

Writing Art's Histories



Babette Mangolte, Photograph of Annette Michelson's bookshelves, New York, 1976

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ARH 6496 Modern Art Seminar
School of Art + Art History, College of the Arts, University of Florida
Spring 2025 Credits: 3

Wednesdays **Periods 8–10 | 3:00–6:00pm** **FAC 116A**

INSTRUCTOR	Email & Office Phone	Office	Office Hours
Professor Rachel Silveri	rsilveri@arts.ufl.edu 352-273-3053	FAC 115	TBA

Course Description and Objectives

How do we write, and why? This graduate seminar focuses its attention on the pleasures, rituals, and labor of art historical writing. Too often in the lifecycle of a semester, a student's scholarship occurs last-minute: on deadline, frantic, crammed and packed into an intensive sequence of days. This course aims to shift that timing by training students to begin a daily writing practice and become more mindful of their

craft. Throughout the course, we will read examples of engaging and experimental art historical texts—books and essays written in a voice, style, or structure intended to inspire, engross, challenge, convince, pique our curiosity, or perhaps even seduce us. Individual classes will incorporate pragmatic exercises on building a routine writing practice, the close study of various art historical scholarship, discussions of research and bibliography-building, and thematic weekly writing workshops and critiques. Interested students should expect to write and share their work frequently, with routine short writing prompts and a final research paper dedicated to an individual topic of their choosing. This class is open to all art history graduate students, from those in the early stages of coursework to doctoral candidates writing their dissertations. Advanced undergraduate students in art history are welcome to enroll with the permission of the instructor, as are graduate students across the humanities who are interested in writing new approaches to the visual.

With the support of the School of Art + Art History’s Harn Eminent Scholar Chair in Art History (HESCAH) endowment, Dr. Darby English (University of Chicago) and Dr. Molly Nesbit (Vassar College) will be each invited to campus for a guest lecture and will conduct a master class seminar on writing for this class.

Course Requirements and Grading

Active Seminar Participation	10%
Weekly Writing Prompts for Workshop	25%
Final Paper Abstract & Bibliography	5%
Final Paper Presentation	10%
Final Paper	50%

Completion of all presentations and assignments is necessary to pass the course.

For more information on UF’s grading policies and assigning grade points, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Letter Grade	% Equivalency	GPA Equivalency
A	94 and above	4.00
A-	90 to 93	3.67
B+	87 to 89	3.33
B	83 to 86	3.00
B-	80 to 82	2.67
C+	77 to 79	2.33
C	73 to 76	2.00
C-	70 to 72	1.67
D+	67 to 69	1.33
D	63 to 66	1.00
D-	60 to 62	0.67
E, I, NG, WF	59 and below	0.00

Assignments

Weekly Writing Prompts for Workshop

Throughout the semester, students will be responsible for short, weekly writing prompts that will be workshopped in class. Each writing prompt asks for three double-spaced pages. Students will have the choice of responding to the specific prompt or writing three pages related to their final research paper; the choice is up to them. The writing prompts will be due each week on Tuesdays at 3:00pm (i.e., one full day before seminar). They will be posted to Canvas and shared with other members of the class. Each student will have the opportunity to have their writing workshopped in class twice throughout the semester.

Final Paper Abstract & Bibliography

In advance of their final projects, students will prepare an abstract of 500 words outlining the scope of their topic and the issues/materials to be examined. They will also include a preliminary bibliography of at least fifteen scholarly texts.

Final Paper Presentation

Students will present a polished, conference-style presentation of their final paper to the class, complete with a PowerPoint of related images. Presentations should be 15–20 minutes in length.

Final Paper

The final research paper should be at least 15 pages in length and demonstrate significant research, original argumentation, clearly defined critical stakes, and mastery of the related secondary literature. It should also incorporate feedback and suggestions from the final project presentation. Plagiarism, in part or in full, will be grounds for failing the course.

In lieu of a final research paper, MFA students are welcome to produce a new, original studio work that is both substantial and directly related to the themes of the class. (Studio works previously created or done on assignment for another course will not count). An artist statement should accompany the work.

Students should discuss their final projects with the instructor in advance.

All assignments must be in Times New Roman 12-point font, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins. Please number the pages. Any citations must be done in Chicago-style.

Chicago Manual of Style Guide: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Readings

All assigned readings will be available either on reserve at the Architecture & Fine Arts Library or made available online through the Canvas e-Learning Course Website. All readings must be completed before each class. Please bring copies of the readings to class with you and be prepared to discuss them.

