

## **Art of the 80's, 90's and 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**AAR 3520.45; AAR9520.45**

Purchase College, Fall 2012

Lecturer: Catherine Spaeth

Catherine.spaeth@purchase.edu

Tuesdays, 6:30-9:50 pm

Location: Fort Awesome 0137

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

A retrospective and prospective point of view is used to analyze contemporary art, beginning with the many coexisting styles and schools of the pluralistic 1970s, progressing toward the powerful neo-expressionist images of the 1980s, and then considering the globalism of the 1990s. Discussions also contemplate the increasingly provocative content of much recent art and the 21<sup>st</sup> century fusion of existing styles.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

The art of our time is embedded in a diversity and social complexity that is revealed together by the art works and the writings they generate. The history of contemporary art is deeply involved with what it means to describe, interpret and judge the value of a work of art. It is a field consisting of a body of literature of some achievement, and we will be studying this alongside of the practices it identifies.

While the course can be seen as providing a historical narrative, more valuable than this are the critical terms that have shaped that narrative - it is not so much the narrative as these terms and criteria that have shaped the conditions of contemporary art.

We live in an age where we are all cultural producers. By the end of this course you will have a further understanding of what art counts for you, and be able to express this from within an art historical context. The ultimate aim of this course is that in understanding some of these terms and criteria through careful reading, observation, description and comparison you will be able to discern what an object is well, and from this will be able to arrive upon an informed judgment.

Apart from the objectives that are specific to this course, the following are SUNY General Education Learning Outcomes:

Basic Communication:

Students will:

- produce coherent texts within common college-level written forms;
- demonstrate the ability to revise and improve such texts;
- research a topic, develop an argument, and organize supporting details;
- develop proficiency in oral discourse; and
- evaluate an oral presentation according to established criteria.

Critical Thinking:

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments as they occur in their own or others' work; and
- develop well-reasoned arguments.

Information Management:

Students will:

- perform the basic operations of personal computer use;
- understand and use basic research techniques; and
- locate, evaluate, and synthesize information from a variety of sources.

This course also meets the following outcomes for the Liberal Studies Degree Completion Program:

- The ability to articulate and communicate clearly in written and spoken forms
- Research skills including the ability to analyze and synthesize information
- Responsibility to others and our community
- Respect, tolerance and openness to new ideas and ways of thinking
- To think critically, independently and creatively
- ARTS: Core knowledge of the field and related concepts, theories and ideas
- ARTS: An understanding of historical knowledge and events in the field
- A critical analysis of different art forms
- Visual literacy and the power of images

### **READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

With strong interest in a variety of approaches to description, interpretation and judgment, instead of using a textbook there will be carefully selected readings offering different perspectives upon what an art object is and does. All readings will be made available on the course website in Moodle. Access to Moodle is explained below.

Readings will be available on Moodle, accessible on the library home page.

**Email:**

You must have your email account activated. Not checking your e-mail regularly and messages not received because your mailbox is full are not excuses for being ignorant of materials and assignments sent by e-mail.

Go to <http://studentservices.purchase.edu/> to activate your account. If you have not done so please go to this website and look under communications, where you will find instructions:  
<http://studentservices.purchase.edu>

**Moodle:**

- An on-line course management system called Moodle will be used for assignments, announcements, and learning resources used in this course.
- All students are required to participate in the Moodle assignments; it will be assumed that all announcements on this site have reached you, so be sure to check it frequently.
- Go to [www.purchase.edu/studenttutorial](http://www.purchase.edu/studenttutorial) and review the Moodle tutorial, designed to help you become familiar with how to use Moodle.
- To access your course in Moodle, first set up your Purchase email account if you have not done so already; log in with your Purchase username and password at <http://moodle.purchase.edu>; (do not put "@purchase.edu"). Your course will appear on the upper right of the page under "My Courses."
- For further information go to this site:  
<https://drupalsites.purchase.edu/tltc/index.php?q=node/7>

As a good portion of each class will be devoted to a discussion of the assigned readings, it is imperative that you download, print out and read these assignments. Read actively with a pen in hand, mark on your copy where you think key ideas appear, there are passages you don't understand, etc. With the reading assignments you will also be handed a list of questions to guide you in your reading. This is only intended to help you find your way into some difficult material. These are readings that do not easily generate 'bullet points' and my expectation is that you will be able to engage with them as an independent mind. It is important that you be involved with them over time, revisiting them with my guidance. As lectures are pitched towards the readings, it is also *imperative that you have read them by the assigned date*. The conversation of these readings will continue throughout the course of the semester,

and *your own critical ability will be proven in your familiarity with them.* **Bring a print-out copy with you to each class.** As we are not purchasing a book, this is not an acceptable requirement, no one should be using their laptops as we discuss the readings. Whether or not you have your work with you does count as participation!

