



Society for the Teaching of Psychology (APA Division 2)

**OFFICE OF TEACHING RESOURCES IN PSYCHOLOGY (OTRP)**

Department of Psychology, University of St. Thomas, 3800 Montrose Blvd., Houston, TX 77006

**ART 480/ PSY 480:  
ART, PSYCHOLOGY  
& VISUAL PERCEPTION**

Class Meeting Time: Wednesday 5:00 – 8:00 P.M.

Instructors	<b>J. Craig Clarke, Ph. D.</b> Associate Professor Of Psychology	<b>Kent N. Kimmel, Ph. D.</b> Associate Provost and Professor of Art
Office	Allenwood 506	Holloway Hall 248
Office Hours	MWF 12-1 & app't.	MW 1-2 & app't.
Phone	410-543-6530	410-548-4085
e-mail	<a href="mailto:jcclarke@salisbury.edu">jcclarke@salisbury.edu</a>	<a href="mailto:knkimmel@salisbury.edu">knkimmel@salisbury.edu</a>
Fax	410-548-2056	410-548-3992

PREREQUISITES: PSYC 101, plus a minimum total of six (6) semester hours in art/psychology.  
(This course may not be used to satisfy any General Education Requirement).

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**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The major objective of the course is for the student to develop the ability to effectively use the study of psychology and visual perception to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the visual arts. Upon completion of the course, the student's perspective should be sufficiently expanded to enable her/him to:

- (a) understand and effectively deal with the contradictory nature of the issues involved in assigning meaning to what we perceive,
- (b) apply some guiding psychological and perceptual principles to interpret and explain art,
- (c) employ one's ever increasing awareness of perceptual processes to more fully realize the capacity to perceive,
- (d) comprehend how psychology, the science of behavior and experience, is used to illuminate the process of creating and/or experiencing art, and then apply that understanding to both the analysis of art and other human experiences,
- (e) analyze visual perception from the perspective of it being a process of reality construction, and,
- (f) understand that vision is not simply the passive mechanical recording of individual elements, but rather the active apprehension of significant structural patterns.

## METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction will be provided through a variety of methodologies, including lectures, demonstrations, experiments, discussions, readings and practical classroom problems, as well as a bi-weekly journal, a mid-semester written exam, and a course project. (See METHODS OF EVALUATION.)

**Lectures.** Formal lectures expand upon and emphasize readings and practical classroom problems, and establish the direction for the classroom activities.

**Demonstrations.** Demonstrations are given to emphasize the principles of art and psychology, and will focus on the use of concepts, theories, methodologies and techniques.

**Experiments.** Experiments are conducted to illustrate empirical approaches to understanding and responding to art.

**Discussions.** Informal discussions are used to emphasize specific topics from lectures, the practical exercises and the demonstrations.

**Library Holdings.** Required and suggested readings encompass information relevant to specific class topics, and help to establish a critical awareness of art and psychological principles. Readings are available prior to lectures.

## METHODS OF EVALUATION

The instructors will employ a variety of techniques to evaluate the student's performance throughout the semester. These techniques will include *four journals* and *a gallery report*, a written essay *mid-term examination*, a (small group) *course project presentation*, and *class participation*.

A student's final course grade will be determined by the total points accumulated from these techniques. There are 560 total points in the course. The student will be required to demonstrate

knowledge and comprehension of the course material, to analyze and apply the ideas presented, and finally to use those ideas to synthesize and evaluate the visual arts. These various skills can be demonstrated via the four areas described below.

**Journals.** The primary purpose of the *journals* is to allow each student the opportunity to raise issues, ask questions, and provide comments or ideas related to the specific topics discussed in class or to the general topic of art and visual perception. Although each *journal* should be considered as a formal written assignment, any aspect of art and visual perception (with or without formal references) may be discussed. Topics may include information taken from class lectures, demonstrations, experiments, discussions and readings, or any other professional or popular source. *Journals* will be due at the beginning of class on the dates indicated on the Class Schedule, and will be returned with comments from both instructors within two class periods.

**Gallery Report.** The *gallery report* will allow the student to understand how another person perceives an art exhibition. It should be no more than four (4) typed pages, and is due at the beginning of class as indicated on the Class Schedule. A detailed handout describing specific details of the *gallery report* will be forthcoming.

Each *journal* and the *gallery report* must be double-spaced with at least one-inch margins. Each *journal* may not exceed two pages for undergraduates or three pages for graduate students. Each *journal* should include a citation of the source, if appropriate, from which the information came.

