COURSE DESCRIPTION

"Perspectives on Inquiry" is a course taken by all first-year students at Michigan Technological University so that they have the shared experience of a small, intellectually engaging class—and so that they are introduced to the intellectual habits of college-educated people. Although all sections of this class share the same goals (listed below), each section is designed around a specific theme.

The theme of our section of Perspectives is sight. It may seem odd to you to study this—after all, don’t we just open our eyes and see? It may seem that our seeing is automatic and physical and out of our control, something that all people everywhere do in exactly the same way—and always have.

My uses of the conditional “may seem” in the preceding paragraph, however, should indicate that I don’t think this is the case. I am not out in this class to prove my position on this—I rather want to explore with you the sense that I (for one) grew up taking for granted (at least until I got glasses in fourth grade).

Our class work will thus take shape, in the beginning, around questions like this:

• How does sight work?
• Are “sight” and “vision” the same thing?
• Is how you see affected by where you grew up, or by the profession you choose?
• Is it possible to define “sight” so that it doesn’t overlap with other practices and habits of our lives, like our religious beliefs or our politics or our relations with other kinds of people?

These questions may seem a little dry in black-and-white ink on paper, but I am going to work to help you see why these questions are deeply intriguing to me, hoping that you come to share some of my enthusiasm. I am also expecting that you will be developing and asking lots of question and bringing a certain intellectual fidgetiness to class.

And, finally, perhaps it seems to you that what I am proposing we study is useful for you only if you are heading off into some sort of biological career. But I am a writer and artist, and the readings I have for you come not only from physiologists but also from anthropologists, poets, engineers, philosophers, psychologists, and historians. I think that, no matter what your interests and intended career, our inquiries will help you see the web of connections among our senses and the work we think and hope is possible in the world.

CLASS GOALS

This course is intended to:

• Engage you as active learners through inquiry into interdisciplinary questions.
• Help you learn how knowledge from a variety of perspectives can be integrated to provide rich and complex insights.
• Introduce you to (or help you strengthen) the intellectual habits of critical thinking and reading; accuracy and thoroughness; creativity; using reasoning and evidence to support arguments; thoughtful consideration of others’ ideas and positions; effective oral, visual, and written communication; textual, empirical, and other kinds of research; effective learning strategies; and time management.
• Help you understand the value of MTU’s mission to promote diversity, creativity, leadership, and teamwork in order to meet the changing needs of our society.
COURSE MATERIALS

The following materials (all available in the campus bookstore) are required for this class:

- A journal whose shape and size pleases you, so that you enjoy writing in it frequently. I want you to bring this journal to each class.
- A dictionary. Find anyone you like, and bring it to class—and use it when you read.
- Some sort of notebook or folder or envelope for holding all the texts you produce in this class. Bring this to each class, so that you are sure to keep everything. (I do not care what shape this notebook takes—just that you have one.)

In addition, I will be handing out additional articles and poems for you to read.

WHAT WILL YOU BE PRODUCING THIS SEMESTER?

Take a look at the Class Calendar—this will give you a broad idea for the formal and informal writings and presentations I am asking of you. As due dates for work approach, we will be discussing each assignment so that you will know (I hope) my expectations for each assignment.

YOUR PORTFOLIO

At the end of this semester you will turn in to me a portfolio that will hold every text you make in this class. This portfolio is kept by the university; you will put into it texts you produce in other classes, and you will use it in other classes. We will talk more about this portfolio over the course of the semester, but be aware that you need to keep every text you make in this class—and that I will be unable to turn a grade in for you at the end of the semester until I have your complete portfolio.

CLASS RESOURCES

- Each other. You can only learn the matter of this class through being attentive to what others say. You can only learn the matter of this class through taking seriously the opinions and thoughts (and criticisms…) of others. In addition, you will feel most comfortable in this class and get the most done if you develop friendly, collegial, and respectful relations with others in class. You will also help make this college community be a community if you work towards such relations.
- Me. I want you to succeed in this class, and to learn—so I want to be sure you always understand the hows and the whys of the work I ask of you. Please don’t hesitate to ask questions in class, and please come to my office hours (you don’t have to have some life-or-death problem to come to office hours—just come with any question or concern you have about our class). (And, in general, in college, people who talk with their professors do better.)
- The Writing Center (phone: 7-2207). The Writing Center is in Walker 107. The Writing Center is not about correcting spelling and grammar (although they can help you with this), but about helping you become a confident and thoughtful communicator: they can help you think about and get ready for oral and visual communication as well as written. You can make appointments to meet weekly with a coach, or you can take advantage of drop-in hours. People who visit the Writing Center do better in classes both because they receive friendly encouragement and support and also because such visits will help you gain even more confidence and seriousness in your communication practices.
CLASS ATTENDANCE
You are allowed to miss two classes per quarter, any subsequent absence will affect your final grade. If you miss a class, you are responsible for finding out from someone else in class what you missed and for making up any work you missed.