### **ArtStor:**

Images from lectures will also be posted on moodle. You must register for ArtStor to access them.

- If you are on-site at your licensed institution, go to [www.artstor.org](http://www.artstor.org)

- or- go to your library's website and look for a link to ARTstor from the

list of electronic databases offered by your institution.

- Click the red **Go** button in the upper right corner.

- Once the Digital Library loads, you can take a minute to [register](#) for a user account or [log in](#) to your existing account for advanced functionality.

### **COURSE GRADING:**

Participation: Students are expected to attend all classes, and absences will have an impact on your grade. **Three absences are grounds for failure.** Here are more details:

- **Attendance and punctuality are expected for every class.**
- Attendance will be taken at every class.
- Your presence is vital for participation in varied learning activities and small group work.
- Late arrivals or early departures may be counted as absences.
- If you miss class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed from classmates and submit assignments on time.
- In fairness to others in the class, 3 absences equals failing the course.

**Participation is worth 20 points of your overall grade** – this does not depend upon attendance but upon engagement with the material in terms of both preparation and classroom involvement.

### **EXAMS:**

There will be **four take-home writing assignments, worth a total of 60 points.** These should be at least onto the third page.

These are divided in two categories – **the first is a comparison of two assigned essays.** The assigned essays are difficult, intentionally so. I am asking you to compare the ideas in one essay to the ideas in another. A reading guide, lectures and discussion have been tailored to help in your understanding of these essays

and it is in the comparison that you show your own understanding of these readings in light of the above. There is no expectation that this understanding will make the essays completely transparent and graspable, although some may feel more confident than others. What I ask for is that you are able to make three main points of comparison, and that these points are explained well in essay form.

My policy for the first essay is to hand it back to you with my comments and feedback if it is not an "A" paper, so that expectations are very clear. You then have the opportunity to re-write the paper according to my expectations. I will do this only for this one essay. When the rough drafts are returned we will go over them well in class. Take good advantage of this time, as it is only done so that you can learn from it as preparation for the essays to follow.

**There will also be two image comparisons.** Similarly, you must be sure to make three main points in your comparison, drawing from observation, readings, lecture and discussion. This is different than comparing the arguments that are made in two essays, however there is a responsibility towards the reading assignments – this is simply another way to test your understanding. Unacceptable is any essay that describes and compares the two works without providing any context for them gleaned from readings, lecture and discussion, as you are being tested on what you have learned, not simply what you see.

### **Papers:**

- All written work must be submitted on time to receive full credit.
- In order to receive an extension, please consult with the instructor.
- Papers are to be on ot the third page, in 12 inch font, one inch margins, 1.5 spaced. Tabs should be used for all paragraphs, not line breaks. At the very top of the page please put your name and the two essays or artworks that you are comparing.
- All papers must include a citation page and be formatted according to Modern Language Association (MLA) or American Psychological Association (APA) citation formats. For resources on citation formats, please go to the Purchase College Library's web-site.

### **FINAL PRESENTATION:**

**The topic for your final presentation is due on October 23<sup>rd</sup> and is worth five points.** If this is handed in late you will not receive these points. I cannot impress upon you enough how important this is. Do not avoid this date, not only is it a way for

you to schedule your work for this class appropriately but I need to screen your topic as appropriate.

**The final presentation itself is worth 15 points.** Throughout the course I will be letting you know of various exhibitions that are relevant to our course content, and it is expected that you are visiting museums and galleries during this course. This is so that you can see a variety of very contemporary work with your own eyes, and to give you the opportunity to find something that you may like to present. On one of the last two days that we meet, you will give a powerpoint presentation focusing on a single work that you have seen with your own two eyes. It cannot be something you have presented before in another class, it cannot be by your teacher or an artist you have previously met, and it can't be in your own or your parent's collection. Further, *there are to be no clips from artists' interviews shown in the place of your own understanding.* This is an opportunity for you to share your own judgment with an awareness of the critical vocabulary that you think is relevant, and your own thoughts upon the value of this work based upon preceding criteria as you understand them.

### **PURCHASE COLLEGE ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY**

The Purchase College Academic Integrity Policy

<<http://www.purchase.edu/Policies/AcademicIntegrity.aspx>>

explicitly forbids cheating, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another person and the representation of them as one's own original work. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the definition of plagiarism and the acceptable methods of attribution.

Violation of any of the above may lead to formal disciplinary action and the following sanctions:

- Minimum Sanction: Failing grade on the assignment or examination. Maximum Sanction: Expulsion
- Recommended Sanction (First Offense): Failing grade for the course
- Recommended Sanction (Second Offense): Expulsion

Students who have any questions or doubts about whether any activity is academically permissible, should check with me first.

