

ARTH480 "Contemporary American Art" Fall 2017 Dr. Pierette Kulpa

Monday & Wednesday 11:30AM-12:45PM, HAMC 203

Course Reference No. (CRN): 80003

Email: pkulpa@sierranevada.edu

Office Hours: Happily scheduled by appointment

Course description

This is an art history course that is designed to equip you with knowledge about the last 100 years of art making, art theory, and art criticism. The history of the visual arts is discussed using formal aesthetic language, historical and social context. Research, reading, and writing are emphasized.

This is an intense course as we cover much history and theory. There is a lot of reading. I encourage you to embrace this challenge. The course will provide you with an outline of the chronology of major monuments and moments from this time period as well as the critical and practical skills to better understand contemporary art and the theories that go along with it. It will teach you about art making, and it will teach you about the discipline of art history itself. You will learn not only facts about artworks, but also learn the kinds of questions that art historians ask, and the way they go about answering them.

Student Outcomes

- To understand the historical context behind artworks produced in the last 100 years.
- To become aware of skills of visual analysis and art historical methodology, art criticism, and art theory.
- To understand a chronological timeline of art historical events in the last 100 years.
- To research and analyze artworks and to communicate your observations to your peers.

Methods of Assessing Student Outcomes:

- Present research on a contemporary artist
- Properly identify artworks and key terms from memory
- Compare and contrast works of art
- Attend an exhibition at the Nevada Museum of Art and analyze a work of art from the show
- Complete numerous readings & participate in class discussions
- Contribute to a discussion of current art events
- Lead a class discussion

Instructional Strategies

This class will utilize small group and individual work in class, full class discussions, lecture, and homework assignments. Readings will all be available as PDFs on the Moodle course management system.

Grade Breakdown

- Class Participation and Engagement	5%
- Presentation on a contemporary artist. (SEPT 25)	10%
- Modern/Contemporary Art Test (OCT 9)	10%
- Exhibition review (presentation and written critique) of Nevada Museum of Art/Stremmel show (OCT 16)	10%
- Presentation on Art Biennial (Nov 27)	10%
- Reading Notecards	20%
- Lead one class discussion	15%
- Final project/paper	15%
- Current Event Briefings	5%

Attendance Policy

Attendance will be taken at each class. Should it be necessary to miss a class, it is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor beforehand and obtain any handouts or lecture notes from a classmate. No more than two unexcused absences may be incurred without an additional grade reduction penalty. Each unexcused absence past the second will result in the reduction of approximately one-third of a grade point of the grade otherwise earned. In other words, an "A-" will be reduced to a "B+," "B+" will be reduced to a "B." All work is due on the date published in the syllabus or otherwise communicated, irrespective of whether one is absent on the due date. Late assignments will incur late penalty deductions. Consistently late arrival (more than 15 minutes after the start of class) may also result in a lowering of your overall grade. Please make an effort to be on time!

Make-Up Policy (Homework/Exams)

If one of your excused absences happens to occur on an exam you must schedule a make-up exam within 2 weeks from the original exam date. Later = no exam. Homework handed in late without an excused absence will be penalized by at least a 5% drop in grade.

Course Requirements

Presentations

Over the course of the semester you will report back to the class on your findings on a variety of topics. These reports will take the form of informal presentations of around 5-10 minutes. They should include visuals (a PowerPoint or Keynote presentation, or physical objects & artifacts), as well as an engaging discussion with questions for your peers.

Reading Notecards

Since there will be a significant amount of reading in this class, reading notecards provide an opportunity for students to identify important information from the material and identify key questions or items for discussion. On the notecards, students will overview three key points from the reading, identify a significant sentence or quote that can spark thoughtful

conversation, and pose a question or critical thought about the reading. The notecard layout is provided below.

The notecards should be completed before class. They will be used during discussion in class, will be collected for review, and will be returned to you. Keep these notecards, as they may be helpful for you to review for other assignments during the class. If you miss class and would like to get credit for notecards, you can send them to me (the information typed into an email or scanned) BEFORE class. Late notecards will not be accepted.

Notecard content:

Your Name

Due Date

Author, Title of Chapter or Article, Page #s

3 Key points from the reading

1 Significant sentence (including page #)

1 Question or critical thought you have as a result of this reading

Leading a Discussion

At least one during the semester you will have the opportunity to conduct a class discussion about the readings and the themes covered in that session. You will prepare a brief summary of the reading and a set of questions to promote discussion. This is not a presentation of the reading. It is designed to promote interaction, so you must focus on the topic of the reading and lead students to share their opinions on it. The time set aside for each discussion is 20-minutes. Your topic will be assigned ahead of time, in-class.

