**ART 3085 Critical Issues in Art**

**3 credit hours**

**Matthew Choberka, Office phone: 626-7270**

[**matthewchoberka@weber.edu**](mailto:matthewchoberka@weber.edu)

**Kimball Visual Arts Center KA150, M/W 2:00-3:22 PM**

*“In my own version of the idea of 'what art wants,' the end and fulfillment of the history of art is the philosophical understanding of what art is, an understanding that is achieved in the way that understanding in each of our lives is achieved, namely, from the mistakes we make, the false paths we follow, the false images we have come to abandon until we learn wherein our limits consist, and then how to live within those limits. ”*

Arthur Danto

**Course Overview**

This course will introduce students to the history of ideas in art from the ancient Greeks to the most contemporary currents, with a focus on Modernism and Post-Modernism up to the present. The goal of this course is the creation of a critical and theoretical foundation that will allow students to locate themselves and their work within the context of critical dialogues in the contemporary art world. Class time will involve discussions of assigned readings, with images presented to supplement and inform the ideas under consideration.

**Learning Outcomes and Core Themes for the class**

The Department of Visual Arts’ Learning Outcomes include several that are particularly applicable to this course in the critical ideas that inform art. These outcomes state that we can judge our success when our students can:

* *Possess a basic knowledge of visual culture from prehistoric to contemporary times.*
* *Possess skills in oral and written communication as they pertain to the visual arts.*
* *Be able to think critically. Students should be able not only to analyze a work of art using traditional methods, but should also be able to develop thoughtful new interpretations.*
* *Be able to express their personal thoughts, ideas, or emotions through visual media.*

**Evaluation of Learning Outcomes**

This is a reading-intensive course. Each week, you will be required to:

* Write a summary paragraph on each assigned reading that summarizes your understanding and response to the specific ideas in the reading.
* Compile a list of three questions for each assigned reading that you think address the key ideas in the text and that bring up issues or problems you want to discuss with the group.

Both types of written response (both paragraphs and questions) may also be required in relation to other resources, particularly a few of the video lectures described below. Summary paragraphs and questions must be which must be e-mailed to the professor by 12 PM on the day of our Monday class meeting. Your submissions will be logged into the Canvas course site, with each paragraph/questions submission receiving a mark of from 5 (highest) to 1 (lowest). Your questions will be compiled and distributed to the entire class for discussion. Again, they should address key points from the readings, issues you want to discuss and terminology and concepts you want to further explore in class. **60% of overall grade**

Lively and engaged class participation is crucial for this course to be an "illuminating" experience. We will learn from and with each other. It is therefore essential that you read all assignments thoroughly so you can contribute to the class discussions. At the beginning of each week the class will draw the name of a student who is then responsible to introduce the week's readings briefly to his/her peers. For each week of class meetings, you will receive a mark for participation in discussion, from 3 (highest) to 1 (lowest). **25% of overall grade**

For the final project, each student must curate a group show plus write a "catalog entry" and present this in class. The exhibition must include yourself\* plus three other artists of your choice (they do not have to be contemporary or even modern artists). In presenting yourself and the other artists, you must apply at least three 'schools of thought' or critical, evaluative and theoretical approaches that you have studied during the semester. The "catalog entry" accompanying the exhibition should be 2-3 pages, must be written in the third person and should explain the affinity of the featured artists (including yourself!) to your chosen 'ideologies'. It should also include captioned images from each artist in the imaginary show. **15% of overall grade**

(\*If you are not an art major, you will substitute for "yourself" a contemporary artist of your choice.)

**Please be aware that a minimum grade of C is necessary for any art major to receive credit for a course in the Department of Visual Arts toward his or her major. In other words, a grade of C- or below will not count as credit towards a degree in any art major.**

Each student is responsible for completing all assignments and projects fully and on time, and will be graded on this basis**. In general, you should be prepared to spend a *minimum* of 6 hours per week outside of class to complete the assigned reading and writing.** Your grade for the course will be determined by your full participation in all aspects of the course, including class discussions, writing, and projects.

The point ranking system for submission of paragraphs and questions, as described above, will record your performance as follows:

**5**  Paragraph and questions reflect very close and thoughtful reading of the text, with specific references to the ideas and issues raised by each reading.

**4** Paragraph and questions reflect comprehensive reading of the text, with general references to the ideas and issues raised by each reading.

**3** Paragraph and questions reflect adequate reading of the text, with some references to the ideas and issues raised by each reading.

**2** Paragraph and questions reflect inadequate reading of the text, with minimal references to the ideas and issues raised by each reading.

**1** Paragraph and questions reflect little or no reading of the text, without meaningful references to the ideas and issues raised by each reading.

