ART 496 Topics: Visual Culture, Media and Meaning in Italy

Instructor: Prof. Dana Thompson
Email: dthompson29@murraystate.edu
Instructor's office hours: on site and by appointment

Syllabus subject to change

1. Course Description:

Discover the power of visual culture and explore how images, design, and media shape the way we see and understand the world. This course blends theory with experience as you visit some of Italy's most influential cultural sites. As part of the KIIS Study Abroad Program, students will investigate visual communication of and in Italy. We will explore problems of meaning, functions of visual culture in contemporary society, the role of galleries and museums, and the impact of imagery in advertising, popular media and consumer culture while visiting world-renowned cultural sites like the Galleria dell'Accademia, Uffizi Gallery, Capitoline Museums, and the Borghese Gallery. Students focused on art, art history, design, journalism and visual communication will gain critical skills to not just consume visual content—but to analyze it strategically and ethically. Other site visits that will deepen your understanding of how visual messages are crafted and how they can be contextualized in theoretical frameworks include as Vatican City, Colosseum, Palatine Hill, and Roman Forum, Villa Medici, the Santa Maria del Fiore, and Basilica di Santa Croce. By studying visual communication in Italy, students will gain an interdisciplinary understanding of a country's visual culture at several different, pivotal points in history.

2. Overall KIIS Program Student Learning Outcomes:

KIIS Study Abroad Mission Statement:
KIIS provides high-quality education abroad programs for students from all diverse backgrounds that promote deep international learning, are integrated into the curriculum, and encourage critical and creative thinking. Our goal is to help students understand the wider world and develop personal and professional skills for lifelong enrichment. We strive to go beyond generalizations and cultural stereotypes to help foster a nuanced appreciation of the world in which we live.

Students participating on KIIS study abroad programs aim to:
1) Understand contemporary issues of their host country/countries (i.e. KIIS program location).
2) Develop skills to interact comfortably in a global setting.
3) Understand other cultures.

Prior to your KIIS study abroad program, and again at the conclusion of your program, KIIS will ask each student to a) answer a few multiple-choice questions, and b) write a short reflective essay (two paragraphs in length) related to the elements detailed above. There is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will not affect your grade in any way. The

purpose of the exercise is to help KIIS measure the effectiveness of its study abroad programs.

3. Course Objectives and Specific Learning Outcomes:

After successful completion of the course, students will be able to:
- Recognize the cultural and historical contexts in which visual culture is produced and consumed in Florence and Rome, including technical, economic, social, and political influences.
- Perform image analyses on a variety of visual texts, such as advertising, popular media, social media posts, news, film, and art from Italy.
- Assess and critique the role of visual media in shaping cultural and political discourse in Italy.
- Understand contemporary critical methodologies and apply various analytic frameworks (e.g., semiotics, iconology, ideology, post-colonial theory) to the study of visual culture.
- Communicate ideas effectively about visual culture in both written and oral formats.
- Understand the functions of galleries and museums, the impact of imagery in consumer culture, and how images relate to memory and identity in Florence and Rome.

4. Major Topics covered in the Course:
- What is Visual Culture?
- Visual and Contextual Analysis
- Visual Technologies and the Complexity of Truth
- How Images Make Meaning
- Representation
- Power and Resistance
- The Visual Culture of Consumerism and Fashion
- Visual Culture and the Environment

5. Fulfillment of General Education Requirement:
At Murray State University, this course fulfills the general education requirement/University Studies course *ART 121: Art and Visual Culture*. ART 121 counts as a University Studies course under the Creative Perspectives category. It also fulfills an elective for the Journalism and Mass Communications major and minor (*JMC 322: Mass Media Study Abroad* and *GCM: 250: Introduction to Visual Literacy*). This course may fulfill some General Education requirement on your campus. Please be sure to explore this possibility with yourcampus KIIS representative.

6. Required Readings and Materials:
- Readings and assignments will be provided digitally before departure. This course uses Google Classroom, so a Gmail account and internet access (via laptop, tablet, or smartphone) are required. If you don't have a Gmail account or prefer not to use your personal one, you may create a new account just for this course and delete it at the end of the KIIS program.
- *Look Closely: A Critical Introduction to Visual Culture* (available for free online)
- Students should bring with them a blank journal or notebook that they will carry with them throughout the course.

7. Graded Assignments:

Pre-departure	
Pre-departure Readings (5 readings, 20pts each)	100
Location Research – Research of assigned field trip location and how it relates to our class (presentation to be given on-site)	100
Museum Mapping Exercise (4 locations, 50 pts each)	200
During	
Attendance and General Participation*	100
Reflective Journal of Daily Activities (1.5 pages per day, 10 entries, 10 pts each)	100
Site Selection for Essay – Select 4 pieces of visual culture to research (25 pts each)	100
After Return	
Researched Essay (1000 – 1500 words)	200
Reflection Essay (500 – 1000 words)	100
TOTAL POINTS	**1,000**

Letter grades will be applied as follows:
A = 900-1000
B = 800-899
C = 700-799
D = 600-699
F = <600

*What constitutes active participation?

