

Graduate Art History Course Descriptions Fall 2014

ARTH 602 Research Methods: Orientalism: Researching the Colonial and Post-Colonial Object

Professor Nebahat Avcioğlu

Thursday 7:00 pm – 9:40 pm HN 1503

Islam and Islamic cultures have a special place in the West. Edward W. Said's seminal work *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (1978) not only addresses this importance but also theorizes cross-cultural interactions within power relations. Said's concept of Orientalism has enabled art historians to study works of art as productions, processes, and practices embodying different manifestations of power and ideologies. In this course we will examine how and for what practical purpose the West constructed both the idea and image of Islam and the Muslim East since the late eighteenth century. How the colonial and post-colonial discourses and practices have formed the 'Other' and the 'Self' into set categories. Focusing on the modes of interaction between cultures the course is specifically designed to analyse visual representations of Islamic peoples and places in the West, including collecting and displaying Islamic art in museums. It will examine architecture, painting, photography and international exhibitions in order to think critically about dominant modes of art history, collecting and display.

While we will examine a range of Orientalist imagery, our focus will be on methodology, and critical interpretation of artistic output to offer alternative insights into Orientalism. Drawing also upon the fields of literature, history, anthropology, literary criticism, philosophy and museum studies, the course will investigate through art the cultures of colonialism, post-colonialism, identity politics and the limits of our theoretical understandings of cultural hybridity and differences. The goal is to promote an understanding of critical and scholarly debates surrounding art and politics in general; to contribute to your awareness of art's capacity to embody and expose ideological discourses; to highlight the role of politics and transnationality in cultural formations; and to develop a critical perspective on collecting and displaying the art of the 'Other' in the West, that is to move beyond ethnic and national lenses.

ARTH 602 Research Methods

Professor Maxim Weintraub

Wednesday 4:10 pm – 6:50 pm HN1502

Course description TBA

ARTH 6xx Buddhism and the Material World

Professor Wen-Shing Chou

Tuesday 1:10 pm – 3:50 pm HN1503

Few religions have critiqued the material world with the eloquence and intellectual rigor of Buddhism. Yet in both theory and practice, Buddhist traditions have also embraced the material world and developed sophisticated systems and techniques for its construction and visualization. What is the status of matter, substance, and man-made objects according to Buddhist views? In what ways are the reliance upon and sensitivity toward medium, form, and structure of the material world central to Buddhist devotional practice? How do these concerns inform modern and contemporary art practice? To explore these questions, the course is divided into three units: the first introduces Buddhist philosophical attitudes toward the material world; the second explores the material history and contexts out of which Buddhism developed in historical China, Japan, and the Himalayas through a series of thematic case studies featuring the prominence of objects, materiality, and artistic representations; the last unit examines the place of Buddhist philosophy and praxis in modern and contemporary art by looking at the different ways in which conceptual artists have incorporated Buddhist material culture and ideas of objecthood into their work. Juxtaposing theory with praxis, the historical with the contemporary, and devotional activities with artistic ones, this course aims to carve new spaces of creative dialogue in art history and practice.

ARTH 625.00 Art and Architecture in Baroque Rome

Professor Ellen Prokop

Thursday 7:00 pm – 9:40 pm HN 1501

Rome was the focal point of Western European culture in the seventeenth century. The campaign for the *Renovatio Romae* (“Restoration of Rome”) that had been launched in the fifteenth century reached its climax: the papacy poured vast sums of money into the modernization and embellishment of the city. The goal of these monumental building campaigns was to prove—visually—that early modern Rome was the worthy successor of the ancient capital as well as the seat of the one legitimate faith. Throughout the century, artists and architects from across Europe flocked to the city to win prestigious commissions that would secure them fabulous wealth and lasting renown. The result is the abundance of dynamic masterpieces that still define the urban fabric of the Eternal City.

Although the course aims to be comprehensive, many lectures will concentrate on the seminal figures of the period, including the painter Caravaggio, the sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini, and the architects Carlo Maderno and Francesco Borromini. Our discussions, however, will not only track the careers of these major figures but also explore the ambitions and motivations of the patrons responsible for their greatest achievements. In other words, we will be tracing the cultural activities and artistic commissions of the popes and their courts. The course will conclude with an examination of the cross-cultural transmission of the artistic idioms developed in Baroque Rome to

Catholic Germany, the New World, and European settlements in India and Asia. Our goal will be to determine how the political strategies and devotional concerns of the early modern papacy affected the built environment in Europe and across the Catholic world.