Similarly, the point ranking system for full participation in class discussions, as described above, will record your performance as follows:

**3** Excellent, prepared contribution to class discussions.

**2** Adequate contribution to class discussions.

**1** Inadequate contribution to class discussions.

Letter grades will be determined according to the following guidelines:

**A** Your work consistently embodies dedication and excellence.

**B** Your work meets and, occasionally, exceeds requirements on a consistent basis.

**C** Your work consistently meets minimum requirements of the course.

**D** Your work meets course requirements only occasionally.

**E** Your work consistently fails to meet requirements.

**Grading Scale**

**A** 93-100 **C**  73-76

**A**- 90-92 **C-** 70-72

**B+** 87-89 **D+** 67-69

**B** 83-86 **D** 63-66

**B-** 80-82 **D-** 60-62

**C+** 77-79 **E** 0-59

**Required Texts:**

* Harrison, Charles and Wood, Paul J., *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (2nd edition). West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing 2002.
* Freeland, Cynthia, *But is it Art?*, Oxford University Press, 2001.

Readings not covered in the above texts text will be posted on Canvas in pdf form.

**Supporting Materials**

Reference/support materials for reading difficult texts: Much writing on art can have the character of art itself, with new terms, historical references, and figurative language complicating our task. Take notes, highlight passages, and write down questions in order to help absorb these texts. Plan on reading them **more than once**. **Please refer to the online module in Canvas with study guides and information and advice for reading difficult texts.**

Other resources, including video lectures on important topics we will find in the readings, will be provided in Canvas. I will let you know which of these are **required**, and which are **recommended**. **However, it is strongly recommended that you use all resources provided, as they can help with a foundation of knowledge of all of the ideas under discussion.**

**NOTE**: The class schedule is subject to change. I will keep everyone informed as to our plans at least a few weeks in advance.

**Attendance Policy**

Since we will be discussing ideas from our readings throughout each class meeting, attendance of all meetings is very important. If you must miss a class session due to illness or personal emergency, contact me as soon as you know that you will miss class. A written excuse (i.e. from a doctor) will be required for all such absences. Any absences that don’t meet this requirement will be considered unexcused. Students should be sure to contact peers in order to catch up on any missed material or assignments.

Each unexcused absence after the first two will result in a reduction of points from your overall grade on the course. In addition, you must arrive at class each session on time, and stay for the entire session. For every two late arrivals to or early departures from class (10 minutes or more), you will be assessed one unexcused absence. Arriving in class 30 minutes late will be considered an absence.

**The point deductions for absences will be as follows:**

**3 Absences (including first 2 unexcused): 5 Points**

**4 Absences: 15 Points**

**5 Absences: 25 Points**

**IMPORTANT: Students with 6 absences will not be able to pass the class. See me to discuss withdrawing/dropping the course.**

**IMPORTANT**: Our schedule, assignments, class materials, and grades will be posted through the **Canvas** system on the **My Courses** menu of your Student Services tab in **eWeber**. You must check this site regularly for information, readings, announcements, and messages. I may also communicate with the class through Weber’s Wildcat Mail, which you must check on a regular basis. If you usually use other email accounts, make sure they link to your WSU email address. I will announce class changes (i.e. cancellations) through these channels, and it is each student’s responsibility to get current information. The class schedule will be based on our progress, and is subject to change. I will keep everyone informed as to our plans at least a few weeks in advance.

**Class policy in the event that unforeseen circumstances necessitate school closures**

In the event of an extended campus closure, I will use **Canvas** to provide instruction utilizing that online course system. Text-based mini-lectures will be provided each week and I will expect you to login to the system on a regular basis to keep up with coursework. Assignments will be provided through the online system with clear due dates and expectations. If you should need to communicate with me, please use my regular (Weber) e-mail. If you are not familiar with the Canvas system, please sign up for orientation to the new online learning system as soon as possible.

**Note Regarding Course Content and Core Beliefs**

*This course may deal with material that may conflict with your core beliefs. It is my judgment that this material is relevant to the discipline I am teaching and has a reasonable relationship to my pedagogical goals. If you do not feel you can continue in this course, please drop it within the designated time frame to do so without penalty. I am not willing to make alternative assignments to the material in the syllabus.*

**PP-M 6-22** outlines the procedure for students to follow:

*Determine before the last day to drop courses without penalty, when course requirements conflict with the student’s core beliefs. If there is such a conflict, the student should consider dropping the class. A student who finds this solution impracticable may request a resolution from the instructor. This policy does not oblige the instructor to grant the request, except in those cases when a denial would be arbitrary and capricious or illegal. This request must be made to the instructor in writing and the student must deliver a copy of the request to the office of the department head. The student’s request must articulate the burden the requirement would place on the student’s beliefs*.