Test

The test will have some image identification, a slide comparison essay, and a definition section.

- Identifications: you will be shown a picture of an object or monument and you will have to provide the title and author of the object & a statement about its art historical significance.

- Comparison essay: you will be shown pairs of images and be asked to identify them; and then compare and contrast the images according to important formal, iconographical, or cultural issues raised by the comparison.

- Definitions: give a brief definition of the term and link the term with the readings.

The best way to study for an art history test is to come to class, stay awake, and make note cards. Putting an image on one side of the note card and the identification on the reverse is a great way to study. Ask and I can show you some examples.

Current Event Briefings

This assignment allows students to connect the focus of this course (contemporary art and theory) with current events and hot topics going on in the "real world." Each student will be assigned a class session and at the start of their class, students will share with a news article, video clip, or other source of content that relates to contemporary art practices, theory, and production that can influence our work as viewers or makers of art. Some sources to consider - ARTNews, artnet News, Facebook, Instagram, blogs, mainstream news sources, etc. You will brief the class on the event/hot topic (5 minutes maximum) and then entertain questions and

facilitate a discussion around the topic (10 minutes).

Final Project/Paper

With this final project you have some flexibility (yay!). The goal is to reflect on the ideas presented in-class on a deeper, perhaps personal, but also analytical or theoretical, level. You could, for example, come up with an art project that encompasses the themes of the Sublime and the Uncanny. Or you could map how your own life and work intersects with the varied theories presented in this class. You could write a paper on the meaning of the ugly and beautiful in art. Whatever you decide to do, you will need to write a proposal, just as you might in an exhibition proposal for a gallery space or in an abstract for a journal, which will be submitted to me and reviewed. The proposals will constitute a percentage of the final grade, and the final assignment will be presented in-class on the last day, Wednesday, Dec 6.

In-Class Policies

All students are expected to arrive prepared to speak out in class, to ask (and to answer) questions, and to participate in class discussions. The classroom should be protected as a safe place for opinions and responses; a courteous and respectful attitude is required. This also means that electronic devices must be put away during class discussion, lectures, and presentation, *this includes your computer, phone, and tablet.*

Prim Library Resources

In this course, you will be expected to utilize the library's resources as you complete your assignments and research. We will hold a class in the library to familiarize yourself with its many resources that will aid you in your "object biography." To start with, the following are excellent resources:

1. Citation Guides: <http://libguides.sierranevada.edu/content.php?pid=123799&sid=1063593>
2. Searching for art history articles: <http://libguides.sierranevada.edu/content.php?pid=125041&sid=1074248>
3. Finding Images: <http://libguides.sierranevada.edu/content.php?pid=125041&sid=1074249>

Sanctions for Cheating and/or Plagiarism

The Honor Code

The faculty of SNC believes students must be held to high standards of integrity in all aspects of college life in order to promote the educational mission of the College and to encourage respect for the rights of others. Each student brings to the SNC community unique skills, talents, values and experiences which, when expressed within the community, contribute to the quality of the educational environment and the growth and development of the individual. Students share with members of the faculty, administration and staff the responsibility for creating and maintaining an environment conducive to learning and personal development, where actions are guided by mutual respect, integrity, responsibility and trust. The faculty and students alike must make diligent efforts to ensure high standards are upheld by their

colleagues and peers as well as themselves. Therefore faculty and students accept responsibility for maintaining these standards at Sierra Nevada College and are obligated to comply with its regulations and procedures, which they are expected to read and understand.

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.

1st Offense: Student receives a zero for assignment/exam and counseling with faculty on the honor code, consequences for violating the honor code, and the value of academic honesty in learning.

2nd Offense: Student fails course and receives counseling with faculty on the honor code, consequences for violating the honor code, and the value of academic honesty in learning.

3rd Offense: Student is expelled.

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 x7534, 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 Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 Act (FERPA). Students should check their college email accounts daily during the school year.

Students have a right to forward their SNC e-mail to another e-mail account (for example, hotmail or gmail). However, confidentiality of student information protected by FERPA cannot be guaranteed for SNC e-mail forwarded to an outside vendor. Having e-mail redirected does not absolve a student from the responsibilities associated with official communication sent to his or her SNC e-mail 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.