Readings will range from selections of early modern artistic treatises such as Gabriele Paleotti's *Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images* (1582) and artist's biographies such as Domenico **Bernini's *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini* (1713) to contemporary studies that feature a broad range of theoretical approaches.** Requirements for the course will include two short in-class presentations, one final examination, and one term paper focusing on a significant monument of early modern Rome, Mexico City, Lima, Minas Gerais, or the Philippines (15 pages maximum). Finally, one class visit to The Metropolitan Museum of Art will be scheduled.

While not required, a reading knowledge of Italian and/or Spanish would be useful.

ARTH 637 Medieval Art I

Professor Cynthia Hahn

Tuesday 4:10 pm – 6:50 pm HN 1501

Medieval Art I covers art topically between the third and twelfth centuries in Europe, including art produced in media as diverse as manuscripts, metalwork, mosaics, ivory, stone sculpture, frescoes, and architecture. Topics include the beginnings of Christian art in catacombs and churches, the portable metal arts of the 'barbarians', art of empire and rulership, and the arts of pilgrimage, and monasticism. The lectures will be chronologically presented, in order to allow a broad overview, but thematically focused. Discussion in each class will center on readings chosen not only to illuminate the topic, but also to represent a wide range of methodological approaches to medieval art. There will be particular attention to how viewers and groups consumed and used the visual arts. Each student will choose a topic to research, give a very short presentation (ideally in front of an object at the Met), and write a paper. There will be a midterm and final.

ARTH 734 Theory and Criticism: Looking: Problems of Visuality, Spectatorship, Observation, Reading, Legibility, Perspective, and the Gaze

Professor Malik Gaines

Thursday 1:10 pm – 3:50 pm HN1503

Given a European philosophical tradition that has emphasized sight as the primary human sense, and the centrality of viewing in visual art traditions, attention to the act of seeing reveals not only a mode of perception, but also social and linguistic operations that enlist indifferent eyes into the reproduction of knowledge and power. With course readings drawn from multiple fields of study, ranging from classical texts to contemporary scholarship and artists' writings, this seminar will consider disciplinary notions of viewing derived from art, theater and cinema histories, the phenomenological experience

of sight, the mechanics of representation and signification, problems of recognition and identification, and the histories of observation that help construct culturally specific terms such as gender, race and class. Authors discussed will include Aristotle, Roland Barthes, Guy Debord, Frantz Fanon, Stuart Hall, Sayidiya Hartman, Immanuel Kant, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jacques Ranciere, Alan Kaprow, Laura Mulvey, José Muñoz, Kaja Silverman, Susan Sontag and others.

ARTH 734 Theory and Criticism: Organism

Professor Katy Siegel

Thursday 9:45 am – 12:25 pm 205 Hudson St.

The class “Organism” will be driven by a wide range of historical theoretical texts, natural science readings, and artists’ writings, including Goethe, Samuel Coleridge, Henri Bergson, Alfred North Whitehead, Klee, Kandinsky, Arp, Edward Weston, Robinson Jeffers, and Richard Hamilton. Despite its historical nature, the class is inspired by contemporary conditions in both art and science, and the return of passionate interest in organicist thinking. The renewal emerges from new scientific discoveries, but also from a critique of science motivated by an understanding of the environment as itself a larger complex of related parts, wherein damage to one aspect has unforeseen consequences for every other aspect of the organism. Philosophically, organicist theory once more appear vital in promoting intuitive, creative thinking about the world, refusing a split between mind and matter, and rejecting the anthropomorphic perspective. For a wide range of contemporary artists, natural form thus once more appears compelling aesthetically, even as it is threatened, and also as a powerful view of reality, in which humans play only one small part. To go back to an earlier moment and study the art and science that first developed these understandings lends a sense of history, depth of understanding, and possibility to our own endeavors.

ARTH 734.002 Theory and Criticism: The Object

Professor: Liam Considine

Monday 7:00 pm – 9:40 pm HN 1501

The question of the object has returned to philosophical discourse and art criticism. Object-oriented ontology has reconsidered the material and ecological specificity of objects, and contemporary art has seen yet another return of the readymade, bricolage, assemblage and other presentational modes. This class will review descriptions of the object in psychoanalysis, Marxism, phenomenology, actor-network theory and object-oriented ontology and assess the applications of these theories by art historians, critics and artists in the 20th and 21st centuries.