*University Policy: Any student requiring accommodations or services due to a disability must contact Services for Students with disabilities (SSD) in room 181 of the Student Service Center. SSD can also arrange to provide course materials (including syllabus) in alternative formats if necessary.*

**Tentative Schedule (subject to change)**

**Notes:**

**Readings are listed for the weeks in which they are due to be discussed**

**Numbers in parentheses refer to page numbers in our primary text*, Art in Theory 1900-2000***

**Readings without page numbers are found in electronic form on Canvas**

**Week 1 Introduction**

Introduction of syllabus, requirements, expectations

Arthur Danto, *Art after the End of Art*

Leo Steinberg, *The Eye is a Part of the Mind*

**Week 2** Cynthia Freeland, ***But is it Art?***

**Note: paragraphs and questions are due for EACH chapter**

**Week 3 The Greeks: Plato and Aristotle**

Introduction to ***Aesthetics a Comprehensive Anthology***, section on the Greeks

Plato, excerpts from *Ion, The Republic, Symposium*

Aristotle, excerpts from the *Poetics*

**Week 4 Burke, Kant and Hegel**

Introduction to ***Aesthetics, a Comprehensive Anthology***, section on Kant

Selections from Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*

Selections from Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*

Selections from Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of Fine Art*

**Week 5 Emerging Modernism -Early 20th century Approaches**

General Introduction from ***Art in Theory 1900-2000***

Roger Fry, from *An Essay in Aesthetics* (75)

Clive Bell, from *The Aesthetic Hypothesis* (107)

Wassily Kandinsky, from *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (82)

Julius Meier-Graefe, from *The Mediums of Art, Past and Present* (51)

**Week 6 Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction and the**

**Age of Technology**

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism* (146)

Umberto Boccioni, et al., *Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto* (150)

Naum Gabo and Anton Pevsner, *The Realistic Manifesto* (298)

Walter Gropius, *The Theory and Organization of the Bauhas* (309)

Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (520)

**Week 7 Dada and Surrealism**

Hugo Ball, Dada Fragments (250)

Marcel Duchamp, The Richard Mutt Case (252)

Tristan Tzara, Dada Manifesto 1918 (252)

Richard Huelsenbeck, First German Dada Manifesto (257)

Andre Breton, from The First Manifesto of Surrealism (447)

Louis Aragon, et al., *Declaration of the Bureau de Recherches Surrealistes* (456)

**Week 8 Modernism: Greenberg, Steinberg, Fried, Rosenberg**

Clement Greenberg, *Modernist Painting* (773)

Leo Steinberg, from *Other Criteria* (971)

Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood* (835)

Harold Rosenberg, from *The American Action Painters* (589)

**Week 9** **Art and Politics**

Clement Greenberg, *Avant-Garde and Kitsch* (539)

Leon Trotsky, from *Literature and Revolution* (442)

Theodor Adorno, from *Commitment* (779)

Laura Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (982)

Edward Said, from *Orientalism* (1005)

**Week 10 Art and Modern Life**

Roland Barthes, from *Myth Today* (693)

Guy Debord, *Writings from the Situationist International 1957-61* (701)

Asger Jorn, *Detourned Painting* (707)

George Maciunas, *Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art* (727)

Allan Kaprow, from Assemblages, Environments, and Happenings (717)

**Week 11 The Move to Postmodernism**

*Ideas of the Postmodern*, Introduction (1013)

Eleanor Heartney, ***Postmodernism*** (introduction)

Roland Barthes, *The Death of the Author*

Arthur C. Danto, *The Artworld*

**Week 12 Deconstruction and Post-Structuralism**

Jean Baudrillard, *The Hyper-realism of Simulation* (1018) and *Simulacra and Simulations*

Michel Foucault, *What is an Author?* (949)

Roland Barthes, *From Work to Text* (965)

Jacques Derrida, from *Of Grammatology* (944)

**Week 13 The Critique of Originality**

Craig Owens, from *The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism* (1025)

Rosalind Krauss, from *The Originality of the Avant-Garde* (1032)

Hal Foster, from *Subversive Signs* (1037)

Sherrie Levine *Statement* (1038)

Peter Halley, *Nature and Culture* (1042)

Frederic Jameson, *The Deconstruction of Expression* (1046)

**Week 14 Figures of Difference**

Edward Said, from *Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies, and Community* (1057)

Mary Kelly, *Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism* (1059)

Ana Mendieta, *Art and Politics* (1064)

Victor Burgin, from *The Absence of Presence* (1068)

W.J.T. Mitchell, *Image and Word and Mute Poesy and Blind Painting* (1081)

Raymond Williams, *When was Modernism?* (1085)

Richard Rorty, *Private Irony and Liberal Hope* (1091)

**Week 15 The Condition of History**

Daniel Bell, from *Modernism and Capitalism* (1117)

Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Introduction to The Postmodern Condition* (1122)

Jurgen Habermas, *Modernity-An Incomplete Project* (1123)

Jean-Francois Lyotard, *What is Postmodernism?* (1131)

Donald Judd, from “…not about master-pieces but why there are so few of them” (1139)

Gerhard Richter, from *Interview with Benjamin Buchloh* (1147) and *Notes* (1157)

Olu Oguibe, ‘In the “Heart of Darkness”’ (1170)