

ARH 563: PHILOSOPHY AND CRITICISM OF ART

Tuesday 6-8:30

Instructor: Melissa Cowper-Smith

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Catalogue Course Description:

Through original texts and close analysis of movements and manifestos this course examines the philosophy and criticism of art. Students trace the history of criticism and the range of ways in which artists, critics, philosophers and rulers have approached, defined and thought about the visual arts from classical to contemporary times.

Course Objectives:

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

- How do we experience art? What makes artistic experiences, either as an artist or an audience significant? Is the best art planned or improvised?
- What is the relationship between reality and representation in art? What skills are required of an artist? How do we define that which is real and that which is represented as real?
- What is involved in visual perception? Do we trust perception and perceptual judgments? Do we take it for granted that what we perceive is factual?
- What is abstract art? Is an abstraction always abstracted from something else? Does abstract art tell us something about the way we talk or think about objects? Does our language or our mind abstract from reality? If this is the case, are we always experiencing in abstractions?
- Should we recognize a difference between fine art, commercial art, and craft? Are there any distinctions between these? Why do we want to separate so-called “fine arts” from design and crafts? How do our evaluations of design or crafts differ when they are placed within the context of the artworld?
- How has popular culture influenced art? Did the advent of the printmaking, photography, and the internet change the way art was made? How have movies and television affected the artworld, artists and artworks? How has advertising and commercialization affected art?
- How has psychoanalysis influenced art? How did the notion of the unconscious mind influence art? What role might art have within the field of psychology? Does art relieve emotions, moods, feelings of the artist or audience?
- What is the role of public art? What determines that a space is public versus private? How does space or context influence the meaning of a public artwork? Should public art be work that everyone could appreciate? How could we determine this? By surveys, voting, etc?
- Does art make the world a better place? Should it make the world a better place? Are there certain artworks that can be called immoral? Has it made us better people to experience visual art? Is offensive, immoral, or discriminatory art worthwhile?
- How has feminism influenced art? Why are there so few famous women artists?

Policies and Evaluation:

Attendance: Absences, lateness, and leaving early will adversely affect your grade. Four unexcused absences will result in a F. Three late arrivals will count as one absence. Please see me if you are planning on missing class, or to catch-up on material missed.

Grading will be based on:

- Classroom participation 25%
- Weekly writing assignments 50%
- Final writing portfolio 25%

Class Structure:

Students will be assigned weekly readings and a weekly written assignment. The written assignment will include a response and at least one question stimulated by the article. Each week, one student will read his/her paper and the class will discuss the topic, including submitted questions. The instructor will provide slides, films, and books to inspire the dialogue. 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 that will be due at the end of the term.

Bibliography:

Adams, Hazard. Critical Theory Since Plato. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Javanovich College Publishers, 1971.

Best and Kellner. The Postmodern Turn. New York: The Guilford Press, 1997.

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

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

Harrison, Wood, & Gaiger. Ed. Art in Theory 1648-1815. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000.

Harrison, Wood, & Gaiger. Ed. Art in Theory 1815-1900. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1998.

Higgins, Kathleen M. Ed. Aesthetics in Perspective. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning, 1996.

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

Neill and Ridley. Ed. The Philosophy of Art: Readings Ancient and Modern. Boston: McGraw Hill, 1995.

Saltz, Jerry. Seeing Out Loud: Village Voice Art Columns Fall 1998-Winter 2003. Berkeley, Ca.: The Figures, 2003.

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

Weekly Syllabus:

1/29 INTRODUCTION & SYLLABUS
2/5 CONTENT: WHERE DOES MEANING COME FROM? <u>Article:</u> McEvelley, Thomas. "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" 1991 <u>Artists:</u>
2/12 REPRESENTATION & SKILL: REALISM AND ANTI-REALISM. <u>Article:</u> Gombrich, Ernst. "The Limits of Likeness." <u>Artists:</u> Rembrandt, Mueck, Quinn, Picasso, Reinhardt, Close, Bonnard, Lin, Hart
2/19 CONTENT OF PERCEPTION: Visual perception, phenomenology. <u>Article:</u> Plato. "Allegory of the Cave." excerpt from "The Republic." <u>Slides:</u> impressionists, optical illusions, et al.
2/26 ABSTRACT ART & MODERNISM <u>Article:</u> Barr, Alfred. "Cubism and Abstract Art" and Greenberg, Clement. "Modernist Painting." <u>Artists:</u> Seurat, Cezanne, Picasso, Boccioni, Gabo, Arp, Miro, Matisse, de Kooning, Van Doesburg, Mondrian, Malevich, Kandinsky, Pollock, Kline, Newman, Rothko, Hofman, Martin, Frankenthaler
3/4 ART & PSYCHOLOGY: Self-representation, Self-portraiture, Identity, Mirroring <u>Article:</u> Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of I As Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience." <u>Artists:</u> Kahlo, van Gogh, Sherman, Warhol, Close, Richter, Goldin, Orlan, Morimura <u>Film:</u> Frida
3/18 INSTALLATIONS, ENVIRONMENTS, & PUBLIC ART: Monuments, Memorials, Site-Specific, Earthworks, Funding, Committees and Juries <u>Article:</u> Hein, Hilde. "What is Public Art?: Time, Place, and Meaning." <u>Artists:</u> Cardiff, Ukles, Johanson, Sonfist, Blum, Tacha, Lin, Zimmerman, Kozloff, Jaudon, Sugarman, Sze, Kapoor, Serra <u>Film:</u> Art 21
3/25 TECHNOLOGY, DIGITAL ART, SIMULATIONS & HYPER-REALITY <u>Article:</u> Best and Kellner. "From the Spectacle to Simulation" <u>Artists:</u>
4/1 Guest Artist: YASMIN SPIRO <u>Website:</u> www.yasminspiro.com <u>Article:</u> To be determined
4/8 FINE ART, COMMERCIAL ART, AND CRAFTWORK: IS THERE A DISTINCTION? <u>Article:</u> to be determined <u>Artists:</u> to be determined
4/15 MONEY, ART & COLLECTING: HOW IS VALUE DETERMINED? <u>Article:</u> Mead, Rebecca. "An Acquiring Eye" The New Yorker, Jan. 15, 2007 <u>Artists:</u> Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo, Van Gogh, Monet, Klimt, Munch, Picasso,
4/22 SUBVERSIVE ART: Censorship, Saatchi's Sensation, and the Avant-garde <u>Article:</u> Foucault, Michel. "The Repressive Hypothesis." and/or Saltz, Jerry. "Revenge of the Real: Sensation: YBA's in Saatchi Collection." and "Man in the Middle: Chris Ofili." <u>Artists:</u> Manet, Hirst, Chapman, Goya, Mueck, Harvey, Mapplethorpe, Emin, Lucus, Bosch, Saville, Quinn, Ofili, Serrano, et al. <u>Music:</u> Stravinsky, "Rites of Spring" <u>Film:</u> Avant-garde film 1920-1930's
4/29 EXHIBITION REVIEW: 2008 WHITNEY BIENNIAL (opens March 6th) <u>Article:</u> To be determined
5/6 ART AND MORALITY: DOES ART MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE? <u>Article:</u> Carey, John. "Chapter 4: Do the arts make us better?" and/or Tolstoy, Leo. "What is Art?" <u>Artists:</u> to be determined <u>Film:</u> Baraka