Introduction to Contemporary Art
3:00 - 4:15pm
Jacob Stewart-Halevy
92-02
Aidekman 9

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday after class. Mondays by appointment.

Summary:
Introduction to Contemporary Art
An introduction to art since the postwar era with a particular emphasis on the present. Who is making contemporary art, where is it being made, and why? Do these elements constitute an “art world” or multiple and fragmented pockets of production? How do they relate to uneven flows of commerce and capital and what is their connection to emerging political and technological trends? The course is devoted to special topics: Center/periphery relations; activist art and the counter-culture; experimental groups across the Americas, Europe, and Asia. We will treat questions of Conceptualism and abstraction; the dynamics between offline and online reception; and the dilemmas of producing art in a digital economy. These thematic units are supplemented by multiple trips to contemporary art exhibitions and events in the Boston area.

Requirements and Reading Materials:
A. Lively participation in class grounded in course readings (all available on Trunk)
B. Attendance at contemporary art events outside of class.
C. Quiz on historical methods and frameworks
D. Three reviews of art exhibitions (guidelines below).
E. 10 page paper (Double Spaced)
F. 1 Book Review
G. Final take home exam

Weekly Schedule:

Week 1: No Readings

Lectures 9/6 and 9/8: An Introduction to Contemporary Art.

Review #1 Due by 9/12. Pick a show from Contemporary Art Daily this week and write a review. After writing the review, describe 1)Why you chose this show as opposed to the others. 2) Some aspect you had difficulty describing. 3) How you formed your opinion about it. We will discuss them in class.

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Part 1. Historical Methods and Frameworks

Week 2: Art Worlds

9/13: Lecture: Avantgardes, Neoavantgardes, and After.

A. Arthur Danto: The Artworld
B. Lawrence Alloway: Network: The Art World Described as a System

9/15: Positions, Roles, and Cycles
B. Pamela Lee: *Forgetting the Art World* (Selections)

Optional: 9/17—Frances Stark Lecture at MFA (September 17, 2016 6:30 pm – 7:30 pm/ Free, Pick up tickets half hour in advance)

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**Week 3: Modernism/Modernity/Postmodernism/Neoliberalism Today**

9.20: Modernism

A. Clement Greenberg, *Modernist Painting*
B. Leo Steinberg, *The Flatbed Picture Plane*

9.22 After Art
A. David Joselit, *After Art* (Selections) and Review for in class exam.

**Week 4: End of Part 1**

9.27. *In Class Exam on Methods and Historical Frameworks*

9. 29: No Class: Weekend Trip to Frances Stark Mid Career Retrospective and Christian Marclay’s the Clock.

**Part 2: Case Studies**

**Week 5: The Uneven Development of Contemporary Art**

*Lecture 10/4: Post-Socialism*

A. Svetlana Kharchenkova, Nataliya Komarova, and Olav Velthuis, *Official Art Organizations in the Emerging Markets of Russia and China*

*Lecture 10/6: Fabrication*

A. Michelle Kuo, *Test Sites: Fabrication*
B. Winnie Wong, *Van Gogh on Demand: China and the Readymade* (Selections)

**Week 6: Individualization/ Subjectification**

*Lecture 10/11: Manner, Affect, and the Rise of Net Art*

A. Adam Jasper and Sianne Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories*
B. Laura Grindstaff and Susan Murray, *Reality Celebrity: Branded Affect and the Emotion Economy*

**Lecture 10/13: Branding and Social Identities**

A. Pablo Larios, *Network Fatigue*  
B. Caroline Busta, *Cyberchannels and the Female Pose*  
C. Constantin Nakassis, *Brands and their Surfeits*  
D. K-Hole PDFs 1-5

**Week 7: Case Studies in Contemporary Latin America: From Abstraction to Events**

10/18: Class Trip to CCVA: Chilean Avant-Gardes


**Week 8: Art and Activism: 21st Century Avant-Gardes?**

**Lecture 10/25: Art, Activism, and Moral Entrepreneurship**  
A. Yates McKee, *Strike Art* (Selections)

**Lecture 10/27: Media Studies and Activism**

A. Kate Eichhorn, Adjusted Margin, Xerography, Art, and Activism in the Late Twentieth Century

Weekend: Fogg Museum Trip: *Vision and Justice: The Art of Citizenship*

**Week 9: Markets**

**Lecture 11/1: Metrics**

A. William Davies, *Neoliberalism, A Bibliographic Review*  
B. David Joselit, *On Aggregators*

**Lecture 11/3: Speculators and Ragpickers: On the Primary and Secondary Markets**

A. Olav Velthuis, Globalization and Commercialization of the Art Market  
B. Olav Velthuis, ArtRank and the Flippers  
C. Mukti Khaire, *Art Without Borders? Online Firms and the Global Art Market*

