



Universidad  
de Navarra

**Visual Culture**  
*Teaching guide 2025-26*

## INTRODUCTION

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION:** An introductory course dealing with artistic tradition and other art settings as a method to understand contemporary images. The aim of this course is to help you acquire the skills to analyze and interpret images and other artistic/cultural manifestations. This course seeks to help you develop a personal aesthetic judgment.

- **Degree:** Comunicación Audiovisual (Screen Studies Program); Periodismo (Global Journalism)
- **Module in the degree program:**
- Audiovisual Communication;
  - Module II. Audiovisual Communication milieu; 1. Historical and sociocultural context.
- Journalism;
  - Module II. Journalism milieu; 3. Historical and cultural context.
- **ECTS:** 6
- **Year:** 2º, Spring Semester
- **Type of course:** Required
- **Instructor:** Lourdes Esqueda Verano
- **Language:** English

**Lecture schedule:** Thursday 15:30-17:30 (FCOM-02); Friday 12:00-14:00 (FCOM-05)

### LEARNING OUTCOMES (Competencies)

#### COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Students must acquire basic theoretical notions about specific art movements and other cultural manifestations.
2. Students should be able to properly interpret the meaning of artworks applying Erwin Panofsky's and Roger Fry's methodologies.
3. Students should be able to recognize and distinguish images made in different times and link them to their socio-cultural context.
4. Students must be able to define the visual culture of contemporary society and to explain how viewers create cultural meaning.

#### AUDIOVISUAL COMMUNICATION DEGREE

##### 1. KNOWLEDGE

RA1 - Students should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the subject area based on a general secondary school education. They should have a general level that is well supported by advanced texts, but that also encompasses aspects that suggest knowledge of the leading edge of their field of study.

RA2 - Understanding and valuing the impact of audiovisual communication on society, culture, history, economics, business, law, science, ethics and technology.



Universidad  
de Navarra

RA3 - Knowing, understanding and contemplating the different components of the human personality (biological, affective, mental, spiritual features) and how they relate to different dimensions of the environment.

RA4 - Identifying the main forms of cultural, literary and artistic expression in Western culture from the beginning to the present day.

## 2. SKILLS

RA10 - Students should be able to apply their knowledge to their job or vocation in a professional way. They should be able to prove their general competencies by developing and defending arguments and solving problems within their subject area.

RA12 - Accurately expressing knowledge and ideas in speech and writing in the field of audiovisual communication.

RA14 - Engaging in responsible decision making and problem solving by applying teamwork and leadership skills.

## 3.COMPETENCIES

RA19 –Students should be able to gather and interpret relevant data (normally within their field of study) in order to make judgments that encompass consideration of social, scientific and ethical topics.

RA21 - Understanding, analyzing and critically evaluating defining elements of human beings and contemporary society from anthropological, historical, cultural and social points of view.

## **JOURNALISM DEGREE**

### 1. KNOWLEDGE

RA1 - Students should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the subject area based on a general secondary school education. They should have a general level that is well supported by advanced texts, but that also encompasses aspects that suggest knowledge of the leading edge of their field of study.

### 2. SKILLS

RA11 - Students should be able to apply their knowledge to their job or vocation in a professional way. They should be able to prove their general competencies by developing and defending arguments and solving problems within their subject area.

RA13 - Accurately expressing knowledge and ideas in speech and writing in the field of audiovisual communication.

### 3.COMPETENCIES

RA22 –Students should be able to gather and interpret relevant data (normally within their field of study) in order to make judgments that encompass consideration of social, scientific and ethical topics.

RA24 - Understanding, analyzing and critically evaluating defining elements of human beings and contemporary society from anthropological, historical, cultural and social points of view.



## PROGRAM

This course is a transversal journey to painting, sculpture, photography, cinema and more recently produced images and actions through five modules:

### 1. What is Visual Culture?

#### a. Object of Study

\*Reading: "[Introduction](#)," E.H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (ADI)

#### b. Methodology and Analysis

- Iconology (visit to Occidens)
- Formal analysis
- Critical theory

#### c. Taste and Beauty

\* Watch [Beauty](#)

### 2. This is Us

#### a. The Purposes of Art

\*Screening: one option from

- [La grande bellezza](#), Paolo Sorrentino, 2013
- [Eternity and a Day](#), Theo Angelopolous, 1998
- [Wings of Desire](#), Wim Wenders, 1987
- [Babette's Feast](#), Gabriel Axel, 1987
- [The River](#), Jean Renoir, 1951

#### b. Art Destruction: Iconoclasts and Vandals

\*Exercise: modern iconoclasm

### 3. The Modern Turn: Craftsmen and Artists

#### a. Renaissance

\*Screening: [Purple Noon](#), René Clément, 1960.

#### b. Romanticism

#### c. Pre-Raphaelites

- Exercise using iconology and formal analysis

#### d. Major aesthetic categories (the beautiful, the sublime, the comic, etc.)

\*Non-mandatory cultural trip to Madrid

### 4. Photography, cinema and how they came to change everything

#### a. The arrival of photography



Universidad  
de Navarra

\*Reading: [The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction](#), Walter Benjamin

b. Photojournalism: information and aesthetics

- Truth claim ("[What's the Point of an Index](#)," Tom Gunning)
- Exercise: 1000 words for an image

c. Photos beyond documents

- Early artistic uses of photography
- Photographic specificity: *studium and punctum*

\*Reading: *Camera Lucida*, by Roland Barthes

d. Representation and overrepresentation

\*Reading: [On Photography](#), by Susan Sontag

e. Realism, Avant-garde and Abstract Expressionism

\*Reading: *The Story of Art*, by Gombrich (personal study, chapters 25-28)

- Formal analysis

## 5. The end of art, Pop Culture, and minor aesthetic categories

a. Ready-made

\*Reading: "[Look at all the Lonely People](#)", Thomas Frank, *La conquista de los cool* (ADI). Available in English [HERE](#).

b. Fluxus

\*Reading: [The End of Art](#), by Arthur Danto (ADI).

c. Minor aesthetic categories (the cute, the interesting, etc.)

