**Introduction to Visual Studies: History, Theory, Practice**

This course provides a point of entry into Visual Studies, an emerging field that integrates artistic practice, historical knowledge, critical thinking, and creative imagination. The course encourages students to think about how Visual Studies can empower the artist to participate in the world as an active agent rather than simply a passive observer. Consideration of the broader social, material, bodily, and ethical aspects of both perception and creation will be an important component of the course as well. Through a series of lecture/discussion sessions with the professor, conversations with practicing artists, assigned readings, a semester project, and exams, students learn to approach their work as a complex process coordinating imagination, knowledge, sensation, careful looking, critical thinking, and creative practice that matters.

**Overview of course requirements and grade components:**

- **Participation:** attendance, discussion (20%)
- **Midterm Project:** E-JOURNAL – DUE OCT. 13 by 6pm (30%).
- **Group Project:** CURATING NOW/PRESENTATION – PRESENTATIONS NOV 29, Dec 1, 6 (20%)
- **Final Paper:** COMPARISON/CONTRAST ESSAY – DUE DEC. 6 (30%)
- **Required texts:** All texts are available in Blackboard (blackboard.temple.edu) or through our class blog [www.contempoart.wordpress.com](http://www.contempoart.wordpress.com)

**University Policies and Ground Rules**

Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has a policy on Student and Faculty and Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy #03.70.02) which can be accessed at [http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02](http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02). Every registered student agrees to abide by an overall set of values, principles and regulations mandated by the university. In order for a student to remain in good standing, it is imperative that each student assumes responsibilities throughout his/her enrollment at Temple. Students also have a number of rights which protect their interests. These rights and responsibilities, including Temple policies on Academic Honesty and Attendance, may be accessed at the following link: [http://www.temple.edu/bulletin/Responsibilitiesrights/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtm](http://www.temple.edu/bulletin/Responsibilitiesrights/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtm). The Temple University *Student Code of Conduct* can be viewed at: [http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.12](http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.12).

Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact Laurie Duffy, Academic Advisor in the Tyler School of Art, at 215-777-9185 privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Contact Disability Resources and Services at 215-204-1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students must present the appropriate paperwork in order to receive special accommodations. Accommodations are limited to those documented by the office of Disability Resources and Services and presented in an official letter to the faculty member.
INFORMATION ON CANCELLATION OF CLASSES DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER: The University participates with the City of Philadelphia and local radio stations such as KYW (1060-AM), WDAS (1480-AM, 105.3-FM), WIOQ (102.1-FM), WUSL (98.9-FM), and WPEN (950-AM), which broadcast code numbers indicating when classes are closed because of snow or other inclement weather: 101 Day Class Cancellation, 2101 Evening Class Cancellation. The most accurate and up-to-date information on class cancellations can be obtained by calling the University’s hotline at 215-204-1975, and by listening to Temple’s radio station, WRTI 90.1-FM or referring to Temple’s website at http://www.temple.edu.

Additional Information about Course Requirements

Attendance: Students are expected to attend all classes. Roll will be taken in every class meeting, in part so that the professor can learn your name. Any unexcused absence will result in a course grade reduction of 5%. If you must miss class, a doctor’s note or other legitimate excuse will be required (judged at the professor’s discretion).

Readings: Be sure to complete all the assigned readings every week and be prepared to discuss them in class. For specific assigned readings, see Schedule beginning on page 3 below. All readings are either on the class blog or on Blackboard. Under the topic heading for each day, a citation for a specific assigned reading appears after “READING ASSIGNMENT.” Read the texts before that day’s class. Think critically about the text and decide for yourself how persuasive it is. Part of your grade for the course will be based on discussion, so make your voice heard.

