VISUALIZING A NATION:
Twentieth-Century Art from Mexico

Erin L. McCutcheon, erin.mccutcheon@tufts.edu
Department of Art and Art History
11 Talbot Avenue, Room 109
Office Hours: Thursdays 12-2 and by appointment

FAH–1020–03, Fall 2016
Tues/Thur: 4:30–5:45
Aidekman Arts Center
Room 13

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

This course introduces students to the major artists, objects and themes of Mexican art history from the late 19th Century through to the present day. Visual art has historically been both directly and indirectly engaged in the collective formation of national identities in Mexico. While students may be able to name the most famous artists associated with Mexican nationalism – such as the muralists – this course will expand their conceptualization of national narratives through the inclusion of a wide variety of producers and discourses. We will continually consider “official” visual narratives of citizenship and national identity, as well as counter-narratives posed by artists along the lines of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity and belonging. In addition to understanding key local discourses, students will also engage with the global interconnectedness of art from Mexico, understanding it existed as a political, intellectual and artistic center since the early part of the 20th century. Elements of this discussion will be the inclusion of ex-patriot artists in Mexico’s local visual histories, as well as the international presence of artists from Mexico around the world.

The course is organized chronologically, however readings and in-class discussions will be focused on issues that pose these works and makers in a dialogue with critical issues associated with Mexico’s visual projects. Some key issues relative to the study of Mexican art from this period will be: the intersection of art and politics under the conditions of revolution, dictatorship, and economic crises; the complexities of identity formation in the contexts of “mestizo” culture, histories of colonization and border migrations; the shift from traditional media to conceptual, performance and site-specific methods of art making; and the visual participation of “marginalized” subjects within dialogues of nationalism and citizenship. Students are encouraged to bring in outside perspectives that expand the scope of class discussions and pursue their own interests related to the concerns of the course in their final research paper.
LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this course students will be able to:

- Identify and describe major movements, artists and artworks as well as the specific historical, political, social, and cultural contexts in which works from this period emerged;

- Locate the major questions and problematics associated with the study of twentieth-century Mexican art, as well as utilize deconstructive methods of art historical inquiry to examine these issues;

- Apply skills in visual analysis and close reading of texts to interpret works of art, both orally and in writing, using vocabulary fundamental to the discipline of art history;

TEXTS


Additional readings will be posted on Trunk in the “Resources” folder. All texts should be read before the class for which they were assigned and will be asked to bring in questions for discussion.

EXPECTATIONS

- Students will enter the classroom with an open mind, and remain respectful of the opinions and perspectives of their classmates throughout the course.

- No late work will be accepted without prior discussion. Please familiarize yourself with the syllabus and due dates for individual assignments.

- All students are expected to abide by the University’s Honor Code, which prohibits any form of plagiarism, cheating, and incomplete citations.

- Laptops are not allowed in class and cell phones must be turned off. That being said, given proper documentation, I am committed to working with students to address any special needs. Please inform me of any accommodations you may need ASAP.

- Do not hesitate to contact me concerning any problems you are experiencing in this course. You do not need to wait until you receive a bad grade before asking for my assistance. I enjoy teaching, I enjoy talking to you and I want you to succeed! If you have questions or just want to explore an idea, send me an email or drop by my office hours.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION (15%): Attendance is mandatory and necessary for doing well in this course. The class will be conducted as a mix of lecture and discussion, and you will be graded on your participation daily. I expect you to come with full knowledge of the readings (and/or questions about issues you are unclear on), prepared to answer direct questions regarding the material and also share your thoughts and opinions during group discussions. Short in-class writing exercises will be periodically assigned and unexcused absences will affect your final grade.

IMAGE PRESENTATION (10%): You will be assigned a date to give a short (5 min.) presentation on an artwork of your choosing that relates to the readings assigned for that class period. Rather than simply presenting information one might find in a Wikipedia entry, this presentation is an opportunity to demonstrate critical thinking skills. You will be expected to make connections between readings, contexts, and the broader analytic concepts we will be working with in class. Your grade will be based on the quality and depth of your analysis, your ability to connect the image with specific concepts, and your ability to engage the class in discussion. You will be required to hand in a 2 page (double-spaced, 12 font, approx. 500 word) summary write-up of your presentation. Detailed instructions and examples will be provided early in the semester.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

SHORT VISUAL ANALYSIS (10%): This initial writing assignment will give you the opportunity to develop your visual analysis skills prior to your midterm exam as well as begin thinking about your final essay. You will be asked to write a visual analysis of approximately 3 pages in length that will focus on one artwork and a theme of your choosing. Papers should use Times New Roman 12pt. font, double spacing, and have one-inch margins. Detailed instructions will be distributed in advance of the deadline.

