

Visualization

LA 497 • Spring 2015

Course Website:

sites.psu.edu/la497visualization/

Class Meeting Times:

Section 001: Fridays, 1:00–3:40pm, in 135 Woodland

FACULTY MENTORS, CONTACT INFORMATION, & OFFICE HOURS

Core faculty

Jake Benfield, Assistant Professor of Psychology
jab908@psu.edu, 215-881-7528
236G Woodland, M 3-4p, T 9-11a, F 11a-1p

Joe Oakes, Senior Lecturer of IST
joe.oakes@psu.edu, Cell: 215-359-8250, Google: 215-259-8250
336 Woodland: TRF at Common Break

Pierce Salguero, Assistant Professor of Asian History & Religious Studies
salguero@psu.edu, 215-881-7593 (please email outside of office hours)
406 Suth: MWF 9:30-10, MW 2:15-4:00

William Cromar, Senior Lecturer of Art, newMedia
williamcromar@psu.edu, 267-670-1945 (cell only)
236L Woodland: TWRf 8:30-9:00, W 1:00-2:45, or by appt.

Yvonne Love, Assistant Professor of Art
ymm1@psu.edu, 215-881-7867
229 Woodland: hours MWF 12-1pm and Thursday 2-4pm (by appointment)

Affiliated faculty

Dolores Fidishun, Library & Information Science
dxfl9@psu.edu, 215-881-7425
Office hours & Reference Consultations by appointment, or stop in my office in the Library

Leah Devlin, Associate Professor of Biology
cld5@psu.edu,
205 Rydal. TTh 9:30 -10:30, W 12-1

Michael J. Bernstein, Assistant Professor of Psychology
mjb70@psu.edu, 215-881-7479 (email is much preferable for contact)
236J Woodland, MW 8a-9a, M 3-5p, T 9-10a

COURSE SUMMARY AND GOALS

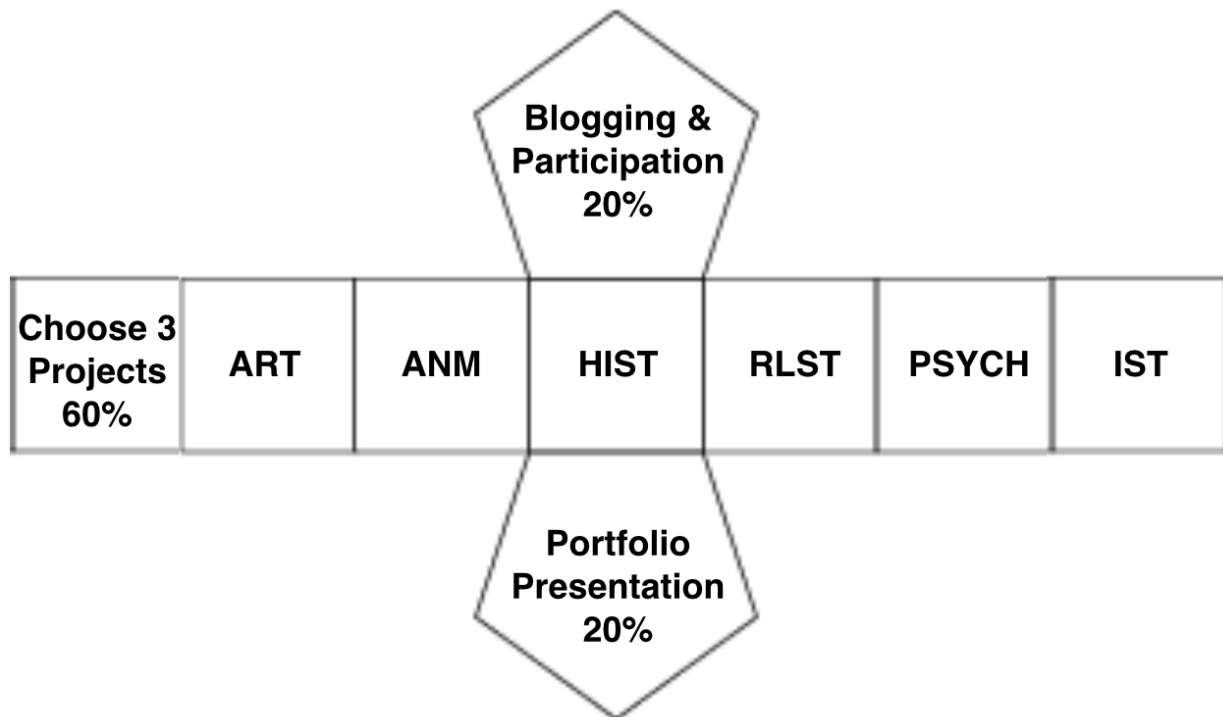
This is a team-taught course designed to encourage collaboration and integration. Using a fifth-century Chinese Buddhist text on visualization meditation as a point of departure, students and faculty will jointly embark on an interdisciplinary exploration from the perspectives of History, Religious Studies, Art, New Media, Psychology, Neuroscience, and Information Sciences & Technology. We will research the role of visualization practices in Asian religion and philosophy, produce artwork that engages with the imagery and practices described in the text, examine the psychological and neurological foundations of meditation, and design an immersive virtual world based on the text using cutting-edge virtual reality technology. The semester's main learning objective will be to integrate interdisciplinary approaches through individual and collaborative projects, which will be displayed on a multimedia website.

