

ENC 3254: Writing in the Visual Arts

University Writing Program (s. 12039), Spring 2025

Location: Rolf 205

Meeting times: Tues. 11:45–1:40 / Thurs 12:50–1:40

Instructor: Abraham Adams

Office Hours: Panama Canal Gallery, Smathers Library, Thursdays 11:45–12:45

Overview

This writing course considers the experience of observing visual art in various mediums, including but not limited to painting, sculpture, photography, installation, book arts, and conceptual art. Looking at art and responding to artworks in our own words does not require specialized expertise, but a willingness to engage with uncertainty, to practice unfamiliar ways of looking, and to learn to recognize and articulate our own responses. For the artworks we encounter, we will seek to put our experience into words through in-class writing exercises and a series of three papers. This class fulfills the 6,000-word University Writing Requirement. Note: Several of our double-block meetings on Tuesdays will take place at the Harn Museum.

Outcomes

- learn the major figures and discourses of the arts writing genre
- develop critical reading and writing skills through visual analysis and reflection
- understand and employ the techniques of public-facing writing
- create three pieces of publishable writing

Texts

Each week we will read and discuss one (1) text of 1–25 pages, which will be posted in full as a PDF on Canvas. These assignments are designed to be short and sweet—thought-provoking and enriching to your writing without being unduly burdensome. In exchange for a relatively light at-home reading workload, I ask you read each assignment carefully in good faith and come to class fully prepared to discuss it. Readings must be completed by the Tuesday of the week for which they are assigned. Failure to read assignments ahead of time will negatively impact the Participation portion of your grade (see Grading, below).

Assignments

Paper due dates (word counts): February 11 (1k), March 11 (2k), April 17 (3k).

Week 1, Jan. 14 & 16: Jason Farago, “It’s Time to Take Down the Mona Lisa,” *New York Times*, Nov. 2019.

Week 2, Jan. 21 & 23: Jennifer Roberts, “The Power of Patience,” *Harvard Magazine*, Nov. 2013.

Week 3, Jan. 8 & 30: Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation," from *Against Interpretation* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966)

Week 4, Feb. 4 & 6: David Joselit, "Conceptual Art of the Press Release, or: Art History Without Art," *October*, Oct 2016.

Week 5, Feb. 11 & 13: *No reading—paper #1 due.*

Week 6, Feb. 18 & 20: David Joselit, "Marking, Scoring, Storing, and Speculating (On Time)," in Isabelle Graw, Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, eds., *Painting Beyond Itself* (Sternberg Press, 2016).

Week 7, Feb. 25 & 27: Svetlana Alpers, "The Museum as a Way of Seeing" *Exhibiting Cultures* (1991).

Week 8, March 4 & 6: Iris Murdoch, "The Idea of Perfection," from *The Sovereignty of Good* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970).

Week 9, March 11 & 13: *No reading—paper #2 due.*

Spring break; no class on March 18 & 20.

Week 10, March 25 & 27: Read Simone Weil, "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God" (G. Putnam and Sons, 1951).

Week 11, April 1 & 3: Read Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 1–25

Week 12, April 8 & 10: Read Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," from *The Visible and the Invisible* (Northwestern University Press, 1968).

Week 13, April 15 & 17: *No reading—paper #3 (final) due.*

Week 14, April 22: Read Yves Citton, "Restructuring the Attention Economy: Literary Interpretation as an Antidote to Mass Media Distraction," from Cynla Akdere & Christine Baron, eds., *Economics and Literature: A Comparative and Interdisciplinary Approach* (Routledge, 2017).

Grading

The grading system of in this course is straightforward: 75% of your grade comes from the quality of your three papers (1000, 2000, and 3000 words long, respectively), weighted by word count; 25% from class participation, which includes: A) your preparedness, such as

demonstrating that you have completed reading assignments B) the quality of your contributions to in-class exercises and class discussion, and C) your indications of listening and paying attention.

Extra credit is available for up to 5 / 100 points of your final grade: For each substantial meeting with a tutor to work on one of your papers in the Writing Studio (who will be required to email me confirming that you have met with them), you will gain 2.5 points, to a maximum of 100.

The writing assignments for this course are designed to meet the minimum requirements of the University Writing Requirement credit. To satisfy this requirement, every assignment's word count must be fulfilled. Submitted assignments short of the minimum word count will receive zero credit.

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Point value	Percentage	GPA
A	940-1000	93-100%	4.0
A-	900-939	90-93%	3.67
B+	870-899	87-89%	3.33
B	840-869	84-86%	3.00
B-	800-839	80-83%	2.67
C+	770-799	77-79%	2.33
C	740-769	74-76%	2.00
C-	700-739	70-73%	1.67
D+	670-699	67-69%	1.33
D	640-669	64-66%	1.00
D-	600-639	60-63%	0.67
E	0-599	0-59%	0.00

To receive writing credit, a student must receive a grade of "C" or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course to satisfy the CLAS requirement for Composition (C) and to receive the 6,000-word University Writing Requirement credit (E6). You must turn in all papers totaling 6,000 words to receive credit for writing 6,000 words.

