

ARTH 480: Special Topics: Art and the Public

Sierra Nevada College, Spring 2014

MW 10:00 – 11:15 AM

Prim Library 320

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

This is an upper-level art history course exploring the relationship between art and the public. While much of this course will revolve around museums, museum-going, and museum-planning, the goal of this course is to prepare students for future work in the arts, employment in the field of museum studies, or becoming a more critical and conscientious observer of art.

Students should leave this course with knowledge of the role of arts institutions in relation to the public and their own role as a participant and viewer. Students will practice being critical of the art to which they are exposed, and have the opportunity to be both curator and critic.

As this course also focuses on education and the arts, we will be exploring the way that museums and other arts institutions incorporate education into their agenda, evaluating online tools and public art programs such as Google Art Project and the Khan Academy. The course will include discussions, blogging, lectures, field trips, scholarly readings and the viewing of 2 documentary films. At the end of the course each student will complete a final project that invents a new way of bringing art to the public. Whew!

Course Objectives

- To critically evaluate the role of museums in the public sphere
- To understand the ways that public art is implicated politically, both historically and in our contemporary society
- To discuss contemporary issues concerning art and the public via weekly blogging and regular reviews of current news articles
- To think critically about the way that information is presented to the public through the evaluation of an exhibit and the composition of museum labels
- To complete a final project devoted to bringing art to the public in a new and refreshing way

Required Text(s):

There is no required textbook for this course. All required readings will be made available to students via Dropbox. In order to retrieve assignments, you must email me your preferred email address so that I can give you access to the shared online folder. Students are also required to have access to Netflix for the duration of the course.

In-Class Policy

All electronic devices must be turned off and put away during class, *including computers, ipads, and e-readers*. If you choose to use your phone or electronic device you will be asked to leave class or forfeit your device until the end of class. No headphones or earbuds in class. Snacks are okay but please avoid particularly loud or smelly foods that might annoy your classmates. Beverages are allowed. Coffee is encouraged.

Late-Assignment Policy

No late assignments accepted; no emailed assignments.

Cookie Policy

If your phone makes any audible noise during class you have to bring in cookies for everyone next class. Your classmates and I will hold you to it.

Course Requirements and Grading

- Weekly Blogging (110 pts.): Students will earn points by contributing to the weekly shared course blog, Art History 480 (title to be decided upon by the class) found at: <http://sncarthistory480.blogspot.com/>. All students will have access as authors of the blog and are expected to be regular contributors. Again, email your preferred email address so that you can become an author. Students must also sign the “Good Blogging Conduct Agreement” before being able to access the blog.
- Article Review (25 pts.): Each week, one or two students will distribute a current-events article on a contemporary art-related topic. The article will be posted by Monday on the blog alongside a review written by the student. Classmates will have until Friday midnight to post a response. See “Article Review Guidelines” for information to both reviewer and responders.
- Film Reviews (40 pts. each): Students are required to watch 2 documentaries, both available on Netflix (*The Rape of Europa* and *The Art of the Steal*). After viewing, students are required to post a review of each on the blog. Each blog post must be a minimum of 200 words. *Do not summarize the film – you are expected to write a thoughtful critique of the film, raising questions and sharing original ideas about what you watched.*
- Field Papers (25): Students are required to a number of museums over the course of the semester. The first will be a group trip to the Nevada Museum of Art, The Sheppard Contemporary Gallery (UNR), and the Stremmel Gallery. We will also visit the Terry Lee Wells Nevada Discovery Museum as a group and students are expected to make an independent trip to a local museum of their choice. A short critique of an exhibit from either museum and of any exhibit will be posted to the blog for the class to read. Critique can be posted for full credit in at any point during the semester *before Monday, May 5*. See “Exhibit Critique Guidelines” for complete requirements.

- Alternative Labels (50 pts.): As this course focuses largely on museums, students will have the opportunity to play a role as curator. Twice during the course students must write a concise summary of a single work of controversial (and often polarizing) artwork. Labels will be worked on largely in-class as collaborative and peer-reviewed project.
- ART 480 Video (50 pts.): In order to evaluate the success and/or shortcomings of the *smarthistory* series of art historical tutorials (available by the Khan Academy) each student will complete a formal analysis of a single work of art as a short video project. Each video will be posted to the blog for the class to view. See “ART 480 Video Guidelines” for complete information.
- Attendance: Participation in the course is based mostly on your contributions to in-class and online discussions. However, *you still have to come to class!!* More than 3 unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your entire grade by a **whole** letter grade. If you know that you are going to miss class then it is your responsibility to notify me beforehand so that you are not counted as absent. Calls, messages, or texts sent during class notifying me of your absence is not accepted and will be counted as unexcused. You are expected to become familiar with Dropbox in order to retrieve assignments and readings that you may have missed.
- Public Art Project (150 pts.): For the final research-based project, students will create an art project designed to inform and educate the public about a specific topic. The project will include a short paper, scholarly research, and an interactive component that students will present to the class. *Students have the option to work in pairs.* See “Public Art Project Guidelines” for detailed information on the project.

The Final Grade is based on 450 points:

Weekly blogs (11 weeks x 10 pts.)	= 110 (25%)
Exhibit Critique	= 25 (6%)
Article Review	= 25 (6%)
480 Video	= 50 (11%)
2 Alternative Labels	= 50 (11%)
2 Reviews of Films	= 40 (8%)
Final Project	= 150 (33%)

Letter Grade Equivalent
405 – 450 = A
360 – 359 = B
315 – 309 = C
270 – 314 = D
Less than 270 = F

Various policies concerning this course and Sierra Nevada College:

Prim Library Resources

Because this course requires students to complete an extensive research paper, students are expected to utilize the library’s resources (either on-site or remotely) in order to complete assignments and research. Further information on library holdings and online research pertaining to art historical research will be handed out.