\*Video: [Kitsch, Camp, and Culture](#), by [Rebeca Longtin](#) video seminar

d. Final remarks

## EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

### 1. In-person Classes: 60 hours

Theoretical Lectures: 50 hours

Practical Sessions\*: 8 hours

Other: 2 hours

\* We will split the group in two

### 2. Students' Workload:

Essays and Assignments 45 hours

Personal Study of Materials 45 hours



Universidad  
de Navarra

### 3. Other activities (non mandatory): Cultural trip

**TOTAL: 150 hours**

**ASSESSMENT**

**MAY SESSION**

**Final Exam: 70%**

**Assignments: 15%**

**In-class participation\*: 15%**

*The Story of Art* by E.H. Gombrich is required reading.

There will be three museum visits in this course. Two of them are required.

Students who are late without a valid excuse will not be allowed to attend class.

Spelling and proper behavior in class will be taken into account in the final grade.

Students are not allowed to use mobile devices or computers in class unless otherwise indicated.

\*In the event of an absence, an acceptable reason must be given for the assignment to be graded.

\*The first and last exercises of the course -on the use of generative AI to analyze art- are part of the Teaching Innovation Project "Educating symphonically in artificial intelligence" (code 211).

**Recurring students** may opt for a 100% final exam evaluation

**JUNE**

**Exam 100%**

## OFFICE HOURS

**Dra. Lourdes Esqueda Verano** ([lesqueda@unav.es](mailto:lesqueda@unav.es))

- Office 2571, Ismael Sánchez Bella Building (second floor)
- Wednesday 12:00-2:00pm ([schedule here](#))

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

**Mandatory bibliography:**

E.H. Gombrich, *The story of art*, Phaidon, London, 2011 [Find it in the library](#)

Other readings will be assigned to the students via hard-copy handouts or by posting materials on the course website (Aula Virtual ADI>Readings>Mandatory).



Universidad  
de Navarra

**Recommended bibliography:**

Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 2001.

William Fleming, *Art & Ideas*, 1980.

Richard Howells, *Visual Culture*, Polity Press, 2006.

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, BBC & Penguin, 1987

Roger Fry, *Vision and Design*, Chatto & Windus, 1920. [Find it at Archive.org](#)

Jameson, F, *Postmodernism: Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Verso London, 1991.

Gillian Rose. "The question of method: practice, reflexivity and critique in visual culture studies." In:

Heywood, Ian & Sandywell, Barry eds. *The Handbook of Visual Culture*. London: Berg, 2012, pp. 542–558.

**Recommended museum links:**

[-Louvre \(Paris\)](#)

[-Rijksmuseum \(Amsterdam\)](#)

[-Tate Gallery \(London\)](#)

[-Thyssen Madrid](#)

[-Bayeler Basilea](#)

[-Prado Museum \(Madrid\)](#)

[-Centre Pompidou \(Paris\)](#)

[-George Kolbe Museum \(Berlin\)](#)

[-Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson \(Paris\)](#)

[-Donation Henri Lartigue \(París\)](#)

[-Juan March Foundation \(Madrid\)](#)

[-De Menill Collection \(Houston\)](#)

[-MOMA \(New York\)](#)

[-Guggenheim curated "obras maestras" \(Bilbao\)](#)

[-Hermitage Museum](#)

**Other resources:**

To understand Aby Warburg's Atlas Mnemosyne: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/b5158e097d9c48b3bc15b844a33ae355>



Universidad  
de Navarra

Hokusai: one of the Masters of Ukiyo-e: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/82d10f48016346d78dcc38b5cdcd1d23>

A lesson on looking: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_jHmjs2270A&t=291s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_jHmjs2270A&t=291s)

On beauty: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9pg2j2oGy0&t=831s>

The Cultural Tutor: [https://twitter.com/culturaltutor?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor](https://twitter.com/culturaltutor?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor)

The Art Assignment: <https://www.youtube.com/user/theartassignment>

One Hundred Years of Cinema: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbM9iT\\_PqBCUOQdaREDAP3g](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbM9iT_PqBCUOQdaREDAP3g)

The Nerdwriter: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJkMI0u7faDgqh4PfzbpLdg>

Glossary of Art Terms (MoMA): [https://www.moma.org/learn/moma\\_learning/glossary](https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/glossary)

Cesare Ripa, Iconologie où la science des emblèmes, devises, &c. qui apprend à les expliquer dessiner et inventer : ouvrage très utile aux orateurs, poètes, peintres: <https://objects.library.uu.nl/reader/index.php?obj=1874-197053&lan=en#page//10/75/63/10756398002341449595643700435858711788.jpg/mode/1up>

Google Art Project: <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/u/0/?hl=es>

Khan Academy: <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-history-basics/beginners-art-history/a/cave-painting-contemporary-art-and-everything-in-between>

The Art Story: <http://www.theartstory.org/>

[The Cultural tutor on art moments](#)