Schedule of Class Readings & Discussions (Subject to Change)

Section I: Modern and Contemporary Art

Week 1

Monday, Aug 21: First Day of Classes/Syllabus/Introduction

Wednesday, Aug 23: Fauvism, Expressionism, Cubism

**Reading: Ken Johnson, "Dark Visions of a Lonely Town on the Brink," New York Times Aug 1, 2008, exhibition review, <http://nyti.ms/29o3pFZ> .

Week 2

Monday, Aug 28: Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, Bauhaus, Painting in US & Mexico, Frank Lloyd Wright

**Reading: Vivien Greene, "Introduction," in Italian Futurism 1909-1944: Reconstructing the Universe (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2014): 21 (PDF).

***Reading: Choose 2 Dadaist manifestoes (PDF).

Wednesday, Aug 30: Abstract Expressionism.

(Readings below).

***Reading: Francis Bacon interviews with David Sylvester (1966, 1971-3) and Jackson Pollock interview with William Wright (1958) in Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art ed. Kristine Stilles and Peter Selz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996): 199-204 & 22-24. (PDF)

Week 3

Monday, September 4: No School Labor Day

Wednesday, September 6: Weee Workshop. Watch video in preparation:

Week 4 Contemporary Art Worldwide

Monday, Sept 11: Minimalism, Pop Art, Superrealism, Performance Art and Conceptual Art and New Media,

***Reading: Selections from Claes Oldenbergh, Roy Lichtenstein, and Andy Warhol in Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art ed. Kristine Stilles and Peter Selz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996): 335-342. (PDF) ***Reading: Tom Crow, "Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol," in Modern Art in the Common Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996): 46-68. (PDF)

Wednesday, Sept 13: Conceptual art and Minimalism

***Reading: Sol LeWitt "Sentences on Conceptual Art" (1966)

<http://www.altx.com/vizarts/conceptual.html> .

***Reading: Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," part 1 (1966). (PDF).

Week 5

Monday, Sept 18: Sociopolitical messages in art: Gender/Feminism

***Reading: Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" (PDF)

***Reading: Ashton Cooper, "The Problem of the Overlooked Female Artist: An Argument for Enlivening a Stale Model of Discussion," published on hyperallergic on January 10, 2015 (reprint of exhibition catalogue essay from *Lucid Gestures*): <http://hyperallergic.com/173963/the-problem-of-the-overlooked-female-artist-an-argument-for-enlivening-a-stale-model-of-discussion/>

***Reading: Martha Rosler, "To Argue for a Video of Representation. To Argue for a Video against the Mythology of Everyday Life." In Alex Alberro and Black Stimson, ed., *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999): 366-369. (PDF)

***WATCH: Martha Rosler, *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, Joan Jonas, *Vertical Roll*
Wednesday, Sept 20: Film Theory

***Reading: Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."

http://www.composingdigitalmedia.org/f15_mca/mca_reads/mulvey.pdf

***Reading: Margaret Olin, "The Gaze," *Critical Terms for Art History*, 318-329.

Saturday, September 23rd, Time: TBA Museum and Gallery Tour à Stremmel Gallery, Nevada Museum of Art

Week 6

Monday, Sept 25: Presentation on a contemporary artist

Wednesday, Sept 27: Screening: "Power of Art: Mark Rothko"

Week 7

Monday, Oct 2:

Post-Colonial Theory & Globalization

***Reading: Selections from Jennifer Clement, *Widow Basquiat: A Love Story*, (Broadway Books, 2014): 27-49.

(PDF)

***Reading: Rebecca Jagoe, "Colonialism and Cultural Hybridity: An Interview with Yinka Shonibare, MBE," *The*

Culture Trip Blog, <http://theculturetrip.com/africa/nigeria/articles/colonialism-and-cultural-hybridity-an-interview-with-yinka-shonibare-mbe/>

***Reading: Jessica Hemmings, "Hybrid Sources: Depictions of Garments in Postcolonial Textile Art," in *The Space Between: Textiles art design fashion 2* (2004): 1-5. (PDF)

Wednesday, Oct 4: Exam Review

Week 8

Monday, Oct 9: Modern and Contemporary Exam

Section II: What is Art Criticism?

