This course is designed to introduce the non-specialist to the world of art and visual culture. Its emphasis will be on viewing and understanding works of art and visual culture within cultural, thematic, and historical contexts. We will discuss the purposes and themes of art, analyze objects and learn to talk and write about what we see. Learning a new visual vocabulary will enable us to analyze and to understand a variety of different styles, periods, cultures, and media, as well as to become familiar with the terminology used in speaking and writing about art. At the end of this course, students will have a deeper understanding of the roles that art plays in the world. The basic format of this course will consist of a combination of topical lectures, in-class activities, and discussion. No previous knowledge of art or art history is required; we will start slowly and create a solid foundation on which to build subsequent understanding and discussion.