### **DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES**

Students with documented physical, learning, psychological and other disabilities are entitled to receive reasonable accommodations. If a student needs accommodations, he or she

must first register with the Office of Special Student Services; please call 914-251-6390 or email [accommodations@purchase.edu](mailto:accommodations@purchase.edu).

You can find a description of special student services provided by the Counseling Center at:  
<http://www.purchase.edu/Departments/SpecialStudentServices/>

Moodle is ADA compliant; you can find the accessibility at:  
[http://docs.moodle.org/dev/Moodle\\_Accessibility\\_Specification](http://docs.moodle.org/dev/Moodle_Accessibility_Specification)

### **CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS**

- Please be on time, listen actively, and participate in class discussion and activities.
- *Please turn off and put away cell phones, beepers, etc. at the start of class.*  
If you need such devices for personal obligations, please inform the instructor in advance and put these items on vibrate.
- Please return promptly from breaks.
- Laptops may be used in class for note taking only. You may not email, IM, etc. Failure to comply with this rule will result in not being allowed to use a laptop.
- *It is inappropriate to carry on conversations or pass notes during class,* as these are disruptive to the class and rude to other students and the instructor.
- *Arrive on time.* If you do arrive late, enter at the rear door, sit near the back; please do not interrupt the class by walking across the room. Repeated late arrivals will be counted as absences, and will lower the grade.
- Clean up the area around your seat **every time** you leave class – do not leave your mess for someone else!
- *When students leave and return again during class,* it is disruptive to the class and to the instructor. Please use the restroom before class or, when possible, wait until class is over.

### **IMPORTANT DATES:**

**October 9<sup>th</sup>: first essay comparison is due.**

**October 16<sup>th</sup>: Image Comparison is due today.**

**October 23<sup>rd</sup>: Topic for presentation is due today.**

**November 5<sup>th</sup>: Last day to withdraw.**

**November 13<sup>th</sup>: Second essay comparison is due.**

**November 27<sup>th</sup>: Second image comparison is due today.**

**December 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>: Class presentations.**

### **CALENDAR**

**September 4<sup>th</sup>: Introduction.**

Please read Benjamin Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions" for next class.

**September 11th: Conceptual Art.**

Please read Helen Molesworth, "From House Work to Art Work," and Lucy Lippard, "Sweeping Exchanges" for next class.

**September 18th: Feminism and Art**

Please read Douglas Crimp, "The End of Painting," and Thomas Lawson, "Last Exit: Painting" for next class.

**September 25th: The End of Painting.**

Please read Douglas Crimp, "Pictures," and Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Feminism and Postmodernism," for next class.

**October 2<sup>nd</sup>: The Pictures Generation.**

Please read for the next class Hal Foster, "Cynical Reason," for next class.

**October 9th: Commodity Sculpture and Post-Minimalism.**

Please read for the next class Hal Foster, "the Artist as Ethnographer," and Frazer Ward, "The Haunted Museum: Institutional Critique and Publicity."

**First essay comparison is due today. We will choose an image comparison today.**

**October 15<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> – Be sure you have handed in all of your work! Midterm Warnings are due.**

**October 16<sup>th</sup>: Identities and Ethnography.**

Please read for next class Andreas Huyssen, "Anselm Kiefer: The Terror of History, the Temptation of Myth," and Benjamin Buchloh, "Divided Memory and Post-traditional Identity: Gerhard Richter's Work of Mourning." **Image Comparison is due today.**

**October 23rd: Painting history in a post-historical age.**

Please read for next class Kimberly Rae Connor, "To Disembark: Glenn Ligon and the Slave Narrative Tradition," and Darby English, "A New Context for Reconstruction: Some Crises of Landscape in Kara Walker's Silhouette Installations." **Artist and work for the class presentation is due today!**

**October 30<sup>th</sup>: Postmodern identities: "signifyin" as a black figure against a white ground.** Please read for next class Miwon Kwon, "One Place After Another".

**November 5<sup>th</sup>: Last day to Withdraw.**

**November 6<sup>th</sup>: Election Day, No Class!**

**November 13th: Site Specificity and the nomadic event.**



Please read for next class Nicholas Bourriaud, "Relational Aesthetics" and Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics." **Second essay comparison is due today.**

**November 20<sup>th</sup>: Relational Aesthetics.**

Please read for next class Michael Fried, "Thomas Demand's Allegories of Intention," and Ohlin, "Andreas Gursky's Contemporary Sublime." **We will choose an image comparison today.**

**November 21<sup>st</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>: Thanksgiving Break.**

**November 27<sup>th</sup>: The Photographic Tableau. Image comparison is due.**

**December 4<sup>th</sup>: Review.**

**December 11<sup>th</sup>: Student presentations.**

**December 18<sup>th</sup>: Student presentations.**

**December 26<sup>th</sup>, last day to submit grades.**