

INTRODUCTORY ART SEMINAR

Wednesday 3:30-6

Instructor: M. Cowper-Smith

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Catalogue Course Description:

The Introductory Art Seminar is a series of discussions among freshman art majors that examine basic assumptions about contemporary art and design. The instructor moderates the dialogue and selects essays, films, and art objects for discussion. Students refine their opinions in a series of short writings that are compiled in a “portfolio of ideas” about art, its place in society, and the process by which its made.

Course Objectives:

The goal of this course is to encourage students to present and defend their thinking on a series of issues concerning the production of visual art. Students will address such questions as:

- How does the art-making process contribute to the meaning of an artwork?
- What are form and content in art?
- How can artworks be discussed?
- What is the role of art in our society?
- How do artworks embody psychological, social, and cultural meaning?
- What are modernism and postmodernism in art?

Course Rationale:

Freshmen come into the art program with a limited knowledge of contemporary art. Although projects in the foundation curriculum at Adelphi allow the students to develop the essential material, perceptual and problem solving skills they will need as artists, historical and philosophical context in which they are working can only be addressed peripherally in studio classes. As a result, students can get as far as their junior year without formally acknowledging or defending their basic assumptions about art.

The idea behind this course is to have students think about art in a more sophisticated and comprehensive way while they are being challenged to develop studio skills in other foundation level art courses.

Policies and Evaluation:

Attendance: Students are expected to arrive for class on time and to attend every class. Every absence after one excused absence will result in 1/2 a letter grade deduction from the students final overall grade for the course. Two lates count as an absence.

Grading will be based on:

- Classroom participation 25%
- E-mailed questions and terms 10%
- Weekly writing assignments 25%
- Final writing portfolio 40%

Class Structure:

Students will be assigned weekly readings and a weekly written assignment. The written assignment will include: a one paragraph synopsis of the article, a response to the ideas presented, at least one question stimulated by the article, and at least one term they found difficult (to be added to the class 'list of terms'). Students are required to e-mail the instructor their question(s) and term(s) by Tuesday night. Each week, one student will read their paper and the class will discuss the topic, including submitted questions and terms. After class the students will write a short summary of the class discussion and will re-write and edit their original papers. These edited writings will be compiled into a final writing portfolio and will be due at the end of the term. During the second half of class, the instructor will present (using books, slides, and videos) the following weeks' topic for discussion.

Texts:

Readings will be copied and distributed to the students on a weekly basis. Readings have been compiled from the following texts:

Arnheim, Rudolf. Art and Visual Perception. Berkeley Ca.: University of California, 1965

Bayles and Orland. Art & Fear. Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1993.

Breton, Andre. "Secrets of the Magical Surrealist Art (1924)." The Surrealists on Art. L. Lippard Ed. 1970

Carey, John. What Good are the Arts? Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Elkins, James. Master Narratives and Their Discontents. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Goldblatt and Brown. Ed. Aesthetics: A Reader in the Philosophy of the Arts. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc, 1997.

Grimberg, Salomon. "Frida Kahlo: The Self as an End." Mirror Images: Woman, Surrealism and Self-Representation. Whitney Chadwick Ed. 1998.

Neill and Ridley. Ed. Arguing about Art: Contemporary Philosophical Debates. Second Ed. London: Routledge, 2002.

Stiles and Selz Ed. Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art. LA: University of California Press, Ltd., 1996.

Woodward, Richard, B., "Reality Bytes." Art News. February, 2005.

Weekly Syllabus:

8/30 THE ART MAKING PROCESS: PLANNING VS. IMPROVISATION Bayles and Orland. <i>Art & Fear</i> . 9-21 Christo. "Fact Sheet." 547-550
9/06 SKILL IN ART (+ FORM AND CONTENT) Elkins, James. "The Importance of Skill." 123-145
9/13 ART & PSYCHOLOGY Grimberg, Salomon. "Frida Kahlo: The Self as an End." Breton, Andre. "Secrets of the Magical Surrealist Art." (Excerpt)
9/20 THE HUMAN FIGURE Pearlstein, Philip. "Figure Paintings Today Are Not Made in Heaven (1962)." 229-232 Stelarc. "Beyond the Body: Amplified Body, Laser Eyes, and Third Hand (1986)." 427-430
9/27 MEANING IN ABSTRACT ART Barr, Alfred. "Cubism and Abstract Art"
10/4 VARIETIES OF PICTORIAL SPACE Greenberg, Clement. "Collage (1959)"
10/11 HANDMADE VS. MACHINE-MADE Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." 85-89
10/18 MASS CULTURE Warhol, Andy. "Warhol in His Own Words: Untitled Statements (1963-87)" 340-346
10/25 MEANING THROUGH CONTEXT Neill and Ridley. Ed. "Transcript of a hearing to decide the future of "Tilted Arc." 429-435
11/01 THE SOCIAL ROLE OF ART Carey, John. "Chapter 4: Do the arts make us better?" 96-134
11/08 FUNDAMENTALS OF VISUAL PERCEPTION Berger, John. <i>Ways of Seeing</i> . (Excerpt) Arnheim, Rudolf. <i>Art and Visual Perception</i> . (Excerpt)
11/15 FACT OR FICTION (REALITY AND ILLUSION IN ART) Woodward, Richard. "Reality Bytes"
11/22 FEMINISM Nochlin, Linda. "Why Are There No Great Woman Artists?" 74-81 Hess, Eva. "Letter to Ethelyn Honig." 593-594
11/29 MODERNISM & POSTMODERNISM Lyotard, J. F. "The Postmodern Condition." 403-408 Stiles, Kristine. "General Introduction." (Excerpt)
12/06 COURSE REVIEW