PLEASE NOTE: a grade of "C-" will not confer credit for the University Writing Requirement or the CLAS Composition (C) requirement.

The instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on the student's written assignments with respect to content, organization and coherence, argument and support, style, and clarity. Conferring credit for the University Writing Requirement, this course requires that papers conform to the following assessment rubric. More specific rubrics and guidelines applicable to individual assignments may be delivered during the course of the semester.

General Education Writing Assessment Rubric

	SATISFACTORY (Y)	UNSATISFACTORY (N)
CONTENT	Papers exhibit evidence of ideas that respond to the topic with complexity, critically evaluating and synthesizing sources, and provide an adequate discussion with basic understanding of sources.	Papers either include a central idea(s) that is unclear or off-topic or provide only minimal or inadequate discussion of ideas. Papers may also lack sufficient or appropriate sources.
ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE	Documents and paragraphs exhibit identifiable structure for topics, including a clear thesis statement and topic sentences.	Documents and paragraphs lack clearly identifiable organization, may lack any coherent sense of logic in associating and organizing ideas, and may also lack transitions and coherence to guide the reader.
ARGUMENT AND SUPPORT	Documents use persuasive and confident presentation of ideas, strongly supported with evidence. At the weak end of the satisfactory range, documents may provide only generalized discussion of ideas or may provide adequate discussion but rely on weak support for arguments.	Documents make only weak generalizations, providing little or no support, as in summaries or narratives that fail to provide critical analysis.
STYLE	Documents use a writing style with word choice appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline. Sentences should display complexity and logical structure.	Documents rely on word usage that is inappropriate for the context, genre, or discipline. Sentences may be overly long or short with awkward construction. Documents may also use words incorrectly.
MECHANICS	Papers will feature correct or error-free presentation of ideas. At the weak end of the satisfactory range, papers may contain a few spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors that remain unobtrusive and do not obscure the paper's argument or points.	Papers contain so many mechanical or grammatical errors that they impede the reader's understanding or severely undermine the writer's credibility.

Course Policies

Attendance is required. The policy of the University Writing Program is that if students miss more than six periods during the term, they will fail the entire course. Double periods count as two absences. Only those absences deemed excused according to UF policy, including university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, illness, and religious holidays will be exempted from this policy. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with the instructor prior to the date that will be missed. Writing skills are gained by experience, so sessions often include in-class activities and discussion, which are difficult or impossible to replicate outside of class. Consequently, frequent absences will affect students' success in the course. Please Note: If students are absent, it is their responsibility to make themselves aware of all due dates. If absent due to a scheduled event, students are still responsible for turning assignments in on time. Tardiness: Late arrivals disrupt the entire class. Multiple late arrivals will affect students' success in the course. If you know of instances when you will be late, please let me know. Late work without documented excuse will be accepted with a penalty at the instructor's discretion.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits plagiarism and defines it as follows:

Plagiarism. A Student must not represent as the Student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
2. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student's own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student's own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
3. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
4. Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.

University of Florida students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the entire Student Honor Code, which can be found at <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/students/student-conduct-code/>.

Important Tip: You should never copy and paste something from the Internet without providing the exact location from which it came.

AI Policy

You are required to write your own papers. AI is a useful tool for researching and finding inspiration for your writing, but all of your written assignments must be entirely written by you, in words each of which you have chosen. If you turn in something that appears to have been

written by an AI program, I will at the very least point it out to you; and if there is evidence that you relied on such a program to write all or part of a paper for you, I will without exception report this to the relevant authorities at UF. If you are unsure whether you are committing academic dishonesty or not, talk to me before submitting work.

Paper Maintenance Responsibilities

Students are responsible for maintaining duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course and retaining all returned, graded work until the semester is over. Should the need arise for a resubmission of papers or a review of graded papers, it is the student's responsibility to have and to make available this material.

UF Recording Policies

Class lectures may only be recorded for purposes defined by House Bill 233/Section 1004.097. A class lecture does not include academic exercises involving student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

A recording of a class lecture may not be published without the consent of the lecturer. Publish is defined as sharing, transmitting, circulating, distributing, or providing access to a Recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. A recording, or transcript of the recording, is considered to be published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper or leaflet. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting our [Get Started page](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Students in Distress

The University of Florida has a number of resources available to help students experiencing difficulties in their lives (whether related to school or not). Do not hesitate to seek help!

Dean of Students Office, 352-392-1261, <https://dso.ufl.edu/>

U Matter We Care, 352-294-2273, umatter@ufl.edu, <http://umatter.ufl.edu>

Counseling and Wellness Center, 352-392-1575, <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>

Field and Fork Pantry, 352-294-3601, <https://pantry.fieldandfork.ufl.edu/>

Non-emergency safety concerns – UFPD, 352-392-1111 (for emergencies, call 911)