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER (25%): Your final paper will be in the format of an exhibition catalogue, and will bring together a selection of artworks from three temporal periods in Mexican art (Late 1800s–1930, 1930–1970, 1970–today) into conversation surrounding a thematic topic of your choosing. You will be expected to identify, relate and contrast the aesthetic/contextual specificities of your chosen case studies, in order to develop thoughtful reflections and comparative conclusions that take into account broader issues discussed throughout the course. Emphasis will be placed on your critical thinking, academic research and analytical writing skills. Papers will be roughly 6-pages in length (Times New Roman 12pt. font, double-space, one-inch margins). Detailed instructions and thematic suggestions will be given in advance. You will submit a topic choice on Nov. 3, and a formal paper summary/abstract on Nov. 29 in preparation for an in-class Peer Workshop on Dec. 6.
**MIDTERM (20%) & FINAL EXAM (20%):** Two exams will be given, a mid-term and a final. Precise formats will be distributed before the exams, however both will include a combination of identifications, visual analysis, comparisons and short answers. Questions will be based on lectures, readings, and discussions and will emphasize critical analysis and reflection over memorization. Both exams will be administered in-class (Oct. 18 and Dec. 8).

**EXTRA CREDIT:** I will provide opportunities for extra credit throughout the course of the semester. These will consist of attending special lectures, presentations, exhibitions and/or cultural events and writing a 1-page reflection. The reflection will include a brief summary that relates the presentation to our course material in a meaningful way. Information regarding dates/times will be posted to Trunk throughout the semester, so be sure to check the course site regularly.

**GRADING**

I view grading as a way to evaluate how successful you are at meeting the course learning objectives. If you find you are not mastering the material and skills, please see me to talk about how you might study/work in a way that gets better results, and I will assist you in finding possible resources on campus that might be helpful.

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<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
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<td>Image Presentation</td>
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Final Grades are determined along the following scale:

- 94-100 = A
- 87-89 = B+
- 77-79 = C+
- 67-69 = D+
- 0-59 = F
- 90-93 = A-
- 84-86 = B
- 74-76 = C
- 64-66 = D
- 80-83 = B-
- 70-73 = C-
- 60-63 = D-

**STUDENT RESOURCES**

Academic Resource Center (Writing Support/Consultations, Tutoring, Study Skills, Public Speaking, etc: [https://students.tufts.edu](https://students.tufts.edu))

Library Research Assistance, Chao Chen, Humanities Research & Instruction Librarian ([chao.chen@tufts.edu](mailto:chao.chen@tufts.edu)), 617-627-2057

Counseling and Mental Health Services (617-627-3360 or 617-627-3030 after 5pm): [http://students.tufts.edu/health-and-wellness/counseling-and-mental-health](http://students.tufts.edu/health-and-wellness/counseling-and-mental-health)
COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 – CONSTRUCTING A NATIONAL IDENTITY

Sep. 6: Introductions

Sep. 8: The Academy of San Carlos – Visualizing History

READ:
> RECOMMENDED: Oles, Chapter 5

WEEK 2 – THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Sep. 13: Reconciling Tradition and Modernism

READ:
> Oles, pp. 198 – 223.

Sep. 15: Art During the Revolution

READ:
> RECOMMENDED: Watch The Storm that Swept Mexico (PBS, 2011), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVWcgOcvgV0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVWcgOcvgV0)

WEEK 3 – REVOLUTIONS IN STYLE

Sep. 20: The “Mexican School" of Painting

READ:
> Oles, pp. 246 – 277.
Sep. 22: Introduction to Mexican Muralism – Styles and Ideologies

READ:
> Oles, pp. 234 – 246.
> “Manifesto of the Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters and Sculptors” (1923).