*Journals* and the *gallery report* may be sent to each instructor as word processed attachments to e-mail, but all written work must be properly proofread and edited just as with a hard copy. In addition, you may send e-mail to us (regular, non-graded e-mail) at any time, and at least one of us will respond as quickly as possible.

The e-mail addresses for the instructors were presented above. All course information, not personal, should be addressed to both instructors. We will also send course information via GroupWise.

Each of the four *journals* is worth up to 20 points.

Grading for each *journal* will be based on a twenty-point scale:

A=18-20, B=16-17, C=14-15, D=12-13 points.

Grading for the *gallery report* will be based on a forty-point scale:

A=36-40, B=32-35, C=28-31, D=24-27 points.

**Mid-term Examination.** The course examination will use an essay format and will last ninety minutes. At least two weeks prior to the examination, the student will receive a "study set" of essay questions covering topics from the readings and class presentations. Examination questions will be drawn from the study set.

The examination is worth 200 points of the total course grade, with grading being based on a curve reflecting overall class performance.

**Course Project.** During the final two classes of the semester, each undergraduate student group will give a presentation detailing and demonstrating their project topic. The project and presentation will be done in small groups (i.e., 3 to 4 members). Each graduate student will give an individual class presentation accompanied by a formal written paper. Specific details for graduate student projects will be forthcoming.

The primary purpose of the **Course Project** is to demonstrate some aspect of art and visual perception by developing a formal public presentation. The project may be presented as an *aesthetic/creative effort* such as two-dimensional (photographs, an artist's book, etc.) or three-dimensional artwork, or as a *discussion of empirical data*. The project could be an extension of or have a relationship to some aspect of art and visual perception discussed in class or from related readings.

For Class 2, each student will be required to submit a written "list" of ideas or expectations for at least one project topic. While the elements, principles or paradigms of art and visual perception may not be well understood by the student at the beginning of the semester, the "list" will be used to focus on individual interests and to begin to "group" students of common interests. During subsequent class periods, student groups will discuss the development of project ideas with peers and the instructors. Each group will work toward creating a project for presentation during one of the last two class meetings.

The project presentation, for both undergraduate and graduate students is worth 200 points. For undergraduates, 160 of those 200 points will be assigned by the instructors. The criteria for earning those 160 points will include (a) *use of time*, (b) *involvement of students* in the class, (c) *quality and clarity of demonstration materials*, and (d) *adequacy and clarity of background materials and explanations*. With the exception of *use of time*, which is worth up to 20% of the project grade for all groups, each group may determine the relative weight of the other criteria. For example, with a project involving the production of an art work, a group may wish to weight *quality and clarity of demonstration materials* more heavily than *involvement of students*.

**Self-ratings of individual group members.** Twenty percent of each student's project grade will be determined by the evaluations of the other members of his or her group.

Students should use the following guidelines when assigning points to fellow group members.

**A = 36-40 points** – outstanding achievement in both performance and leadership.

**B = 32-35 points** – high achievement in performance and leadership

**C = 28-31** – adequate achievement in performance and leadership

**D = 24-27** – marginal achievement in performance and leadership

**F = 0-23** – inadequate achievement in both performance and leadership

Salisbury University's *Writing Across the Curriculum* requirement will be met by the journals and the gallery report, the mid-term examination, and the course project.

**Class Participation.** Class participation includes both the quantity, as well as the quality, of the student's participation. It involves class discussions, experiments, questions and answers, and in-class activities (i. e., demonstrations and problems). The class participation grade reflects the student's preparedness for each class. Class participation is worth up to 40 points of the final course

grade (A=36-33, B=32-29, C=28-25, D=24-21 points); an additional four (4) points will be awarded at the discretion of the instructors, as follows:

**4 Points** = Consistent active participation, Asks questions, Provides insights, Raises issues.

**3 Points** = Frequent active participation, Asks questions.

**2 Points** = Infrequent active participation, Answers questions when asked.

**1 Point** = Passive participation, Answers questions when asked.

**0 Points** = No participation.

***NOTE:** Both instructors evaluate all course activities. That is, each writing assignment, including the bi-weekly journals, the gallery report, the mid-semester examination, and the final course project are read and evaluated by each instructor individually. These individual evaluations are averaged for each activity and constitute the final grade for the activity. The final grade for class participation, while understandably more subjective, is determined with discretionary points awarded by the instructors.*

## COURSE GRADE CUTOFFS

	Exam (36%)	Project (36%)	Journal (14%)	Gallery (7%)	Participation (7%)	Course (100%)
TOTAL	<u>200</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>80</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>40</u>	<b>560</b>
A	180	180	72	36	36	<b>504</b>
B	160	160	64	32	32	<b>448</b>
C	140	140	56	28	28	<b>392</b>
D	120	120	48	24	24	<b>336</b>

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

The class will meet once weekly, except normal holidays, according to the current academic schedule. In case of inclement weather, the class will continue to meet as scheduled unless the University is **officially closed**.