Wednesday, Oct 11: An Introduction to Art Criticism

***Reading: James Elkins, "Art Criticism: Writing without Readers," *What Happened to Art Criticism?* Chicago: Prickly Paradigm, 2003, 1-14. (PDF)

***Reading: Dave Hickey, "Some Things are Better Than Others," *Pirates and Farmers*, Ridinghouse, 2013, pp. 155-163. (PDF)

Week 9

Monday, Oct 16: Tools of the Critic

***Reading: Dave Hickey, "Formalism," from *Pirates and Farmers* (PDF).

***Reading: Harold Rosenberg, "American Action Painters" (PDF).

Wednesday, Oct 18: Reflections on Museum and Gallery visits. **Exhibition Review Presentation & Critique Due**

Monday, Oct 23: Critics and Collectors

Screen: *Herb & Dorothy* (2008) 1hr 27 min directed by Megumi Sasaki

Week 10

Section III: Aesthetics

Wednesday, Oct 25: The Sublime

***Reading: Edmund Burke, *Selections from A Philosophical Inquiry* (1757), Oxford, 1990. (PDF)

***Reading: Julian Bell, "Contemporary Art and the Sublime," *Tate Modern Research Publications*

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/julian-bell-contemporary-art-and-the-sublime-r1108499>

Week 11

Monday, Oct 30: The Beautiful

***Reading: Immanuel Kant, *Selections from "Analytic of the Beautiful," Critique of Judgment* (1790), Oxford, 2007 (PDF)

***Reading: Peter Schjeldahl, "Notes on Beauty," reprinted in *Uncontrollable Beauty*, (NY: Allworth Press, 1998), 53-60. (PDF)

***Reading: Jacques Derrida, "The Parergon," (selections) from *Truth in Painting*. (PDF)

Wednesday, Nov 1: The Aesthetic of Cute & Camp **Final Project Proposals Due**

***Reading: Frances Richard, "Fifteen Theses on the Cute," *Cabinet Magazine*, no. 4, (Fall 2001), n.p.

(<http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/4/cute.php>)

***Reading: Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp," (1966) from *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*, Picador, 2001.

Week 12

Monday, Nov 6: The Ugly & The Uncanny

***Reading: Umberto Eco, "Introduction" and "Ugliness Today" from *On Ugliness*, translated by Alastair McEwan, Rizzoli, 2007. (PDF)

***Reading: Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny." (PDF)

Week 13

Monday, Nov 13: Screening: *Mulholland Drive* (2001) 2hr 27min directed by David Lynch

***Reading: Andrew Hageman, "The Uncanny Ecology of *Mulholland Drive*." *Scope: An Online Journal of Film & TV Studies*. 11 (June 2008).

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/scope/documents/2008/june-2008/hageman.pdf>

Wednesday, Nov 8: Continue *Mulholland Drive*.

Wednesday, Nov 15: The Aura and the Object/Art as Commodity

***Reading: Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 1936. (PDF)

***Reading: Sections of W.J.T. Mitchell, "Offending Images," in *What do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, (University of Chicago Press, 2005): 124-144.

***Reading: Keith Moxey, "Impossible Distance", in *Visual Time*, (Duke University Press, 2013): 139-172.

Week 14

Nov 20-24 Happy Thanksgiving! No Classes!

Week 15: Monday, Nov 27: Biennials and Galleries ** Presentations on Biennials**

***Reading: Dave Hickey, "Idiot" in *Pirates and Farmers* pp. 31-37.

***Reading: Stephen E. Weil, "Twenty-one Ways to Buy Art," in *Making Museums Matter*, (Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002): 151-155.

Resource: <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/worlds-top-20-biennials-triennials-and-miscellennials-18811>

Wednesday, Nov 29: Fakes & Copies

***Reading: Alexander Nagel, "The Copy and its Evil Twin," *Cabinet* 14 (2004), <http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/14/nagel.php>

***Reading: John Darlington, "Fake Heritage for the fake news era," *ArtNews* 10 August 2017, http://theartnewspaper.com/comment/comment/fake-heritage-for-the-fake-news-era-/?utm_source=weekly_august11_2017&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=email_weekly&utm_source=The+A+rt+Newspaper+Newsletters&utm_campaign=363914737b-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_08_11&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c459f924d0-363914737b-43546593

***Listen: "How the Brain tells Real from Fake: From Fine Art to Fine Wine," on *The Hidden Brain* with Shankar Vedantam <http://www.npr.org/2015/12/01/457232855/how-the-brain-tells-real-from-fake-from-fine-art-to-fine-wine>

Week 16

Monday, Dec 4: Screening: *Art and Craft* (2014), directed by Sam Cullman & Jennifer Grausman 1hr 29min

***Reading: <http://burnaway.org/feature/burning-questions-broken-art/>

Wednesday, Dec 6: Final Project/Paper Presentations In-Class.