

**DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES
AND CULTURAL STUDIES**
<https://uofa.ualberta.ca/modern-languages-and-cultural-studies>

2017-2018 MLCS 299 A3: Graffiti
(Fall Term)

Instructor: Andriy Nahachewsky
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Time: MWF 1-1:50
Place: Tory 1 105
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30-3:30,
or by appointment
Course Website: eclass

Course Prerequisite: None

Course-based Ethics Approval not needed, no such projects approved.

Community Service Learning component

None

Past or Representative Evaluative Course Material Available

Document distributed in class

Additional mandatory Instructional fees (approved by Board of Governors)

No

Course Description and Objectives:

Course goals are: 1) to understand graffiti as a social phenomenon with great diversity – and many sub-subcultures. We will explore interactions between motivation and form as we observe some graffiti writers who write tags, others who create art, and still others who express ideology. 2) We will explore a variety of perspectives and commentary on graffiti, observing tensions that exist among official culture, commercial culture, and alternate (“vernacular”) cultural players. 3) We will gain research design skills that are applicable beyond this course, explore “forensic” ethnographic methods, to increase our skills in observing nuances in expressive social culture. 4) We will not create illegal graffiti.

The course will focus on Edmonton graffiti in its worldwide context, and will involve participation in a special photography and database project. Several class projects will be built upon analyzing the graffiti information we collect.

By the end of the semester, successful students will recognize graffiti sub-subcultures and be able to differentiate between graffiti tags, aesthetic street art, ideological slogans, and hybrid forms that they may observe in public spaces. They will gain sensitivity to diverse stakeholder positions about graffiti as a controversial topic, and describe those diverse positions. They will be able to critically evaluate the assumptions and logic of claims in diverse stakeholder texts, and articulate their own

views. They will be able to identify 5 main stages in ethnographic research design, and have personal experience in a group project involving all the stages.

Texts:

Excerpts will be read from the following core bibliography (and potentially other publications, depending on the direction of the class discussions, interests, and abilities of the students). In general, the goal is to read approx. 30 pages per week (sometimes less, sometimes more if there are many pictures!).

History of Graffiti, Insider-Outsider Views

Stewart, Jack. *Graffiti Kings: New York City Mass Transit Art of the 1970s*. New York: Melcher Media, 2009.

Mackey, Clarke. *Random Acts of Culture: Reclaiming Art and Community in the 21st Century*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2010.

Ferrell, Jeff. *Crimes of Style: Urban Graffiti and the Politics of Criminality*. Boston: Northeastern University, 1993.

Waclawek, Anna. *Graffiti and Street Art*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2011.

Geason, Susan and Paul R. Wilson. *Preventing Graffiti and Vandalism*. Canberra, Australian Institute of Criminology, 1990.

Haworth, Billy, Eleanor Bruce, Kurt Iveson. "Spatio-Temporal Analysis of Graffiti Occurrence in an Inner-City Urban Environment." *Applied Geography* 38 (2012): 53-63.

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0143622812001026#>.

Thompson, Kirrilly et al. "From broken windows to a renovated research agenda: A review of the literature on vandalism and graffiti in the rail industry." *Transportation Research, Part A*, 46 (2012) 1280–1290.

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0965856412000663>.

Tagging

Chandès, Hervé, editor. *Born in the Streets: Graffiti*. Exhibit catalogue. Paris: Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, 2009.

Cooper, Martha. *Tag Town*. Årsta, Sweden: Dokument Förlag, 2008.

Gastman, Roger, Darin Rowland, and Ian Sattler. *Freight Train Graffiti*. New York: Abrams, 2006.

Ley, David and Rooman Cybriwsky. "Urban Graffiti as Territorial Markers." *The Annals of the Society of American Geographers* 64/4 (1974): 491-505.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2569491>.

Powers, Stephen J. *The Art of Getting Over: Graffiti at the Millenium*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.

Graffiti as art

Ellsworth-Jones, Will. *Banksy: The Man Behind the Wall*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2012.

Melnyk, Adam. *Visual Orgasm: The Early Years of Canadian Graffiti*. Calgary: Frontenac House Media, 2011.

Walde, Claudia. *Street Fonts: Graffiti Alphabets from Around the World*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2011.

Graffiti as Ideology

Albin Axel and Josh Kamler. *Written on the City: Graffiti Messages Worldwide*. Cincinnati: How Books, 2008.