Since much of the course is based on the student's active involvement during in-class activities including lectures, demonstrations, experiments, discussions, readings and student presentations and participation, you are expected to attend each class in its entirety.

Class attendance will be recorded. More than one absence will result in a reduction of your potential highest course grade. That is, if you miss two classes your potential highest course grade will be 'B', regardless of your performance on the graded activities. If you miss three classes your potential highest course grade will be 'C'. More than three absences will result in a failing grade for the course. There are **NO** excused absences.

You are responsible for any and all material or information presented in class, including announcements or changes to the syllabus. If any assigned work is missed for any reason, it is your

responsibility to consult with one or both of the instructors to determine if and/or how the work may be made up.

A make-up examination will not be given unless you present an acceptable written justification (e.g., a medical excuse from your physician stating that you were unable to attend class on the exam date) for the absence. If a make-up exam is justified, it may not follow the same format as the scheduled examination.

You are expected to attend and take part in your own group's project presentation, and to attend and support all other project presentations, undergraduate and graduate.

Grading is based on a letter scale and may be found in the current University catalogue section entitled Academic Policies. "Grading System". Evaluation of each student will be based on the activities listed above under METHODS OF EVALUATION.

## **ASSIGNED READINGS**

Readings listed in the syllabus are on reserve at the circulation desk in Blackwell Library.

Berlyne, D. E. (1971). *Aesthetics and psychobiology*. New York: Appleton Century Crofts.

Gleitman, H., Fridlund, A. J., & Reisberg, D. (1999). *Psychology* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Norton.

Parsons, M. J. (1987). *How we understand art: A cognitive developmental account of aesthetic experience*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Solso, R. L. (1994). *Cognition and the visual arts*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Winston, A. S., and Cupchik, G. C. (1992). The evaluation of high art and popular art by naive and experienced viewers. *Visual Arts Research*, 18, 1-14.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

	<b>Class Activities</b>	<b>Lecture Topics</b>	<b>Chapter Readings</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
Class 1	Introductions, Artwork production and evaluation	Presentation of the syllabus		
Class 2	In-class <i>Write-up</i> and Discussion of a project idea. The Golden Section Hypothesis	History of psychology and art, History of perception and art.	Solso 8, Berlyne 2, 14	Journal 1 Due.
Class 3	<b>Video: <u>The Psychologist and the Experiment</u></b> , Kimmel's making of a stained glass window	Creative/ Research Methodology.	Gleitman app. 1	Journal 1 returned
Class 4	Brief discussion of projects, Drawing impossible figures & <i>Write-up</i>	The science of vision	Solso 1, 2	Journal 2 Due
Class 5	<b>Video: <i>Godzilla Meets Mona Lisa</i></b> , with comments from an eye witness	How we understand art. High art vs. low art	Solso 5, Winston & Cupchik (1992), Parsons (1987)	Journal 2 returned
Class 6	Retinal mapping and Color deficiency evaluation	Color perception	Gleitman 5, Solso p. 11-12, 21, 172-173, 250	Journal 3 Due
Class 7	<i>Gallery report assigned</i> Interviews handed out	<u>Gallery speaker</u>	Readings TBA by speaker	<i>Gallery Report</i>
Class 8		Depth perception and visual perspective	Solso 7, 8	
Class 9	Exam review	Gestalt principles and illusions	Solso 4	Journal 3 returned <i>Gallery Report due</i>
Class 10	<b>Mid-term Examination</b> Art therapy demonstration	<u>Guest presenter</u>		
Class 11		Art, context, and	Solso 5, 9	

	<b>Class Activities</b>	<b>Lecture Topics</b>	<b>Chapter Readings</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
		cognition		
Class 12	Gallery reports returned with discussion	<u>Guest lecturer:</u> Art therapy	Readings TBA by speaker	
Class 13	Examinations returned with discussion	Project preparation discussion		Journal 4 Due
Class 14	<b>Group project presentations</b>			Journal 4 returned
Class 15	<b>Group project presentations</b>			<i>Course Evaluation</i>

**Final Exam Period:** Reserved for graduate student project presentations, if necessary.