Assignments:

Assignments will be discussed at length in class. Below is an overview of assignment expectations

Midterm Project – E-JOURNAL:

- 4 written responses (1-2 paragraphs each) to 4 assigned readings (you choose which 4).
- 2 written responses (1-2 paragraph each) to 2 exhibitions from the below list (you must go see the 2 exhibitions that you choose to write about):
  Charline Von Heyl opens Sept 7 at ICA; Bill Walton opens Sept 7 at ICA; The Grief Hunters opens Sept 7 at ICA (group exhibition curated by Doron Rabina); Unsettled: Photography & Politics in Cont. Art (closes Sept 19); Triton Lowe opens Oct 22 at Philadelphia Museum of Art; Isamu Noguchi outside through 2012 at Philadelphia Museum of Art

Group Project – CURATING NOW:

Working in assigned Groups of 3-4, Topic TBD: you will get one full class period to work on this project, and should meet outside of class as a group

Final Paper – COMPARE/CONTRAST:

Topic TBD: Length 4-5 pages (1000-1200 words)
Schedule

**Week 1: Projecting Vision**

August 30, Meeting 1: Welcome, Overview
Sept 1, Meeting 2: What is an Image?

  - **Questions for discussion:** What is truth according to Plato and what did he think of images? What did he regard as truth? Do you agree or disagree with him? What modern image technology did his ancient text “foreshadow,” albeit unintentionally?

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**Week 2: Origins: Thinking and Making**

Sept 6, Meeting 3: Concepts
  

  - **Questions for discussion:** What is a concept? How does it lead to making a work of art? Where do concepts come from? What is the difference between a concept and a work of art? Can a concept *be* a work of art?

* Sept 7, attend the Fionn Meade lecture at 6pm B 04 (basement auditorium)

Sept 8, Meeting 4: Objects

  - **Questions for discussion:** What is the difference between an object and a concept? Do objects resist and/or contribute to conceptualization? What is the relation between craft, or processes and habits of making, and objects? And concepts?

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**Week 3: Interpreting Images, Objects, Media**

Sept 13, Meeting 5: Visual Material
  • Questions for discussion: What is an image? Is a work of visual art the same as an image? Is an image a material artifact? What different kinds of visual artifacts can you identify? Is anything lost or gained by studying such artifacts as “visual images”?

Sept 15, Meeting 6: Medium and Media

  • Questions for discussion: What is a “medium” and how does it relate to “media”? What is the relationship between an “image” and the “media”?

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**Week 4: Perspective and Perception**

Sept 20, Meeting 7: Linear and Geometric

• READING ASSIGNMENT: Excerpts from Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting* (1426); René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* (1637); and Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (1927)
  • Questions for discussion: Is there a “natural” way of seeing and visually understanding the world that is shared by all human beings?

Sept 22, Meeting 8: Non-linear and Embodied

  • Questions for discussion: How would you compare Donq Qichang’s vision of the world to that of Alberti? What is the relationship between vision and the body?

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**Week 5: Reception, Audience, Community**

Sept 27, Meeting 9: **ARTIST CONVERSATION: Bayeté Ross Smith**


Sept 29, Meeting 10: NO CLASS
Week 6: Art, Work, Politics

Oct 4, Meeting 11: Art as Work

  - **Questions for discussion:** What does Benjamin mean by “ritual” and “aura”? What does he say is the effect of mechanical reproduction on the aura of the original work of art? What is the most powerful medium of mechanical reproduction in his view? What does he mean by politics?

  - **Questions for discussion:** In what ways is making art a form of work? Is it the same as other kinds of labor?

* Oct 5, attend the Hal Foster lecture at 6pm B 04 (basement auditorium)

Oct 6, Meeting 12: Art as Political


- **SCREENING:** Excerpts from *Art21*, episode: “Power” (2005) and “Protest” (2007)
  - **Questions for discussion:** Is art inherently political or is it “autonomous” and apolitical?

Week 7: Art, Object, Gaze

Oct 11, Meeting 13: Menacing Looks

  - **Questions for discussion:** What is the difference between art and objecthood according to Fried?

