

Frida Kahlo: Art, Artist, Icon

Spring 2020 Great Works - HNRS T480 001

Online/Thursdays, 2:00-2:50pm EST

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Dr. Katie Barak

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Office Hours: Open office hours will be held via Zoom on Thursdays from 3:00-4:00pm EST and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine Frida Kahlo: the artist's personal history, the art she created, and the feminist shorthand she has come to represent. We will analyze the ways nationality, gender, sexuality, and ability intersect on the canvas while interrogating public imagination surrounding this cult figure. We will consider the links between self-portrait, selfie, and attempting to position one's intersectional identity visually. We will discuss commodification and the resulting impact on art, artist, and audience. Finally, we will be looking inward at the ways we choose to represent ourselves to the public.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Critical understanding of painting form and content
- Analysis of Frida Kahlo's self-portraits
- Discuss analysis "in-person" via Zoom or through response essays
- Grapple with Kahlo's:
 - Self-representation via portraits and the notion of "authenticity" when depicting the self
 - Persona in life and her commodified legacy post-mortem
- Demonstrate an understanding of your own intersectional identity, self-representation, and creativity through self-portrait (broadly defined)

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Technology

- Blackboard account
- Access to an Internet connection
- A Drexel email account

Required Texts

All required texts will be posted via Blackboard Learn as file uploads or links. **NOTE:** Class readings are "due" the week you see them on the syllabus.

Additional Materials

The final project for this class is to create a self-portrait. Depending on your self-portrait's form, this may mean purchasing additional materials. Please see assignment info below.

Content Advisory

It is important to note that some of the Kahlo's self-portraits contain nudity, violence, gore, sex, and other potentially triggering content. Our discussions will also touch upon potentially triggering content including interpretations of pain, the body, gender identity, sexuality, miscarriage, and other unforeseeable areas. It is suggested that before continuing with this course students look up Kahlo's body of work to prepare yourself. **Students will not be allowed to skip viewing paintings or discussing their form or impact due to their subject matter.**

GRADING

Assignment	Points
Introduction Post + 3 Responses	5
Midterm Project	20
Final Project	30
Weekly Participation (9 weeks x 5 possible pts)	45
	100 maximum points

Letter Grade	Numerical Grade
A+	100-97
A	96-93
A-	92-90
B+	89-87
B	86-83
B-	82-80
C+	79-77
C	76-73
C-	72-70
D+	69-67
D	66-63
F	Below 63

ASSIGNMENTS

Intro Post + 3 Responses

Let's humanize this digital classroom! Intro posts will focus on the student and must include the below specs. Students also need to read through other student's intros and respond to at least 3.

Specs:

Intro post should include the following components:

- Pinpoint your familiarity with Frida Kahlo and/or critically analyzing art on a scale of 1-10
- List 8-10 personal qualities and/or anecdotes that capture who you are as a human
- 3 photos that capture the following three things:
 1. how you wish strangers would see you
 2. how your friends see you
 3. how you see yourself

Posts should be around 400-500 words, submitted through the discussion board. Intro post due by 11:59pm EST Wednesday (04/08) of Week 1.

Responses should connect the dots between you and other students and need to be 75-100 words. Responses due by 11:59pm EST Friday (04/10) of Week 1.

Grading:

Students will be graded on the following:

1. Completion of the prompt
2. Fulfilment of the specs

Midterm project

Since the final project of this course will be a self-portrait that focuses on visually representing your personal intersectional identity, the midterm is meant to help you prepare by exploring the ways Frida Kahlo represents her intersectional identity.

Specs:

Students will write a 1500-word critical analysis of a Frida Kahlo painting, specifically describing the ways she visually depicts her intersectional identity on the canvas.

You must address at least three of the following in your essay:

- Gender
- Sexuality
- Nationality and/or ethnicity
- Ability
- Class

In addition, you need to consider the historical context of the time she is painting; 1907-1954 Mexico puts a very particular spin on the above identities as well as the political and cultural zeitgeist in play. Class readings have given you insight on all of the above; you are expected to create your own analysis and use the readings as support for your argument.

Midterm project due Thursday, 05/14 by 11:59pm EST in BBLearn.

Final Project

The final project for this course will be a self-portrait (broadly defined) + reflection that incorporates aspects of your intersectional identity.

Specs

- The student will create a self-portrait (please see the full assignment info in BB Learn). It does not have to be a painting; students have explored visually representing their

intersectional identities through frosting, collage, sculpture, poetry collection, original song, playlist, and many other avenues. Be creative!