Sanctions for Cheating and/or Plagiarism

The Honor Code

SNC students and faculty are expected to be familiar with the principles and guidelines of the Sierra Nevada College Honor Code as published in the current SNC Course Catalog. Faculty and students are expected to read, understand, and uphold the standards of the Honor Code

Consequences of Violating the Student Honor Code

SNC students and faculty share the responsibility for maintaining an environment of academic honesty. Thus, all are responsible for knowing and abiding by the SNC Faculty/Student Honor Code published in the current SNC Catalog. Faculty are responsible for reporting all incidences of academic dishonesty to the Provost. Students are responsible for knowing what constitutes *cheating, plagiarism, and fabrication* and for refraining from these and other forms of academic dishonesty. *Academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism, will result in an F in the course and subject to further disciplinary action by the College.*

ADA Accommodations

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, students with a documented disability are eligible for support services and accommodations. If a student wishes to request an accommodation, please contact the Director of Academic Support Services, Henry Conover, at (775) 831-1314 x 7534, hconover@sierranevada.edu, or visit the office in Prim Library: PL-304

The SNC Email System

The SNC email system is the official communication vehicle among students, faculty members and administrative staff and is designed to protect the confidentiality of student information as required by the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). Students should check their college email accounts daily during the school year. Students have a right to forward their SNC email to another email account (for example, a personal email address). However, confidentiality of student information protected by FERPA cannot be guaranteed for SNC email forwarded to an outside vendor. Having email redirected does not absolve a student from the responsibilities associated with official communication sent to his or her SNC email account.

The Sierra Nevada College Mission Statement

Sierra Nevada College graduates will be educated to be scholars of and contributors to a sustainable world. Sierra Nevada College combines the liberal arts and professional preparedness through an interdisciplinary curriculum that emphasizes entrepreneurial thinking and environmental, social, economic and educational sustainability.

Weekly Class Schedule

**come to class having completed the reading/assignment for that day*

Wed., Jan. 22

First Day of Class – Welcome to ARTH 302!

Mon., Jan. 27 – *NO CLASS*

UNIT I: CARE

Wed., Jan. 29 – What are Museums good for?

- Read “From Being *about* Something to Being *for* Somebody” by Stephen E. Weil (handout). Come to class ready to discuss the talking points.

Mon., Feb. 3 – Introduction to Alternative Labeling Project

- “Museums as Dangerous Sites” by Lisa Yun Lee

Wed., Feb. 5

Mon., Feb. 10 – Issues of Cultural Property

- “In the Heart of Darkness” by Olu Oguibe

Wed., Feb. 12

- “More Political Matters” by James Cuno

Mon., Feb. 17 – President’s Day: NO CLASS

(Tues., Feb. 18)

- Film Review Blog Post due by midnight Tuesday, *The Rape of Europa* (available on Netflix)

Wed., Feb. 19 – Art in Conflict: WWII and Cultural Property

Mon., Feb. 24 – Commemorating Conflict: Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and the United States Holocaust Museum

- “Japan in American Museums – But Which Japan?” by Yoshiaki Shimizu
- In Class: Alternative Labeling Project

Wed., Feb. 26

- In Class: Alternative Label #1

UNIT II: DISCERNMENT

Mon., March 3 – Interpreting the Interpretations: What Museums Want Us to Know

Wed., March 5 – *No Class Due to Field Trip on Saturday

Sat., March 8 – Meet at Nevada Art Museum, 10:00 AM

Mon., March 10 – The History of Monuments in America

- “Monuments, Memorials, and Americanism” by Michael Kammen

Wed., March 12 – *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* vs. *Tilted Arc*

March 17 – 21: *Spring Break* – Enjoy!

Mon., March 24 – Public Art and Nationalism

- “Art Politicized: Ideological Issues” by Michael Kammen

Wed., March 26

- In Class: Alternative Label #2

Mon., March 31 – Global Histories, Local Politics

(Tues., April 1)

- Film Review Blog Post due by midnight Tuesday, *The Art of the Steal* (available on Netflix)

Wed., April 2 – Collections in Crisis – What Happens to the DIA?

- Proposal for Final Project Due

UNIT III: EDUCATION

Mon., April 7 – New Approaches to Public Art Education

- *The Participatory Museum* (pgs. TBA)

Wed., April 9 – (Tentative) No Class Due to Field Trip on Saturday

Sat., April 12 – Field Trip to Terry Lee Wells Nevada Discovery Museum, Reno, 10:00 AM

Mon., April 14 – Using New(er) Technologies to Teach Art History

- “The Slide Library: A Posthumous Assessment for our Digital Future” by Beth Harris and Steven Zucker

Wed., April 16 - Museums without Walls

- “Old Museums and a New Paradigm” by Hilde Hein

Mon., April 21 – Alternative Spaces for Art Education

- ART 480 Video Due (post to Blog prior to the start of class)

Wed., April 23

- “Museums: Can and Do They Make a Difference?” by Stephen E. Weil

Mon., April 28

Wed., April 30 – Class Presentations

Mon., May 5 – Class Presentations

- Final Project Due (final paper including images with labels and scholarly sources)
- Last day to post Exhibit Critique

Wed., May 7 – No scheduled class in preparation for Finals Week

Fri., May 9 – FINAL CLASS: 11:30 – 2:30 PM Last Day for Presentations, *no late assignments accepted*