

AVT 105 – 3D Design

Spring 2026
Art and Design Building L003
Monday 10:30-1:10
Instructor: Brian Davis
Email: bdavis26@gmu.edu
Office Hours: Monday 1:30-4

Course Description

This course introduces three-dimensional design as the study of how form, space, and structure are perceived rather than what they represent. Students will explore how difference, repetition, variation, and scale influence the way viewers understand objects and spaces. Emphasis is placed on designing work that is dynamic rather than static—work that engages perception and requires the viewer to actively complete what they see, rather than passively receiving all information at once.

There is no single correct solution to any design problem in this course. Instead, students are expected to make intentional decisions and justify them through the clarity and effectiveness of the resulting work. While design outcomes may vary, craft and presentation are measurable and central to evaluation. Attention to construction, precision, material handling, and finish will be emphasized as essential components of clear design thinking.

This course fulfills a Mason Core Arts requirement.

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

1. Design three-dimensional works that engage perception through implication and emergence rather than literal description
2. Use repetition, variation, scale, and interval to create dynamic visual and spatial conditions
3. Understand unity and contrast as interdependent conditions within a design system
4. Translate design intentions into clearly constructed physical forms
5. Present and discuss work using appropriate three-dimensional design vocabulary
6. Evaluate work based on perceptual clarity, craft, and decision-making rather than personal expression

Course Structure & Major Projects

The course progresses from small-scale design problems focused on visual relationships between parts to larger projects involving spatial and bodily perception.

Major Projects may include:

1. Emergent Volume (Implied Form)

Small-scale constructions exploring how repetition or variation can imply a coherent volume.

2. Applied / Serial Planes

Systems of repeated planar elements used to generate unity, difference, and perceptual completion.

3. Container / Interior Logic

Designs driven by interior conditions, access, and containment rather than exterior appearance.

4. Collaborative Cardboard Architecture

A full-scale project emphasizing spatial perception, bodily engagement, and collective design decisions.

Each project includes critiques and required process documentation.

Evaluation & Grading

There is no grading based on symbolism, narrative, or personal meaning. Work is evaluated based on clarity, effectiveness, and execution.

Each project is assessed using the following criteria:

- Fulfillment of project objectives
- Design clarity and perceptual effectiveness
- Craft, construction, and material handling
- Presentation and documentation

Final Grade Breakdown:

- Major Projects: 70%
- Process Work & Documentation: 20%
- Participation & Critique: 10%

Project-specific rubrics will be provided.

Attendance & Participation

Attendance is mandatory. Studio work, demonstrations, and critiques cannot be replicated outside of class.

- 2 unexcused absences = final grade reduced by one letter
- 3 unexcused absences = final grade reduced by two letters
- 4 unexcused absences = failure
- 5 total absences (excused or unexcused) = failure

Tardiness of more than 10 minutes counts as a half absence.

Materials

Students are responsible for purchasing basic supplies. Additional project-specific materials will be discussed in class.

Required supplies include:

- Utility knife and replacement blades
- X-Acto knife and replacement blades

- Cutting mat
- Sketchbook (8.5" × 11", for this class only)
- Masking tape
- Marker
- Safety goggles

Official Communications via Mason E-Mail

Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University e-mail account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason e-mail account.

Students with Disabilities and Learning Differences

Students with disabilities who need accommodations for a course must first speak to the [George Mason University Office of Disability Services](#) (ODS), then provide the Memorandum of Accommodations to their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester.

Attendance Policies

Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class (including sections that meet online) participation is important not only to the individual student, but also to the entire class. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of non-participation. Students who miss an exam without an acceptable excuse may be penalized according to the individual instructor's grading policy, as stated in the course syllabus.

Honor Code

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University Community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this Academic Standard: Student Members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work. See: Academic Standards - <https://academicstandards.gmu.edu/>

Responsible Employee Disclosure

As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Responsible Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as [Student Support and Advocacy Center \(SSAC\)](#) at 703-380-1434 or [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from [Mason's Title IX Coordinator](#) by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu

AI Policy

Moderate Use Policy: "Generative AI tools may be used in this course with clear guidelines. Students must disclose when AI tools are used and how they contributed to the work. Misuse may be treated as a violation of academic standards."

Inclement Weather University Closure

See: <https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/inclement-weatheremergency-closure/>
In the event of campus closure, we will work on zoom at the instructors discretion.

Important Dates

First Day of Spring Classes:	Tue. Jan 20
Last Day to Add	Tue. Jan 27
Last Day to Drop: With 100%	Tue. Feb 3
Last Day to Drop: With 50%	Tue. Feb 10
Unrestricted Withdrawal Period: 100% Tuition Liability	Wed. Feb 11 - Tue. Feb 24
Mid-term Evaluation Period: 100-200 level classes -	Mon. Feb 16 - Fri. Mar 20
<u>Selective Withdrawal Period - Undergraduate Students Only (100% Tuition Liability)</u>	Wed. Feb 25 - Mon. Mar 30
Spring Recess (no classes)	Mon. Mar 9 - Sun. Mar 15
Incomplete Work from Fall 2025 Due to Instructor	Fri. Mar 27
Incomplete Grade Submission from Fall 2025 Due to	Fri. Apr 3
Last Day of Class	Mon. May 4
Reading Day(s): Reading days provide students with additional study time for final examinations. Faculty may schedule optional study sessions, but regular	Tue. May 5 and Sun. May 10
Examination Period	Wed. May 6 - Wed. May 13
Spring Commencement	Thu. May 14
Degree Conferral Date	Fri. May 15