The concept for this class is the outcome of many discussions about the central role of collaborative teaching and learning in the future of higher education the faculty mentors have been involved in at Abington College. We envision this course as a pilot project that will pave the way for future interdisciplinary and collaborative teaching on our campus, and serve as a model for other campuses throughout the university system. The specific problem that this course is intended to address is that, all too often, classroom instruction of university students remains one-dimensional, bounded by disciplinary methodologies and inherited comfort-zones. One of our main goals is to generate deeper possibilities for critical thinking and creativity through the explicit and purposeful integration of multiple disciplines. Our ideal outcome for the class is nothing less than the creation of a new, integrated model of teaching and learning that transcends conventional approaches to postsecondary education. Through participation in discussions and collaborative work throughout the semester, students and faculty mentors will expand their intellectual horizons by making connections between different areas of academic inquiry. Whether they come into the class as scientists, programmers, historians, or artists, all participants will experience a highly stimulating range of approaches, and will learn how these can enrich one another.

Prerequisites: Invitation by faculty

GRADING

This semester, we will employ a system of grading called a "Learning Contract." This system is designed to encourage you to customize your own learning experience. The contract will allow you a great amount of freedom, flexibility, and personal choice in your grading, but will require you to "rise to the occasion" in terms of your professionalism, academic achievement, and intellectual engagement throughout the semester. Your LC will also include make-up and absence policies, which you will craft yourself (see Default LC below to use as an example).



There are three basic components to your final grade: (1) Blogging & Class Participation, (2) Projects, and (3) Portfolio Presentations:

Blogging & Class Participation (20% of final grade)

This portion of the grade is a holistic assessment of your overall effort and contribution to the course blog and to our class discussions. Attendance is a major factor. Also, you should be attentive in class, be reflective upon the material, be willing to participate in the conversation, raise questions of your own, and otherwise contribute constructively to the group in every class period. In addition, all students will be required to contribute to the class blog each and every week, as well as to read and comment on each other's work. This component will be collectively graded by the faculty you choose to work with for your projects. <• See BEST PRACTICES FOR BLOGGING for more information. •>

Projects (60% of final grade)

Faculty mentors have devised a menu of project options for you to choose from that are representative of the range of disciplines involved in this course. Possible projects include a history research paper, an immersive experience of Buddhist lifestyle, an art or new media project, a psychology experiment, or a virtual reality coding challenge. More detailed descriptions of these projects are provided separately <• See PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS & RUBRICS. •>

Each project has a separate set of learning outcomes, expectations, processes, and grading rubric. At the beginning of the semester, you will specify which three projects you would like to complete, and how much of your final grade each will comprise (each project can be weighted between 10% and 40%, adding up to a total of 60%). Each project will be graded separately by the faculty you choose to work with, according to the rubric that is provided for each project.

Portfolio Presentation (20% of final grade)

By the end of the semester, you will have had the opportunity to be involved in three separate projects with three separate faculty mentors. The portfolio presentation is your opportunity to present your work to the class, and to demonstrate how you have synthesized the separate disciplinary approaches you have explored into an integrated interdisciplinary portfolio. This component will be collectively graded by all faculty mentors and students, using a rubric we collectively devise during the semester. <•See PORTFOLIO PRESENTATION GUIDELINES for more information. •>

Default Learning Contract

If you fail to hand in a Learning Contract by the deadline in the schedule below, you will be graded according to the Default Learning Contract, which breaks down as follows:

- Projects will be split evenly, 20% each.
- Late assignments are docked 10% upon missing the deadline, and a further 10% for each 24-hour period afterwards.
- Penalty of 20% of final grade for each unexcused absence. (University absence policy mandates that absences are excused only when they are due to serious illness, religious holiday, or university-sanctioned field trips or sporting events.) Three tardies of more than 5 minutes constitutes an absence.