1) Arriving promptly to class and excursion sites

2) Engaging in discussions with professor and/or classmates during class time and visits to, during, and from excursion sites

3) Completing assigned readings and other assignments.

These items represent the minimum expectations for your participation in my course. Students who exceed these expectations will earn a higher grade in this area.

8. Generative AI Policy:

Generative AI is permitted/encouraged in some ways, with proper attribution, but prohibited in other ways.
Students are allowed, encouraged, and even required to use Generative AI in some ways but are prohibited from using it in other ways. Keep in mind that any content produced by generative AI can "hallucinate" (produce false information), so students are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of any AI-generated content. Examples of citing AI are available at: https://libguides.wku.edu/stylewrite/ai.

Students are permitted and encouraged to use generative AI in the following ways:

- Brainstorming: You may use generative AI to stimulate creativity, generate ideas, or brainstorm topics for papers, presentations, and discussions. The generated content must serve as a steppingstone, not a final product.
- Citation Assistance: AI tools can be used to manage, format, and organize citations and references, promoting adherence to academic writing standards and specific style guides required for individual assignments.
- Grammar and Style Checking: AI-powered writing enhancement tools may be used to help with spelling, grammar, syntax, and stylistic errors.
- Concept Understanding: Generative AI can be used to explain or simulate concepts taught in class, aiding in a deeper understanding.
- Research Assistance: AI can be used to conduct initial research, compile data, and summarize articles, books, or papers. It should not replace traditional research methods but rather enhance them.

You may not use generative AI in coursework in the following ways:

- Plagiarism: Using AI-generated content as your original work without attribution. This includes essays, papers, presentations, and exam answers.
- Data Manipulation: Using AI tools to alter data or create misleading information.
- Misrepresentation of Skills: Using generative AI to complete tasks that are meant to assess your knowledge and skills.
- Confidentiality Breach: Using AI tools that might violate KIIS/university policies or laws related to data privacy and confidentiality.

Metacognitive Reflection. In addition to a proper citation, the student should include the following statement with any assignment where generative AI is used for assistance.

"I used generative AI [INSERT NAME OF PLATFORM] for assistance in the following ways on this assignment: [INSERT WAYS USED, such as brainstorming, citation assistance, grammar and style checking, concept understanding, and research assistance, etc.]."

9. Attendance Policy:

KIIS program participants are expected to be punctual to and in attendance at all classes, presentations, meetings and required excursions, and to remain with the program for the full academic period. Unexcused absences from classes and/or mandatory meetings will result in a lowering of the student's final grade, as will excessive tardiness. Multiple unexcused absences could result in expulsion from the program. Any absence from an academic class session must be excused for medical reasons.

10. Disability Accommodation:

KIIS will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations for program participants with special needs or disabilities, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Be aware that many foreign countries do not have comprehensive legislation comparable to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, businesses and other establishments operating in foreign countries may not be able to provide accommodations.

If you have a disability accommodation need, we recommend you contact your KIIS Campus Representative, https://www.kiis.org/about-kiis/contact-us/campus-representatives/ early in your program selection process so that s/he has time to discuss any specific needs, including which KIIS programs may be best suited. You also are welcome to contact KIIS

Assistant Director, Maria Canning, maria.canning@wku.edu, to discuss your disability accommodation needs (e.g. housing, transportation, excursions, class schedule, etc.).

Immediately after acceptance, notify KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, haley.mctaggart@wku.edu, if you have a special need or disability that might require any form of accommodation abroad. Failure to notify KIIS may prevent you from participating on your KIIS program.

If you require any accommodations abroad, you must provide KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, an accommodation letter from your home campus' disability accommodation office that lists the accommodations you are eligible to receive. Please do not request accommodations directly from your KIIS Program Director or other KIIS Faculty; the KIIS Office will notify your KIIS Program Director and/or Faculty after we have received your above accommodation letter.

In some cases, you may need to make arrangements for a caregiver to join you on your KIIS program, should your physician, campus disability accommodation office, or KIIS make such a recommendation or require it.

11. Title IX / Discrimination & Harassment:
Recent attention to gender discrimination and sexual harassment at colleges and universities reminds us of the importance of adhering to standards of ethical and professional behavior. KIIS Study Abroad is committed to supporting and encouraging safe and equitable educational environments for our students, faculty, and program directors. Students, faculty, and program directors are required to be civil and treat each other with dignity and respect. As such, harassment and/or discrimination of any kind will not be permitted or tolerated.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of KIIS policies. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to a) KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning (+1-859-200-1000) or KIIS Executive Director, John Dizgun (+1-270-227-2288), b) WKU's Title IX Coordinator, Ena Demir (270-745-6867 / ena.demir@wku.edu) or WKU's Title IX Investigator, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / michael.crowe@wku.edu). Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a KIIS program director and/or faculty member, KIIS program directors and faculty are considered "Responsible Employees" of Western Kentucky University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator.

If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center, https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/ at 270-745-3159.

For more information on KIIS Title IX, see https://www.kiis.org/students/health-safety/title-ix-clery/.

Everyone should be able to participate on a KIIS program, attend a KIIS event, or work in a KIIS environment (e.g. KIIS office) without fear of sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. Be respectful of each other.