Once the add and drop deadlines have passed, instructors can approve a Late Schedule Adjustment, but students need the permission of the instructor, or the office of the department offering the course for classes for some departments, before completing the form. There is also a late fee associated with adding a course after the add deadline. Requests for non-selective withdrawals and retroactive adds (adds after the last day of classes) should be discussed with an advisor first and must be approved by the college of the student's major

Writing Center and Library Resources

The University Writing Center supports writers at George Mason University through one-to-one consultations at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming to the final phases of polishing. In these consultations, writers can try out ideas and approaches with a well-trained student staff comprised of attentive readers and listeners from a variety of disciplines. The Writing Center helps writers develop strategies and knowledge that make them stronger writers in the long term through both online and in-person sessions. For online sessions, writers can choose between meeting their tutor in real time on Zoom or uploading a draft for their tutor's written feedback. Please send your questions to wcenter@gmu.edu

Provisions Research Center for Art & Social Change is in Room L001 of the Art & Design Building. This student resource assists students in exploring and engaging new models for artmaking that lead to a more inclusive and connected society. Provisions is also a hub for developing art projects through Mason Exhibitions, the Mural Brigade, and art partners throughout the metropolitan area, and beyond. Contact Don Russell for more information: drusse10@gmu.edu

Art and Art History Librarian, Stephanie Grimm. Contact sgrimm@gmu.edu for appointments and virtual office hours.

School of Art Safety Manual

George Mason University has developed the Art Safety Manual for the purpose of establishing mechanisms, methods, engineering controls, administrative controls and work practice controls that employees must use to safely create and display art. This document outlines George Mason University's Art Safety Program and describes specific policies and procedures designed to satisfy federal and state safety and health requirements. The components and information required by Virginia Occupational Safety and Health and federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration Standards as they relate to the hazards involved in creating art are contained within this document. **See: Art Safety Manual Attachment.**

Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)

CAPS provides a wide range of free services to students. CAPS offers crisis, counseling, and psychiatric services virtually, and limited services in person. Services are provided by a staff of licensed clinical psychologists, licensed professional counselors, licensed social workers, doctoral-level trainees, and a board-certified psychiatrist. Their individual and group counseling, workshops, and community education programs are designed to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance. For distance learners, please see the [Resources for Distance Learning page](#). They also provide consultation to faculty and staff who have concerns about a student.

CAPS provides short-term mental health services for enrolled students. When a student's needs require a different level of care, CAPS works with students to transition care to community providers. If a student is currently seeing a professional in the community for therapy and can continue to work with them, they will be encouraged to continue care with their current provider.

To begin services with CAPS, please call 703-993-2380 during business hours.

If you are experiencing a crisis after business hours or on weekends or holidays, please call 703-993-2380. Please select option 1 in the phone system to be connected to an after-hours crisis counselor.

If you are interested in connecting with a provider in the community for long term counseling, please visit the [Find a Community Provider page](#) for a database of community provider

options and other options for connecting with a therapist. If you have student health insurance through Aetna, you may also choose to access services through TimelyCare.

Student Support and Advocacy Center

The Student Support and Advocacy Center assists students who are encountering a life crisis or significant barriers that impact their academic and personal success and/or overall functioning. Their goal, through individual consultations, is to best understand the student's situation, answer questions, provide guidance, and make connections to appropriate on and off-campus resources.

For more information, please visit their website: <https://ssac.gmu.edu/>

School of Art Social Media Accounts

IG: gmusoa

FB: gmusoa

The School of Art is committed to fostering and supporting our diverse community of students, staff, and faculty. We are a community of diverse perspectives and experiences, which contribute to varied approaches to artistic and creative expression. We know that excellence in art education and creative practices is strengthened by the inclusion of varied cultural traditions, identities, and ways of knowing. As such, students are encouraged to connect with university resources as they develop and deepen in their studies within our supportive and inclusive community.

This class fulfills a Mason Core requirement for Arts. Mason courses in the film making, visual and performing arts stress generative, inquiry-based learning through direct aesthetic and creative experience in the studio environment. Art history courses address the intrinsic relationship of personal and cultural creativity, and the manifestation of aesthetics, visual culture, and visual narrative within historical contexts.

Arts goal: Courses aim to achieve a majority of the following learning outcomes: students will be able to identify and analyze the formal elements of a particular art form using vocabulary appropriate to that form; demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between artistic technique and the expression of a work's underlying concept; analyze cultural productions using standards appropriate to the form and cultural context; analyze and interpret material or performance culture in its social, historical, and personal contexts; and engage in the artistic process, including conception, creation, and ongoing critical analysis.

Tentative schedule:

Jan 26

Syllabus review; materials overview; cube exercise

Feb 2

Intro to Implied Form project; form: measuring, cutting, gluing

Feb 9

Workday

Feb 16

Implied Form critique

Feb 23

Intro to Container project

Mar 2

Meet at the Fuse

Mar 9

Spring Break — No Class

Mar 16

Workday

Mar 23

Workday

Mar 30

Container critique

Apr 6

Intro to Final project

Apr 13

Workday

Apr 20

Workday

Apr 27

Workday

May 4

Workday

May 11

Final critique