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**Week 10: The Jargon of Sustainability**

**Lecture 11/8: Friday Substituted for Tuesday**
**Lecture 11/10: Art and Ecology**


B.

**Week 11: Resistance through Rituals/The Militarization of Perception**

**Lecture: 11/15: Subculture and the Work of Representation, Orders of Indexicality**

A. Stuart Hall, “The Work of Representation” in *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*


**Lecture 11/17: The Observer**

A. Harun Farocki, *Interviews*

B. Jonathan Crary *Techniques of the Observer* (Introduction)

Analysis of Christian Marclay’s *The Clock* (See at MFA at any point this fall)

**Week 12: On the Socialization of Contemporary Artists**

**Lecture 11/29: Pedagogy**

A. Thierry de Duve, *When Attitudes have become Form and After*

B. Howard Singerman, *Art Subjects* (Selections)

C. John Baldessari, *Post-Studio Assignments*

D. Class Dismissed, *A Roundtable on Art School, USC, and Cooper Union*

**Lecture 12/1: Art-Speak**

A. Alix Rule and David Levine, “International Art English”

B. Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle, *Editorial: Language and Internet*

C. Hito Steyerl, “International Disco Latin”

**Week 13: Presentations**

12/6 and 12/8: **Presentations**

**Notes on Assignments:**

A. **Reviews:**

Based on attendance at exhibitions around Boston. The three reviews are meant to develop your abilities in fluid writing and keen observation. By the end of the course, you will have been exposed to enough contemporary art that you should be able provide a précis of any contemporary art exhibition.
B. Exhibitions and Events: See full schedule below

In order to learn about contemporary art, you actually have to go out and see it. Attendance at exhibitions and events is mandatory unless otherwise indicated. Because they take place outside of scheduled class time, I understand that it may be difficult to make it to particular screenings, talks, and walkthroughs. Nevertheless, they are indispensible to the course and so if you need to miss one, please come see me beforehand and we will figure out another way or time to make up for it.

D. Final Presentation and Paper: No Drafts. Due 12/14

The final presentation and paper gives you a chance to expand on one of the units presented in the course. While there is no extra reading required for writing, you should integrate the material from the unit into a thorough analysis of individual artworks or exhibitions, while developing your own thesis/interpretation. You will give a presentation on the subject of your paper and, having received comments and criticism, write up a final draft. The paper should be double spaced, 12 pt. font.

E. Final Take-Home Exam:

The course is divided into two sections. The first is meant to provide grounding in historical methodologies, which are indispensible for understanding the thematic units in the rest of the course. There is an in-class exam at the beginning of the fourth week so students have a strong base from which to proceed. The final exam is based in the readings and will be partially image based. Each lecture will include between four and ten key images, which will be made available with identification on a comprehensive PDF on Trunk toward the middle of the semester. Students will use this as a study guide for the final. In the exam, they will be expected to 1) discuss images; 2) integrate knowledge of individual artworks with relevant readings; 3) describe and discuss artworks and exhibitions that they have not yet seen.

SCHEDULE OF EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS AROUND BOSTON
(More Details to Follow)

A. CCVA
1. Consumer Research Center/ On-Going
2. Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet: Three Works
   Aug 4–Sep 24, 2016
3. Exhibition +Performances: Embodied Absence: Chilean Art of the 1970s Now
   Oct 27, 2016–Jan 8, 2017

B. ICA Boston

1. LIZ DESCHENES JUN 29 – OCT 16, 2016
2. NALINI MALANI: IN SEARCH OF VANISHED BLOOD JUN 29 – OCT 16, 2016

C. MFA Boston


D. MIT List Center

1. EDGAR ARCENEAUX: WRITTEN IN SMOKE AND FIRE, October 14, 2016 - January 8, 2017

E. Tufts University Art Gallery


F. Harvard Fogg Museum