CLASS GRADING

Overall grading
If, at the end of the semester, you have earned a C in this class, it means you did what was minimally expected of you: you came to all classes and did all the work. (NOTE that you must complete all the class assignments if you hope to receive a passing grade in this class). If you want a B or an A, you must not only come to all the classes and do all the work, but you must do the work with shining effort and attention. To earn a B or an A, your work must demonstrate to me that you have gone well above and beyond the basic requirements of each assignment:

• You will come to class with questions about assignments and readings, showing that you have thought about the work.
• You will have thought about an assignment and come up with several different ways to do it and will have tried out several approaches before you are done. (I will happily go over different versions or drafts with you, to discuss your decisions and concerns.)
• You will listen carefully and respectfully to others in class and consider how what they say can change how you approach your work.
• You will take active and energetic and engaged part in class discussion, respecting the opinions of others.

• All the formal work assignments of class—the projects you turn in on paper and the oral presentations—are polished. You will have proofread your written work, and made sure (by having others read your work before you turn it in) that there are no typos or grammatical problems that will trip another reader; your oral presentations will show that you have practiced beforehand so that you can be at ease and as effective as possible for your audience. It will be very hard to earn an A in this class, and it will also be hard to earn a B. If you do earn either grade, you will have good reason to be proud of yourself and your efforts. Earning a C is nothing to scoff at, either, because I have designed the work of this class to challenge you.

Grading on individual assignments
I do not put grades on individual assignments because I don’t think that grades on assignments are what encourage you to revise and rwork and improve your work; instead, you will receive plenty of feedback from me. If you ever want to know what grade I think you are earning, come talk. (I will let you know if ever I think you are doing below C-work in class.) At three points during the semester, I will be asking you to do an assessment of the work you have done so far; I consider it part of my responsibility as a teacher to help you learn how to do fair and motivating assessments of your own work. At the end of the semester you will meet with me individually to determine, through discussion and assessment, the grade you have earned.

A NOTE ON YOUR TIME & THIS CLASS
It is an expectation of this university that for every hour you spend in a class there will be approximately three hours of time outside of class you will need to spend on the work of the class. Since we meet approximately two-and-a-half hours per week, I am expecting that you will put in, on average over the semester, close to eight hours per week on your work for this class. I have planned assignments with these expectations of you in mind.
MY RESPONSIBILITIES TO YOU

What I believe to be most of your responsibilities to the class and yourself are, I hope, made clear in the preceding sections. Here are what I think to be my responsibilities to you:

• To be prepared for class myself, having read or studied the day’s work and having developed class activities that help you approach the work thoughtfully and carefully and often, even, I hope, with interest and delight.

• To work to develop a respectful class environment where we listen and respond to each other thoughtfully and respectfully.

• To be available and attentive to you immediately before and after class and during posted office hours, so that you can bring up and discuss issues that interest you or matters that concern you about how class and your work are going. I am also happy to make appointments to meet with you if I cannot attend my posted office hours.

• To be clear about my expectations about the work of the class. With each assignment, you should know before you start what I am looking for you to do and consider in that assignment; you should know how I will be assessing your work.

• To return your work to you in a timely manner. I will most often return short assignments to you during the following class. For longer assignments—any of the formal projects—I will take a week to respond. (Like most of you, I plan ahead to be sure I have time for work that is coming up. For example, when I know you will be turning in a long paper, I make sure not to schedule much other work for the week that I will be reading and carefully considering your work—so, if you turn in work late, my schedule will probably no longer be so set up, and it might very well take me longer to respond.)

One final responsibility I see you as having, then, is to help me in this work. I want to hear from you, for example, whether my assignments help you understand my expectations. Also, it is only with your careful participation that we can achieve a class that is enjoyable and challenging and engaging for everyone.

IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY POLICIES

MTU’s policy on Academic Integrity

Plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offenses. MTU’s Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “knowingly copying another’s work or ideas and calling them one’s own or not giving proper credit or citation,” and the policy covers copying sections or entire papers from printed or electronic sources as well as handing in papers written by students for other classes or purchasing academic papers. Plagiarism and cheating are not only dishonest but they cheat you out of learning. If you ever have any questions about this issue, or about how to cite someone else’s work properly, please talk with me or consult a coach in the Writing Center.