ARTH 780 Art, Empire, and the Global Eighteenth Century

Professor Tara Zanardi

Tuesday 4:10 pm – 6:50 pm HN 1503

As Felicity Nussbaum has argued, the eighteenth century was truly the first “global” century. In order to address the cross-cultural exchange of goods, ideas, and art, we will investigate real and imagined encounters between Europe and other parts of the globe and the impact such encounters had on the visual arts. As a vital component of the Enlightenment, Europe’s motivation for exchange was partially rooted in a systematic aspiration to know, catalogue, and possess the world, and global expeditions provided opportunities for scientists and artists to observe, reproduce, interpret, and collect. Many of the objects, including gems, artefacts, or plant specimens were placed in natural history cabinets, and many of the images, like botanical illustrations or studies of peoples and their dress and customs were published in travel accounts or in costume albums, or served as the basis for larger projects, such as ceiling frescoes. But Europe (and its monarchs) also desired to build networks for imperialistic gain, especially as ongoing competition for resources and markets often generated military conflict. We will investigate a wide range of topics that artists considered from differing vantage points, including the negotiation of identities across national, global, and imperial spaces, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, shifting definitions of race and gender, travel narratives, colonial collecting and display, chinoiserie, turquerie, the trafficking (legal and illegal) of goods, and scientific expeditions. We shall evaluate these subjects from diverse methodological perspectives, such as material culture and global studies.

Preliminary Reading

Felicity A. Nussbaum, “Introduction,” in *The Global Eighteenth Century*, ed. Felicity A. Nussbaum (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003)

ARTH 780 Curatorial Practicum: Subjectivity and the 19th Century Latin American Landscape

Professor Harper Montgomery

Monday 4:10 pm -- 6:50 pm HN 1501

In this course we will consider the representation of the landscape as a complex process of mapping subjectivity onto a global, transcultural field. Focusing on a private collection of more than three hundred paintings, drawings, and photographs of landscapes in Latin America, we will combine the practice of connoisseurship--the close examination of objects--with theoretical inquiry and curatorial practice. We will extend our consideration of the theoretical issues raised by landscape painting, including the nature of aesthetic experience, the meaning of the picturesque and sublime, and the geo-politics of colonialism, as they relate to contemporary questions around ecology, affect, and the digital sublime. Theoretical readings will include texts on exhibition making, the sublime, colonialism and modernity, and affect. Historical research will focus on primary objects: the some three-hundred photographs, drawings, and paintings by European, North American, and South American artists that constitute the private collection from which the exhibition will be drawn. Because the course is a curatorial practicum, all work will contribute to realizing an exhibition authored collaboratively by the class. Our sustained examination of diverse methods of display will often take us out of the classroom to the galleries of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, and Olana

(Frederick Church's house museum in the Hudson River Valley); our focus on a private collection will take us to storage to examine the objects of our research; and, finally, our engagement in the curatorial process will bring us into contact with the curators, editors, and designers who will help us realize our exhibition.

ARTH 780 Photography, Modernity, and the Culture Industries

Professor Maria Antonella Pelizzari

Tuesday 4:10 pm – 6:50pm HN 1502

In recent years, we have witnessed important museum exhibitions focusing on the multiple strands of modern art, from Cubism to Futurism to Surrealism and Dada. These extensive projects have always included photographic prints in the mix, proving that modern art influenced the camera's eye. This history is well known through the striking work of photographers like Rodchenko, Moholy-Nagy, Renger-Patzsch, Man Ray, Brassai, and Paul Strand, among others.

This course takes the opposite direction, positioning photography as an intrinsic engine of modernity and studying the ways in which this medium contributed to avant-garde art. The main focus is on Horkheimer and Adorno's concept of "culture industry," which helps us consider the evolution of photography as modern art in the context of advertising, printed media, and mass production. A particular emphasis will be placed on illustrated periodicals and public art works as vehicles of these works and as agents of their distribution. How did photographers negotiate their avant-garde vocabulary with the growing expectation of mass culture and politics, and what are the most appropriate tools to interpret the works made by artists commissioned by the modern "culture industries"? The course will profit from two important exhibitions in the NYC area, the first one at the NYPL, *Public Eye. Photography Captures the World*, dealing with the circulation of photography as media across society, and the second one at the Philadelphia Art Museum, *Paul Strand: Photography and Film for the Twentieth Century*. We will visit and discuss both exhibitions and will be able to meet curators and scholars participating in these new projects.