* Oct 12, attend the Wangeci Mutu lecture at 6pm B 04 (basement auditorium)

Oct 13, Meeting 14: Reciprocal Glance

  - **Questions for discussion:** Is the gaze always voyeuristic? Does it inevitably assert power through surveillance and/or desire? Or are other, less coercive forms of looking possible?
  
- **DUE:** E-JOURNAL (MUST BE EMAILED TO PROF BY 6PM)
Week 8: The Personal is Political

Oct 18, Meeting 15:

ARTIST CONVERSATION: (Tyler faculty artist Karyn Olivier will visit the class to speak about her work and take questions)

* Oct 19, attend the Jens Hoffman lecture at 6pm B 04 (basement auditorium)

Oct 20, Meeting 16: Viewing Museums and Galleries

  - Questions for discussion: How do museums and galleries structure viewing of art and the world? Why does Haacke say that the museum, “by the very structure of its existence ... is a political institution”? Why does Smithson compare curators to prison wardens?

Week 9:

Oct 25, Meeting 17: Curatorial practices, Museum strategies, Structures and Subversions of Power

  - Questions for discussion: What is the power of vision according to Foucault? What does Foucault’s analysis suggest about the role of vision in modernity and postmodernity?
  - Introduction to Group assignment CURATING NOW: Time in class to meet with your group

Oct 27, Meeting 18: Visiting Curator, Petrushka Bazin (Program Manager for The Laundromat Project)

- Reading TBD

Week 10: Genders

Nov 1, Meeting 19: From Binary to Multiplicity

Questions for discussion: Is there a difference between “gender” and “sexuality”? What does Davis mean by the difference between gender “in” and “of” representation?

* Nov 2, attend the Mike Smith lecture at 6pm B 04 (basement auditorium)

Nov 3, Meeting 20: Salvaging and Queering


  Questions for discussion: Does gender determine anything in art? If so, what? Or, is there a danger of stereotyping and essentialism in thinking about art as something that can be determined by gender?

Week 11: Decolonizing Vision

Nov 8, Meeting 21: Critiquing Empire

- SCREENING: Excerpts from The Battle of Algiers (1966), directed by Gillo Pontecorvo

  Questions for discussion: What is/was imperial knowledge? How have visual art and culture contributed to the formation of such knowledge?

Nov 10, Meeting 22: Postcolonial Perspectives

- SCREENING: Excerpt from Art21, episode: “Transformation” (2009, on Yinka Shonibare)

  Questions for discussion: Was imperial vision and knowledge ever stable or coherent? What does/did it mean to be an imperial subject? Is there such thing as a single “art world”?
- ARTIST CONVERSATION: TBC

Week 12: Imagining Identity

Nov 15, Meeting 23: Who Sees?

- Group proposals for CURATING NOW assignment DUE
• SCREENING: Excerpt from *Art21*, episode: “Identity” (2001)
  
  Questions for discussion: How have artists viewed and constructed identities? Why?

* Nov 16, attend the Dara Birnbaum lecture at 6pm B 04 (basement auditorium)

Nov 17, Meeting 24: Who’s Who?

  
  Questions for discussion: Is there such thing as a stable “identity”? If not, then what?

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**Week 13: Decentering Human Vision**

Nov 22, Meeting 25: Looking Ecocritically/Becoming Animal


• SCREENING: Excerpts from *Grizzly Man* (2005), directed by Werner Herzog
  
  Questions for discussion: When we look at other animals, what or who do we see? What do they see? Why should we care? Do they care? What ethical considerations come into play when humans use other animals in art? Do other animals make art?

  Questions for discussion: What are the ecological consequences of art? Is all art worth making and keeping in an age of ecological crisis? Does some art constitute a form of pollution? Can artists help envision a more sustainable future

Nov 24, NO CLASS

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**Week 15: Final Presentations**

Nov 29, Meeting 26: In Class Group Presentations

Dec 1, Meeting 27: In Class Presentations

Dec 6, Meeting 28: In Class Presentations

• FINAL PAPERS DUE (MUST BE EMAILED TO PROF BY 6PM)