General Policies Applying to All Students

- University policy mandates that “excused absences” are those due to serious illness, religious holiday, or university-sanctioned field trips or sporting events.
- If class is cancelled for any reason, you will be notified as soon as possible via Angel email.
- Any late work must be handed in within one week of the due date or it receives a zero.
- All projects must be completed by final exam period, or they will not be graded.
- Final grades will be calculated as follows:

A = 95 to 100%
A- = 90 to 94.9%
B+ = 88 to 89.9%
B = 83 to 87.9%
B- = 80 to 82.9%
C+ = 75 to 79.9%
C = 70 to 74.9%
D = 60 to 69.9%
F = 59.9% and below

REQUIRED READINGS/MATERIALS

Readings required for the entire class as well as for individual projects (if any) will be distributed in hard copy or via Angel on a weekly basis. In addition, faculty mentors may require that you purchase books or materials in order to complete certain projects. Any such requirements are listed in the individual project descriptions. <• See PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS & RUBRICS. •> All students have the opportunity to borrow an iPad from the library for the semester if you wish.

SCHEDULE

(Subject to revision.)

1. Introduction to Syllabus and Learning Contracts
Introduction of Faculty Mentors and Disciplinary Methods (20 min. ea.)
2. Introduction to Buddhist meditation (Pierce, 60 min.)
Art/Journal Response (Yvonne, 15 min.)
Hands-on Crash Course in Blogging on WordPress (Bill, 60 min.)
Required readings to complete prior to this session are on Angel
3. Learning Contracts Due Today
Opening Meditation (5 min.)
Information Visualization (Dolores, 60 min.)
Art/Journal Response (Yvonne, 15 min.)
Break-out into project groups
Required readings to complete prior to this session (if any) are on Angel
4. Opening Meditation (5 min.)
Secret Essentials and its Historical Context (Pierce, 60 min.)
Art/Journal Response (Yvonne, 15 min.)
Break-out into project groups
Required readings to complete prior to this session are on Angel
5. Opening Meditation (5 min.)
History of Buddhist Art & Crosscultural Exchange (Pierce, 60 min.)
Art/Journal Response (Yvonne, 15 min.)
Break-out into project groups
Required readings to complete prior to this session (if any) are on Angel
6. Mid-Semester Feedback Due Today
Opening Meditation (5 min.)

Overview of research on meditation (Michael, 60 min.)
Art/Journal Response (Yvonne, 15 min.)
Break-out into project groups
Required readings to complete prior to this session (if any) are on Angel

7. Opening Meditation (5 min.)
Overview of research on visualization (Jake, 60 min.)
Art/Journal Response (Yvonne, 15 min.)
Break-out into project groups
Required readings to complete prior to this session (if any) are on Angel
8. Opening Meditation (5 min.)
Visual systems (Leah, 60 min.)
Art/Journal Response (Yvonne, 15 min.)
Break-out into project groups
Required readings to complete prior to this session (if any) are on Angel
9. Opening Meditation (5 min.)
Virtual reality overview (Joe, 60 min.)
Art/Journal Response (Yvonne, 15 min.)
Break-out into project groups
Required readings to complete prior to this session (if any) are on Angel
10. Opening Meditation (5 min.)
3D environment components (Joe, 60 min.)
Art/Journal Response (Yvonne, 15 min.)
Break-out into project groups
Required readings to complete prior to this session (if any) are on Angel
11. Opening Meditation (5 min.)
Mind-Body connection (Jake, 60 min.)
Art/Journal Response (Yvonne, 15 min.)
Break-out into project groups
Required readings to complete prior to this session (if any) are on Angel
12. Opening Meditation (5 min.)
Strategies for presentation (Bill, 60 min.)
Art/Journal Response (Yvonne, 15 min.)
Break-out into project groups
Required readings to complete prior to this session (if any) are on Angel

13. Project Fair

Required readings to complete prior to this session (if any) are on Angel

14. Portfolio presentations (class extended to 6pm)

Required readings to complete prior to this session (if any) are on Angel

15. Portfolio presentations (class extended to 6pm)

Required readings to complete prior to this session (if any) are on Angel

All projects must be completed and submitted by the end of the final exam period.