Participation in the course and discussion of weekly readings in class is mandatory. The final assignment is a 20-page paper in which you will be asked to conduct original research on one item that proves the engagement of a photographer with mass media. This item can be a feature essay in a magazine, a photomural, an advertising campaign, a brochure or a poster, and you are required to find archival sources that document how the work was generated.

ARTH 780 Postwar California

Professor Howard Singerman

Thursdays 4:10-6:50 HN 1503

Beginning with readings in and around the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute) and the rise of a San Francisco School of Abstract Expressionism, the course will trace a history of modern and contemporary art and its institutions in Los Angeles and San Francisco from the end of World War II into the 1980s. Among the northern California artists it will cover in its first weeks are Richard Diebenkorn, David Park, Jess, Jay De Feo, and Bruce Conner, before turning to San Francisco conceptualists such as Tom Marioni, Bonnie Sherk, Terry Fox, Howard Fried, and Paul Kos. In Los Angeles, it will include the group around Ferus Gallery and the so-called “fetish finish” and “light-space” artists, the LA County Museum’s Art and Technology exhibition, and varieties of conceptual and performance art. Artists will include Ed Ruscha, Robert Irwin, Billy Al Bengston, Chris Burden, Allan Ruppersberg, and numerous others.

ARTH780.08 THE ARTIST’S INSTITUTE CURATORIAL PRACTICUM

Jenny Jaskey

Monday 6:30 pm -- 9:30 pm

The Artist's Institute is a research institute and an experimental curatorial platform for contemporary art (see www.theartistsinstitute.org). Each semester, the Institute engages a single artist as its point of departure and examines the broader field of contemporary art and ideas through the lens of that artist's work. As "research fellows," students contribute to the life of the Institute through readings, discussions, and by curating aspects of its public programming. For the Fall 2014 season, The Artist's Institute will be transitioning from its Lower East Side storefront to a townhouse on the Upper East Side and will spend the semester preparing two forthcoming magazines on Lucy McKenzie and Pierre Huyghe, its artists from 2013-2014.

The Institute’s fall seminar will focus on publishing as a curatorial practice. Weekly meetings will consist of a reading group, where we will discuss the history of independent artist magazines, the book as an exhibition format, as well as contemporary scholarship around post-digital print. As an editorial team, we will attend workshops with graphic designers and professional writers to hone our editorial skills, and each fellow will be responsible for an aspect of the Institute's publications. Working in close dialog with McKenzie and Huyghe, the distinction between those who create and those who mediate, and the nature of collaboration between artists and curators will become a pressing and practical question in the context of our time together.

Permission of instructor required. Please e-mail a statement of interest to jenny@theartistsinstitute.org

ARTH 7801W Contemporary Art: Drawing in the Expanded Field

Professor: Eileen Costello

Thursday 7:00 pm to 9: 40 pm HN 1501

Fall 2014

As evidenced by a range of recent museum and gallery exhibitions, scholarly publications, art magazines, art fairs, and biennials, a renewed interest in drawing has made it one of the preferred media of the latest generation of artists rendering it an important means of making contemporary art. A fundamental change in the way that works on paper were made, used, and appreciated first occurred in the late 1960s as artists began to shift away from drawing as an intimate means of expression toward a focus on material and conceptual conditions. They began to employ drawing in ways not previously considered independent works of art, which included diagrams, instructions for fabrication, notes for site-specific installations, and markers of duration. As this departure from the institutional definition of drawing continued, artists discarded a reliance on paper as the fundamental support material and began to expand into real space to connect it with painting, sculpture, photography, film, and dance. More recently, drawing has been energized by the vast proliferation of imagery from mechanical and electronic means so that today contemporary drawing encompasses animation, the graphic novel, comics and zines. This seminar will explore the different ways in which artists have used drawing as a critical tool to shape new ways of thinking about art since the late 1960s. It will focus on key conceptual and material strategies employed by a range of contemporary artists, primarily American and Western European, who have exploited many of drawing's new possibilities as a way in which to rethink the work of art and the nature of representation. The artists we will consider have not only transformed the medium but have called into question the relationship of today's art with the artistic traditions in which it is rooted.