Attendance, Participation, Due Dates

Attendance in seminar is mandatory. Any absences that are incurred as a consequence of illness, religious observance, or family emergency will be excused; please simply inform the instructor and, in the case of illness, provide a doctor's note.

Students are expected to arrive to class on time and to actively participate throughout our seminar discussions. Active participation means continually engaging and contributing to seminar conversations throughout the entire semester, coming to class having completed all the readings and being ready to discuss them (consulting images, identifying puzzling aspects of the texts, highlighting passages for

analysis, raising questions for discussion), and being respectful of your instructor and peers. Students are also expected to participate fully in the seminar's writing workshops, giving constructive critique to their peers, and to participate in the related HESCAH lectures and master classes.

All assignments must be turned in on time. Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for every twenty-four hours past their due date (i.e., from an A to an A-). Any extensions on assignments and the acceptance of late submissions are solely at the instructor's discretion.

Requirements for class attendance, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Course Policies & Additional Information

Land Acknowledgement

The University of Florida rests on the traditional lands of the Potano, Timucua, and Seminole peoples, territories which later had long ties with the Miccosukee and Mascogo peoples as well. As one of the 52 land-grab universities in the United States, the University of Florida has benefited from the forced cession and sale of 90,226 acres of Indigenous lands from 121 Tribal Nations under the Morrill Act of 1862.

Please learn more at the Land-Grab Universities Project and Native Land Digital:

<https://www.landgrabu.org/universities/university-of-florida>

<https://native-land.ca/>

As faculty, I recognize and respect these Indigenous communities past, present, and future, and honor the ongoing important work of dismantling settler colonialism.

Email

Announcements about the class will be sent out over email. Please check your UF email regularly. If you send the professor any emails, please do so from your official UF account and practice email etiquette and courtesy when messaging (write a clear subject line, include a salutation and closing, address your instructor as "Professor" or "Dr.," etc.). If your professor sends you an email answering a question or providing research advice, please consider saying thank you.

For more information on email etiquette, see the guide from *Inside Higher Education*:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2015/04/16/advice-students-so-they-dont-sound-silly-emails-essay>

Disability Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. 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.

College of the Arts Mission

The University of Florida College of the Arts intends to be a transformative community, responding to and generating paradigmatic shifts in the arts and beyond. We do so by:

- Embracing the complexity of our evolving human experience and seeking to empower our students, faculty, and staff to shape that experience fearlessly through critical study, creative practice, and provocation
- Collaborating effectively with the forces of change

- Preparing students to access and unsettle centers of power in a radically changing world
- Facilitating an arts education that will position emerging artists and researchers as catalysts for equity on local and global levels

School of Art + Art History Mission and Values

Mission Statement:

The School of Art + Art History nurtures a culture of critical inquiry in our scholarly and creative work. Our educational mission is to empower each student with knowledge, skills, and insight to engage thoughtfully with our changing world.

Values Statement:

We believe in community and transformation. We aspire to be courageous, generous, and engaged.

- **Community:** We foster a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community through mutual respect and acceptance.
- **Transformation:** We pursue positive transformation and impact through education, research, and creative works.
- **Courage:** We ask challenging questions, take risks, and strive for excellence.
- **Generosity:** We assume the best in others and enable a culture where everyone can flourish.
- **Engagement:** We believe the diverse contributions of art, design, and scholarship are critical to our community and beyond.

Diversity

We will explore the content of this course in a way that is respectful of diversity—including gender identity, sexuality, race, ethnicity, age, ability, socioeconomic class, nationality, religion, and culture. Throughout, this course explores diverse points of view, which might be challenging. Maintaining a respectful environment will be the responsibility of both the students and the instructor. This course is intended to serve students from all backgrounds and perspectives and is based upon the premise that the diversity which students bring to the classroom is a resource, strength, and benefit. Throughout the semester, your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated.

Critical Thinking, Honest Questions, & Open Debate

Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint, or belief.

People learn best when they are encouraged to ask questions and express their diverse opinions on course content which may include images, texts, data, or theories from many fields. This is especially true in courses that deal with provocative or contemporary issues. UF offers many such courses, in which students encounter concepts of race, color, sex, and/or national origin. We teach these important issues because understanding them is essential for anyone who seeks to make economic, cultural, and societal contributions to today's complex world. With this in mind, we do not limit access to, or classroom discussion of, ideas and opinions—including those that some may find uncomfortable, unwelcome, disagreeable, or even offensive. In response to challenging material, students and instructors are encouraged to ask honest questions and thoughtfully engage one another's ideas. But hostility, disruptive and disrespectful behavior, and provocation for provocation's sake have no place in a classroom; reasonable people disagree reasonably. These guidelines can help instructors and students as they work together to fulfill the mission of the University of Florida, which includes the exploration of intellectual boundaries, the creation of new knowledge, and the pursuit of new ideas.

Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

University of Florida Student Honor Code

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states: “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: *‘On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.’*”

In addition to The Honor Pledge, students are responsible for knowing and abiding by the Student Honor and Conduct Codes, both of which are available in full here: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

UF’s policies regarding academic honesty, the Honor Code, and the Conduct Code will be strictly enforced. Plagiarism, in part or in full, will be grounds for failing the course.

Campus Resources: Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you are in distress or have a friend who is, please contact “U Matter, We Care” so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Email: umatter@ufl.edu
Phone: 352-392-1575
Website: <http://www.umatter.ufl.edu/>

Counseling and Wellness Center:

Address: 3190 Radio Road, Gainesville, FL 32611
Phone: 352-392-1575
Website: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), at the Student Health Care Center:

Phone: 352-392-1161
Website: http://www.umatter.ufl.edu/sexual_violence

Campus Resources: Academic

The Writing Studio, 2215 Turlington Hall, offers help with brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers, as well as online tutoring.

Phone: 352-846-1138
Website: <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

Academic Resources, 1317 Turlington Hall, for tutoring and strengthening study skills.

Email: teaching-center@ufl.edu
Phone: 352-392-6420
Website: <https://academicresources.clas.ufl.edu/>

Harn Museum of Art, 3259 Hull Road, excellent collection on campus with more than 10,000 works of art; offers free student memberships that include admission to 75+ museums nationwide, invitations to museum events, and more.

Phone: 352-392-9826

Website: <http://harn.ufl.edu/>

Resources for Art Historical Research:

UF Libraries Catalogue: <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/>

UF Libraries Inter-Library Loan Service: <https://uflib.illiad.oclc.org/illiad/FUG/logon.html>

Journals:

Recommended art history journals include *The Art Bulletin*, *Art Journal*, *Art History*, *October*, *Grey Room*, *Oxford Art Journal*, *History of Photography*, *Dada/Surrealism*, *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, *Modernism/modernity*, *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, *African Arts*, *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, *Third Text*, *Representations*, *Critical Inquiry*, *Word & Image*, *American Art Journal*, *ARTMargins* + lots more – access through UF Libraries Catalogue.

Databases:

WorldCat, JSTOR, Artstor, Oxford Art Online – access through UF Libraries Catalogue.

Chicago Manual of Style Quick Guide for Citations:

https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Important Dates to Remember

Thursday, February 6, 6:00pm	HESCAH Lecture with Dr. Darby English
Friday, February 7, TBA	Master Class with Dr. Darby English
Friday, February 14, 11:59pm	Final Paper Abstract + Bibliography Due
Thursday, April 3, 6:00pm	HESCAH Lecture with Dr. Molly Nesbit
Friday, April 4, TBA	Master Class with Dr. Molly Nesbit
Wednesday, April 16, 3:00pm	Final Paper Presentations, Day 1/2
Wednesday, April 23, 3:00pm	Final Paper Presentations, Day 2/2
Tuesday, April 29, 11:59pm	Final Research Paper Due

Schedule

The schedule may change slightly during the semester in response to the needs of the class.

Wednesday, January 15 – To the Seminar! Overview + Introductions

Wednesday, January 22 – No classes

Wednesday, January 29 – Method

Wednesday, February 5 – Urgency

☞ **Thursday, February 6 HESCAH Lecture: Dr. Darby English, “The Places You Find Love,” Harn Museum of Art, 6:00–7:00pm, followed by reception**

☞ **Friday, February 7 Master Class with Dr. Darby English, location and time TBA**

Wednesday, February 12 – No classes

☞ **Friday, February 14 by 11:59pm Final Paper Abstract + Bibliography Due**

Wednesday, February 19 – Word & Image

Wednesday, February 26 – Notes, Theses, Splinters

Wednesday, March 5 – Archives

Wednesday, March 12 – Description

Wednesday, March 19 – No classes (Spring Break)

Wednesday, March 26 – Outrage

Wednesday, April 2 – Pragmatism

☞ **Thursday, April 3 HESCAH Lecture: Dr. Molly Nesbit, title TBA, Harn Museum of Art, 6:00–7:00pm, followed by reception**

☞ **Friday, April 4 Master Class with Dr. Molly Nesbit, location and time TBA**

Wednesday, April 9 – Giving An Account of Oneself

Wednesday, April 16 – Final Presentations (Day 1/2)

Wednesday, April 23 – Final Presentations (Day 2/2)

📅 Tuesday, April 29 by 11:59pm Final Paper Due