Peteet, J. 1996. "The writing on the walls: the graffiti of the intifada." *Cultural Anthropology* 11 (2), 139–159. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/656446>

Grade Distribution (see "Explanatory Notes"):

Photography and metadata of Edmonton Graffiti (due Oct 2)	15%
Reading commentary (2 articles each @ 5%, 5 minute summary in class, dates TBA)	10%
Project 1 analyzing graffiti corpus (solo) (due Oct 30)	15%
Project 2 analyzing graffiti corpus (group) (due Nov 27)	15%
Attendance and Participation	15%
Final Exam (scheduled 2:00 Dec 19)	30%
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Total	100%

Date of Deferred Final Exam: to be determined in case of need, between 19 Jan and 18 February 2018.

Explanatory Notes on Assignments:

1. Photography and Metadata of Edmonton Graffiti. Students will be required to photograph graffiti found in Edmonton. Specific numbers, formats for the photos, particular metadata (documentation of the content and context), and posting procedures will be elaborated in class.
2. Reading commentary. Each student will be assigned two readings to summarize orally in class, spread throughout the semester. The summary needs to be 5 minutes long, highlight the key concepts in the reading and raise at least one question for discussion. The summary is to illustrate a particular point of view on graffiti, and explore tension between the perspective of the author and some other perspective.
3. Project 1. Once the corpus of graffiti photos has been assembled, students will analyze this information for particular features. Specific examples and suggestion for analytical features will be discussed in class. The project can be written as a 1000 word report (plus probably photos), or a careful powerpoint presentation.
4. Project 2. Similar to Project 1, but dealing with a different feature of the graffiti collection (eg. Locations, media, aesthetics), and requiring more background information and deeper analysis. Approx 1000 words per person, produced in small groups.

Required Notes:

"Policy about course outlines can be found in the [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#) of the University Calendar."

Academic Integrity:

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at www.governance.ualberta.ca) and avoid any behaviour that could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

Learning and Working Environment:

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring all students; faculty and staff are able to study and work in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels that this policy is being violated to:

- Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or
- If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that direct discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department.

For additional advice or assistance regarding this policy you may contact the [Office of the Student Ombuds](#). Information about the [University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures](#) is described in [UAPPOL](#).

Academic Honesty:

All students should consult the information provided by the [Student Conduct & Accountability Office](#) regarding avoiding cheating and plagiarism in particular and academic dishonesty in general (see the [Academic Integrity Undergraduate Handbook](#) and [Information for Students](#)). If in doubt about what is permitted in this class, ask the instructor.

An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. See the [Academic Discipline Process](#).

Recording of Lectures:

Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components:

Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor by e-mail within two days. Regarding absences that may be excusable and

procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult sections [Attendance](#) and [Examinations](#) of the University Calendar. Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the “attendance and participation” component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result.

In this class, students are encouraged to contribute actively to class discussions. Students will be assessed a 1% penalty for each class missed or late. More importantly, attendance will also likely reflect on learning, assignment and exam success.

Policy for Late Assignments:

Assignments may be handed in after the stated deadline with a 5% -per-class-day penalty assessed for each class-day of lateness. (MUCH better than getting zero!)

Student Accessibility Services:

If you have special needs that could affect your performance in this class, please let me know during the first week of the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If you are not already registered with [Student Accessibility Services](#), contact their office immediately (1-80 SUB; Email sasrec@ualberta.ca; Email; phone 780-492-3381).

Grading:

Assessment of the individual course components may be in the form of numerical marks or letter grades. The final letter grade will be based on "a combination of absolute achievement and relative performance in a class" (University Calendar, [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#)). The University Grading Procedure mandates that "a student’s level of achievement of the goals/outcomes of a course, their grade, and the descriptor of that grade must be aligned" (<https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/>). The following guidelines have been adopted by the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies:

“MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale”

Descriptor	Letter Grade	Grade Point Value	%
Excellent. A+, A or A- is earned by work which is superior in content and form and demonstrates an exceptional grasp of the subject matter. The grade of A+ designates work that far exceeds course expectations. Grades in the A range are normally achieved by a small number of students.	A+	4.0	97-100
	A	4.0	93-96
	A-	3.7	90-92
Good. B+, B or B- is earned by work that demonstrates a thorough comprehension of the course material and a good command of relevant skills. Grades in the B range are normally achieved by the largest number of students.	B+	3.3	87-89
	B	3.0	83-86
	B-	2.7	80-82

<p>Satisfactory. C+, C or C- is earned by work that demonstrates an adequate grasp of the course material and relevant skills. Grades in the C range designate work that has met the basic requirements of the course.</p>	C+	2.3	77-79
	C	2.0	73-76
	C-	1.7	70-72
<p>Poor/Minimal Pass. D+ or D is earned by work that demonstrates minimal familiarity with the course material. Grades in the D range generally indicate insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.</p>	D+	1.3	65-69
	D	1.0	60-64
<p>Failure.</p>	F	0.0	0-59