**WEEK 4 – MEXICAN MURALISM: LOS TRES GRANDES**

Sep. 27: Diego Rivera

READ:


Sep. 29: Jose Clemente Orozco and David Siqueiros

READ:
> “Painting as Protest on Mexico’s Walls”

WEEK 5 – TRAVELERS AND INNOVATORS

Oct. 4: Los Tres Grandes in the United States

READ:
> Oles, pp. 263 – 277.

View mural here as you listen: http://www.dartmouth.edu/digitalorozco/app/

SHORT VISUAL ANALYSIS DUE


READ:

RECOMMENDED: Watch ¡Que Viva Mexico!, Sergei Eisenstein (1931): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjDNmSJBqNk

WEEK 6 – WHOSE ART IS REVOLUTIONARY?

Oct. 11: Collectivism, Modernisms and the Politics of the Avant-Garde

READ:
> Oles, pp. 278 – 295
> Karen Cordero Reiman, “Appropriation, Invention, and Irony: Tamayo’s Early Period, 1920-1937” in Tamayo Revisited
Oct. 13: Modernistas: Kahlo and Her Contemporaries

READ:
> Oles, pp. 295 – 310

EXTRA CREDIT: Read Linda Nochlin’s “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” and write a 2-page response paper (due in class)

WEEK 7 – MIDTERM

Oct. 18: MIDTERM EXAM (material covered in class up to and including Oct. 11)

Oct. 20: Visit to MFA

READ:
> PRI, “Frida Kahlo’s Breakthrough Work is Coming to Boston”
> Reading TBD

WEEK 8 – FROM MIRACLE TO MASSACRE

Oct. 25 Architecture and Infrastructure – Mega Modern Mexico City

READ:
> Oles, pp. 312 – 331
> Adriana Zavala, "Mexico City in Juan O'Gorman's Imagination,"
Hispanic Research Journal 8:5 (Dec. 2007), 491-506
> Reading TBD

Oct. 27: The Generation of “La Ruptura” and Midterm Review

READ:
> Oles, pp. 331 – 349
> Jose Luis Cuevas, “The Cactus Curtain" (1959)
WEEK 9 – 1968 – NATIONAL IMPACT and VISUAL AFTERMATH

Nov. 1: Visualizing 1968

READ (please note these are all quite short readings!):
> Oles, pp. 350 – 366
> Emmet Byrne, “Radiant Discord: Lance Wyman on the ’68 Olympic Design and the Tlatelolco Massacre”
> “The Fight to Save a Land Art Masterpiece in the Heart of Mexico City”

Nov. 3: Conceptualism and Collectivism – Los Grupos

READ:
> Oles, pp. 366–371 (through 2nd paragraph re: Grupo Suma)

PAPER TOPIC WORKSHEET DUE

WEEK 10 – IDENTITY AS RESISTANCE

Nov. 8: Feminist and Queer Interventions of the 1970s and 80s

READ:
> Oles pp. 371–374

Nov. 10: Post-1960s Chicano Art

READ:
> TBD from Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 1965 – 1985
WEEK 11 – DECONSTRUCTING THE NATION

Nov. 15: Neomexicanismo

READ:
> Oles, pp. 374 – 386
> TBD from Teresa Eckmann, Neo-Mexicanism: Mexican Figurative Painting and Patronage in the 1980s

Nov. 17: Art at the Border

READ:

WEEK 12 – NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING

Nov. 22: Class Cancelled (Work on your paper/study for your final)

Nov. 24: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY – NO CLASS

WEEK 13 – CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES

Nov. 29: Internationalism and Urbanism

READ:
> Oles, pp. 388 – 407

FINAL PAPER SUMMARY DUE
Dec. 1: Participation and Publics

READ:
> Robin Greeley, “‘The Space of Appearance’: Performativity and Aesthetics in the Politicization of Mexico’s Public Sphere” in Sabotage Art: Politics and Iconoclasm in Contemporary Latin America (London: IB Taurus, 2016) pp. 188 – 213
> Reading TBD

WEEK 14 – COURSE WRAP UP

Dec. 6 Research Paper Workshop & Final Review

READ:
> Come prepared with written comments on your classmates’ abstracts/summaries as well as any questions you have for the final exam

Dec. 8 FINAL EXAM (material covered from class on Oct. 13 through last day)

FINAL PAPER DUE: Tuesday, December 20th by NOON