- Students will upload photos or videos of their creative work on BBLearn.
- In addition to the creative piece, there is a written component. A 300-word reflection must accompany the self-portrait. This reflection needs to address “this is what I was thinking when I made this” and tie in your intersectional identity.

Final project due Thursday, 06/11 by 11:59pm EST in BBLearn. If the student’s project is visual, they will need to take and upload photos of your projects and submit them along with the written component.

Participation

Participation can be earned one of two ways:

- Logging into a Zoom meeting during the scheduled class time (Thursdays 2:00-2:50pm EST) and joining the “in-person” discussion based on course topics and readings
- Submitting a participation assignment. The assignment will typically be a 300-word discussion paper in response to posted prompts based on the course readings (due Thursdays by 2:50pm EST)

Everyone is doing their best in this unprecedented time, so I wanted to build in some flexibility for participation. Students can choose which of the above option works for them on a weekly basis; you do not have to commit to *only* “in-person” or *only* discussion papers. Check in with yourself, your schedule, your bandwidth for extraversion, and choose the path that is best for you.

Grading:

Students will be graded on the following:

1. For “in-person” discussion: engaged throughout the class time (not multi-tasking), demonstrates an understanding of the course topics and readings, present for the entire 50-minute session
2. For discussion papers: thoroughly addressing all parts of the prompt, demonstrates an understanding of the course topics and readings, fulfilling the 300-word minimum length

STUDENT RESOURCES

DISABILITY SERVICES

Students requesting accommodations due to a disability at Drexel University need to request a current Accommodations Verification Letter (AVL) in the ClockWork database before accommodations can be made. These requests are received by Disability Resources (DR), who

then issues the AVL to the appropriate contacts. For additional information, visit the [DR website](#), or contact DR for more information by phone at 215.895.1401, or by email at disability@drexel.edu.

Once you have received your AVL, please send it to me via email or bring it by my office. The University does not grant retroactive disability accommodations, so please provide your letter as soon as you are able.

WRITING CENTER

If you find that you are struggling with the weekly assignments, check out the Drexel Writing Center. They provide individualized support for writers working on any kind of writing and welcome writers at any stage in the writing process — from brainstorming to final revision. To make an appointment, please visit [their online scheduling system](#) or call 215.895.6633 during regular business hours.

CLASSROOM POLICIES

RESPECT

Students will be asked to discuss several topics that may or may not be comfortable. It is of utmost concern that there is decorum and respect. Students should feel safe. While I encourage you to comment freely in class and express opinions, remember to think about your classmates and their feelings as well. When a student is speaking, listen and then respond. Diversity is welcome, intolerance is not. Be respectful of your classmates, their experience and opinions, and their right to privacy. No students should feel that they must disclose personal information about themselves due to the discussions in this class.

LATE WORK

No late work will be accepted. This includes participation (“in-person” discussion or discussion papers)! It is the student’s responsibility to keep track of deadlines and assignments. If an emergency occurs where you are unable to participate, please send me a quick note with the general situation and your expected return. At that point we can work on an alternative plan. The more proactive and communicative you are, the better.

EXTRA CREDIT

There is no extra credit for this course.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism includes: copying and pasting from online sources, using nothing but citations to make your arguments, turning in somebody else’s work as your own, and turning in the same paper/project multiple times (either in the same class or different classes). **Do not try to pass off someone else’s work as your own!** Anything found to be plagiarized will result in a 0 grade for the assignment, a discussion, and further action.

For more information about Drexel’s definitions of plagiarism and cheating, as well as a full rundown of the Academic Integrity Policy, visit the [Provost’s Academic Policies page](#).

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY NOTICE

It is important to recognize that some or all of the course materials provided to you may be the intellectual property of Drexel University, the course instructor, or others. Use of this intellectual property is governed by Drexel University policies, including the policy found here:

<https://drexel.edu/it/about/policies/policies/01-Acceptable-Use/>

Briefly, this policy states that course materials, including recordings, provided by the course instructor may not be copied, reproduced, distributed or re-posted. Doing so may be considered a breach of this policy and will be investigated and addressed as possible academic dishonesty, among other potential violations. Improper use of such materials may also constitute a violation of the University's Code of Conduct found here:

<https://drexel.edu/cpo/policies/cpo-1/> and will be investigated as such.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1	Class Introduction + Interpreting Art Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Course Syllabus• Art History 101: How to Look at an Artwork• “Introduction: The Artist as Mythmaker; Fissured Tales of Art and Life” from Gannit Ankori’s biography <i>Frida Kahlo</i> Assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intro Post in BBLearn due 04/08 by 11:59pm EST• 3 responses to other student’s intro posts in BBLearn due 04/10 by 11:59pm EST Participation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attend class “in-person” Class 04/09 2:00-2:50pm EST via Zoom OR <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Week 1 Participation Assignment in BBLearn by 2:50pm EST 04/09
Week 2	Introduction to Frida’s Narrative Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• From Gerry Souter’s biography <i>Frida Kahlo</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">○ “Introduction”○ “The Wild Thing”○ “Death of Innocence”• Intersectionality lecture Participation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participation via “in-person” Class 04/16 2:00-2:50pm EST via Zoom OR <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Week 2 Participation Assignment in BBLearn by 2:50pm EST 04/16
Week 3	Complicated Intersectional Identities: Artist, Mexican, Community, Woman + TIME PERIOD Reading:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take note of Calabró's and Mirkin's OUTSTANDING analysis of the paintings; this is what you should be striving for when analyzing Kahlo's art <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Frida Kahlo and Mexican Tradition Identity" Fortunata Calabró! "To Paint the Unspeakable: Mexican Female Artists' Iconography of the 1930s and early 1940s" Dina Comisarenko Mirkin <p>Participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation via "in-person" Class 04/23 2:00-2:50pm EST via Zoom OR Week 3 Participation Assignment in BBLearn by 2:50pm EST 04/23
Week 4	<p>WOMAN Artist: Kahlo's Gender Performance + Self-Representation</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "(De)Fusing the Bomb (Shell): Gender Issues, Popular Culture and Frida Kahlo" Barbara Nelson "From Feminists to Public Figures: Frida Kahlo, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Suzanne Lacy" Natalee G. Palmer "Patron Saint of Lipstick and Lavender Feminism" Germaine Greer <p>Participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation via "in-person" Class 04/30 2:00-2:50pm EST via Zoom OR Week 4 Participation Assignment in BBLearn due by 2:50pm EST 04/30
Week 5	<p>Frida's Pain: Individual or Shared Experience?</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "'Now I Live on a Painful Planet': Frida Kahlo Revisited" Marta Zarzycka "Kahlo's World Split Open" Evelyn Torton Beck <p>Participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation via "in-person" Class 05/07 2:00-2:50pm EST via Zoom OR Week 5 Participation Assignment in BBLearn due by 2:50pm EST 05/07
Week 6 MIDTERM	<p>Considering Sexuality</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From Gannit Ankori's biography <i>Frida Kahlo</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "'Double Sorrow': Losing and Finding Love" "'Where Is the 'I'?': Losing and Finding Her Selves" <p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SUBMIT MIDTERM via BBLearn by 11:59pm EST on 05/14 <p>Participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation via "in-person" Class 05/14 2:00-2:50pm EST via Zoom OR Week 6 Participation Assignment in BBLearn due by 2:50pm EST 05/14
Week 7	<p>Selfie vs. Self Portrait</p> <p>Reading:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “From Liberation to Control: Understanding the Selfie Experience” Richard Kedzior and Douglas E. Allen • “Facing the Camera: Self-Portraits of Photographers as Artists” Dawn M. Wilson <p>Participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation via “in-person” Class 05/21 2:00-2:50pm EST via Zoom OR • Week 7 Participation Assignment in BBLearn due by 2:50pm EST 05/21
Week 8	<p>Why Does She Still Resonate Today? And How Is She Being Interpreted?</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Frida Kahlo: Feminist, Selfie Queen, Queer Icon and Style Muse of 2017” Ellie Violet Bramley • “The Absurd Tragedy of the Frida Kahlo Barbie: Feminist Icon Was Opposite of Plastic” Aditi Natasha Kini • “Frida Kahlo Is Not Your Symbol” Ayoola Solarin <p>Participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation via “in-person” Class 05/28 2:00-2:50pm EST via Zoom OR • Week 8 Participation Assignment in BBLearn due by 2:50pm EST 05/28
Week 9	<p>Looking at Yourself</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Face It” Mara Altman <p>Participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation via “in-person” Class 06/04 2:00-2:50pm EST via Zoom OR • Week 9 Participation Assignment in BBLearn due by 2:50pm EST 06/04
Week 10 Finals NO CLASS	<p>Assignment Due: Final Projects DUE Thursday, 06/11 by 11:59pm EST!!!</p>