MTU’s Policy on Discrimination and Harassment

MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. If you have a disability and need reasonable accommodation for equal access to education and services at MTU, please contact Dr. Gloria Melton in the Dean’s Office (phone: 7-2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may talk with me, your advisor, a department chair, or the Affirmative Action Officer (phone: 7-3310).
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>TOPICS</th>
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| 1    | T 8/29 | Intro to class  
• Models of sight/vision/eyes  
• Visual illusions |
|      | TH 8/31 | Describing...?  
• Syllabus response  
• (with partner): Revised model of sight/vision/eyes |
| 2    | T 9/5  | Presentations of designs  
• (with partner): Redesign the desktop computer  
• Read poems |
|      | TH 9/7 | Start to develop Question Set  
• Writing: Explaining sight/vision/eyes to someone/thing who doesn’t have eyes (see handout) |
| 3    | T 9/12 | Continue developing Question Set  
• Writing: What questions are there now?  
• Read “Human Eye,” “Color Vision,” & “Visual Perceptions and Illusions” |
|      | TH 9/14 | Discuss readings  
• Read selection from Color for Philosophers: Unweaving the Rainbow  
• Writing: A poem about one of the questions |
| 4    | T 9/19 | Presentations of books/websites  
• (with partner): A children’s book/website explaining one of the aspects of sight/vision/eyes we’ve been discussing  
• Read Hoffman: Preface, Chapters 1-3  
• Writing: Explain to a 10-year-old why one of the questions ought to interest her |
|      | TH 9/21 | Discuss readings  
• Read Hoffman: Chapters 4-6  
• Read Hoffman: Chapters 7-8, Epilogue  
• Reading notes/questions written up |
| 5    | T 9/26 | Discuss reading  
• Writing: Which questions seem more within your grasp now?  
• Discuss readings  
• Mid-term assessment |
|      | TH 9/28 | Discuss digesting a book (or other writing) as a whole  
• Read Panek, Section I (“Seeing”)  
• Reading notes/questions written up |
| 6    | T 10/3 | Start to revise model from week 1  
• Writing: Summary of Hoffmann’s argument  
• Prepare for lecture |
|      | W 10/4 | Small groups: telescope write-up  
• Attend lecture, “Process & Expression,” 8pm, Rosza Center |
|      | TH 10/5 | Lecture notes/questions/response |
| 7    | T 10/10 | Discuss model—revisit Question Set  
• (with partner): Revised model (from week 1)  
• Telescope write-up  
• Read Panek, Section I (“Seeing”)  
• Read Panek, Section II (“Believing”)  
• Writing: adding to the Question Set; where are you? |
|      | TH 10/12 | Discuss reading  
• Discuss reading  
• Start preparing for research papers |
| 8    | T 10/17 | Discuss reading  
• Read Panek, Section III (“Beyond Belief”)  
• Reading notes/questions written up  
• Mid-term assessment  
• Writing: A preliminary research plan |
|      | TH 10/19 | Other technologies  
• Respond to research plans  
• Prepare for reading Romanyshyn |
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<th>WEEK</th>
<th>TO PREPARE FOR CLASS</th>
<th>IN CLASS</th>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>T 10/24</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Read Romanyshyn: Prologue &amp; Chapter 1</td>
<td>Discuss reading</td>
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<td>• Writing: Reading questions</td>
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<td>TH 10/26</td>
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<td>• Read Romanyshyn: Chapter 2</td>
<td>Discuss reading</td>
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<td>• Writing: Reading questions</td>
<td>Discussion of research progress</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>T 10/31</td>
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<td>• Read Romanyshyn: Chapters 3-5</td>
<td>Guest lecture: Janice Ghme from Biology</td>
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<td>• Writing: Reading questions</td>
<td>Halloween &amp; eyes</td>
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<td>TH 11/2</td>
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<td>• Read Romanyshyn: Chapters 6-7</td>
<td>Looking at Romanyshyn's whole argument</td>
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<td>• Writing: Reading questions</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>T 11/7</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Writing: Summary of and response to Romanyshyn</td>
<td>LIBRARY VISIT (meet there)</td>
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<td>TH 11/9</td>
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<td>• Read Rilke</td>
<td>Discuss poem</td>
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<td>• Writing: Research plan</td>
<td>Discuss research papers/annotated bibliography</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>T 11/14</td>
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<td>• Read articles on senses in other cultures, other species</td>
<td>Discuss readings</td>
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<td>TH 11/16</td>
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<td>• FIRST DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPERS DUE</td>
<td>Respond to drafts</td>
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<td>• Mid-term assessments</td>
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<td>TH 11/17</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>T 11/28</td>
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<td>• Writing: Research report</td>
<td>Discuss &amp; prepare for formal oral presentations</td>
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<td>TH 11/30</td>
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<td>• Annotated bibliography due</td>
<td>Work on drafts</td>
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<td>• Portfolio discussion</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>T 12/5</td>
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<td>• Second draft of research papers due</td>
<td>Formal oral presentation of research</td>
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<td>TH 12/7</td>
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<td>• Evaluations of presentations due</td>
<td>Formal oral presentation of research</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>T 12/12</td>
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<td>• Evaluations of presentations due</td>
<td>Formal oral presentation of research</td>
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<td>• Final draft of research papers due</td>
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<td>TH 12/14</td>
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<td>• Evaluations of presentations due</td>
<td>Class tie-up, good-bye ... sigh</td>
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<td>• Class &amp; self-assessments due</td>
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**THANKSGIVING BREAK 11/20-11/24**

**WEEK 13**

**WEEK 14**

**WEEK 15**

**FINALS WEEK**

**Note:** this syllabus may change, depending upon your interests and the directions taken by class discussion.