others around you.
- This is not an exhaustive list, as the materials you may be using could be vast- and thus, always put safety first. When in doubt, ask.

Student Support Services

Mental Health

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](#)
- [Counseling and Testing Services](#)
- [Individual Therapy](#)

Chosen Names

A chosen name is a name that a person goes by that may or may not match their legal name. If you have a chosen name that is different from your legal name and would like that to be used in class, please let the instructor know. Below is a list of resources for updating your chosen name at UNT:

- [UNT Records](#)
- [UNT ID Card](#)
- [Legal Name](#)

Additional Student Support Services

- [Registrar](https://registrar.unt.edu/registration) (<https://registrar.unt.edu/registration>)
- [Financial Aid](https://financialaid.unt.edu/) (<https://financialaid.unt.edu/>)
- [Student Legal Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services>)
- [Career Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center>)
- [UNT Food Pantry](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry) (<https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry>)

Academic Student Support Services

[Academic Resource Center](https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources) (<https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources>)

[Academic Success Center](https://success.unt.edu/asc) (<https://success.unt.edu/asc>)

[UNT Libraries](https://library.unt.edu/) (<https://library.unt.edu/>)

[Writing Lab](http://writingcenter.unt.edu/) (<http://writingcenter.unt.edu/>)

****Your instructor of record reserves the right to change the syllabus/schedule as needed****