Art History Theories & Methods
Jacob Stewart-Halevy
10:30 - 11:45 AM
FAH-0100-01
Aidekman Arts Center
Room 013

Course Description:
In what sense does art have a history and how, if at all, are art and history related? In this course, we move from the origins of art history as an academic discipline into the latest theoretical models that preoccupy scholars today. We will look at Heinrich Wölfflin’s formalism, Alois Riegl’s notion of style and value, Aby Warburg’s studies of ritual and ornament, the tradition of French criticism, alongside social art histories, anthropologies of art, psychoanalytic models, and “visual culture” approaches. The course will be reading intensive and broad in scope.

Course Requirements:
A) Class participation: Regular attendance; timely reading of assigned texts; active participation in class*
B) 3 reading responses based on prompt or your own idea (3 Page Double Spaced).
C) Group presentations introducing the Topic (About Every Third Week)
D) One final research presentation at the end of the semester (15 minutes),
E) A 12-page research paper, due on December 14th, based on the presentation and feedback you have received for your presentation
*Grade penalty for unexcused absences and for papers handed in late.

Group Presentations:
In these presentations, you are meant to provide an overview of the week’s subject. In most cases this means engaging with the Hatt and Klonk summaries and providing relevant artistic examples. Our class discussion will follow from these presentations. The prompt you answer may not come from the weeks in which you present.

Final Presentation and Paper Guidelines:
1) Choose a work of art—a painting, sculpture, photograph, print, textile, building, installation, or material culture object in a public collection in the Boston Area. 2) Come up with an annotated bibliography of scholarship on the artwork. 3) For your presentation, analyze the artwork according to one of the methods treated in the course. 4) Write a research paper outlining your approach with regards to previous scholarly approaches to the work. Before you begin your research, come to my office hours to discuss your choice and plans.

Readings:
Hatt and Klonk’s Art History is available at the campus store. All other readings will be made available on Trunk unless otherwise stated. You may want to purchase the cheaper books instead of reading a PDF, but up to you. The readings are in English, but feel free to read the original French and German texts if you are able and willing.
Weekly Schedule (Subject to change depending on how the course goes)

Week 1: Does Art have a History?
(Optional Reading: Hatt and Klonk Chapter on Hegel)

9/6: Introduction to the course

9/8: Aesthetics: Kant and Hegel

Prompt: Does art have a history? If so, is it a progression? Using our class discussion of Winkelmann, Hegel, and Weber as background, provide an argument.

Week 2: Connoisseurship, Authorship, Agency, Personhood
(Group 1 Presents: Hatt and Klonk Connoisseurship Unit)


Prompt: Provenance Problem Set. I provide you 3 images. You try to figure out who made it and when. Describe your approach and reasoning.

Week 3: Criticism
(Group 2: William Hazlitt’s “Death on the Pale Horse” (1775))


Prompt: Criticism Exercise: Go to an art gallery or museum exhibition and write a brief review. See me if you need suggestions for what to see.

Week 4: Conduct and Cultural History
(Group 3: Hatt and Klonk Unit on Feminism)


Prompt: What is the relation between art and conduct according to Shearman and Berger, where do the art and conduct coincide and diverge, and how does this relation seem to have changed today?

**Week 5: Formalism**  
(Group 4: Formalism Chapter in Hatt and Klonk)


Prompt: Select an object from a museum exhibition in the Boston Area and prepare a formalist analysis using Wölfflin’s approach. Then describe the formalist method, its insights, and its limits in accounting for a historical moment.

**Week 6: Iconography, Semiotics, and The Sign**  
(Group 1: Iconography and Semiotics Chapters in Hatt and Klonk)


Prompt: What type of art is most readily available to iconographic or semiotic analysis and what might resist these hermeneutics?

**Week 7: Social Art History**  
(Group 2: Hatt and Klonk Social Art History Chapter)


Prompt: Describe an artwork and how it addresses certain publics (whether national, regional or class-specific) through the work.

**Week 8: Psychoanalysis**
(Group 3: Hatt and Klonk Psychoanalysis Chapter)

Research Exercise: You must get your hands on a copy of this book on your own!


Prompt: TBD

**Week 9: Anthropology of Art**


11/3: Alfred Gell, Technology of Enchantment

Prompt: Describe an artistic ritual in the past or present. Who are the participants, what is its social meaning?

**Week 9: Mediums, Media, Monuments, and Value**
(Group 1: Alois Riegl, “The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Origin” (1903), in Oppositions 25 (Fall 1982), pp.21-51)

11/8: Tuesday is Substituted for Friday


Prompt: 1) Are mediums tied to craft practices or particular materials? What makes mediums specific and how do mediums change over time?: Or 2) Describe the different senses of value Riegl attributes to monuments and how they come into conflict in our competing efforts to shape historical memory.
**Week 10:** *Center-Periphery, Markedness, Post-Colonialism (Part 2)*  
(Group 2: Hatt and Klonk Postcolonialism)


Prompt: Go to the Harvard Fogg Museum and discuss the “Vision and Justice” exhibition in light of this week’s readings.

**Week 11:** *The Observer and Visual Culture*  
(Group 3: Present on the Mirzoeff reading)


12/1: Presentations (Group 1, Group 2—depending on how far we get)

Prompt: Discuss a contemporary or historical element of visual culture. Is art a subset of visual culture? Are the models of art history and visual culture compatible, where do they diverge?

**Week 12: Final Presentations**

12/6: Presentations (Group 2-3)

12/8: Presentations (Group 3-4)  
(Annotated bibliographies are due)

**December 14th:** Final Research Paper Due