



Santa Reparata International School of Art
Course Syllabus

Semester Course

Course Title: History of Contemporary Art

SRISA Course Number: ARTH 3201

Maryville Course Number: ARTH 350

Credits: 3, Contact Hours: 45

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The end of the 1950's brought about new directions in artistic practices and beliefs. The role of the artist in society changed significantly with the advent of Pop art, Minimalism, Conceptual art, Performance art, and art, Installation art and many other artistic movements of the second half of the 20th century. Starting with a review of the formative artistic ideas, which led up to these new directions, this course will take a close look at the art of today. This inquiry is of absolute importance for artists wishing to understand the challenges faced in the 21st century. Students consider theory as a way to become an inspired and autonomously creative thinker and will do several writing assignments in conjunction with topical readings.

2. CONTENT INTRODUCTION

The course is conceived to create a critical space within and around the History of Contemporary Art, a space for debate and discussion. Contemporary art is intended as a fundamental component of life, deeply connected with social and political issues, and it furnishes tools and strategies to interpret them, both in historical and phenomenological ways.

Therefore the course will treat every topic under different points of view, observing the art experience in the complex context of global history and in close relationship with the various artistic languages in an interdisciplinary perspective.

So students will be asked to attend exhibitions and theater shows in Florence, to read the texts suggested by the professor, to keep themselves informed by reading local and international press (both general and specialist). Brainstorming and debates will aim to give students the terms to create personal opinions about the lessons' topics and to face eventual misunderstanding.

The course starts with the analysis of fundamental events in art practice and theory in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The interpretation of the connections between artists and society will be done around some keywords (like 'body', 'space', 'public', 'communication', etc.).

"The Jump into the void" by Yves Klein (1960) opens up the course with a big question concerning the role of the artist, his responsibility, his goals. After a brief survey look at the most important events in the first half of the 20th century (historical avant-gardes during the period of the 2nd World War), the lessons will be dedicated to specific topics and artistic tendencies: Expressionism and Art informal, Neo Dada, Pop Art, Minimalism, Conceptual Art, Land Art, Body Art, Arte Povera, Nouveau Réalisme, Fluxus, Postmodernism, Postcolonial art. The relationships between Art Feminism will be treated in a short seminar (two/three lessons).

Special attention will be paid to the most recent experiences, focusing on postcolonialism, social engagement, public space and matters of urban communities.

3. PREREQUISITES

The Course is open to all students.

Background knowledge in modern art history is not necessary, but is helpful.

Additional readings and tests will be considered for students without such background.

At the successful completion of this course the student will be able to:

- Describe an artwork in terms of time and context
- Understand the complexity of local and regional interests to broader international trends
- Interpret and read images, sculptures, performances, and architecture
- Develop critical thinking in relation to theoretical discourses that often surround modern, post-modern and contemporary art
- Develop personal ideas through the study of historical and contemporary theory
- Develop communication skills through class participation
- Describe the varying movements of the past fifty years of contemporary art
- Develop writing skills, and professionalism in written work
- Develop vocabulary fitting to the expression of theoretical issues

5. REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS AND MATERIALS

Textbooks necessary for this course are:

- Foster, Krauss, Bois, Buchloh , "Art Since 1900, modernism, postmodernism, antimodernism", Thames and Hudson, 2004
- Jonathan Fineberg, "Art Since 1940", Laurence King
- Pietro Gaglianò, "Memento", Postmedia Books, 2016
- Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, "Art in Theory, 1900-2000", Blackwell 2002
- Tracey Warr, edited by, "The Artist's Body", Phaidon, London 2000 (reference only)
- Claire Bishop, "Artificial Hells. Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship", Verso, London 2010 (reference only)

6. GRADING POLICY AND EVALUATION PROCEDURES

Your final grade will be based on the following percentages:

- 30% Attendance/Class participation
- 25% Home assignments
- 10% Mid-term paper
- 10% Mid-term exam
- 10% Final Paper
- 15% Final exam

The following grading system will be observed:

- A Excellent 4.0 (grade points awarded) 95% percentage of 100%
- A- 3.7 (90% to 94%)
- B+ 3.3 (87% to 89%)
- B Above Average 3.0 (83% to 86%)
- B- 2.7 (80% to 82%)
- C+ 2.3 (77% to 80%)
- C Average 2.0 (73% to 76%)
- C- 1.7 (70% to 72%)
- D Below Average 1.0 (60% to 69%)
- F Failure 0.0 (59% and below)
- W Withdrawal 0.0

7. PLAGIARISM AND COPYING

SRISA severally condemns ignorant plagiarism and copying during examinations. Any student that makes use of words or ideas taken from another person's work without properly citing credit for the specific purpose of deceiving their professor will receive an automatic "F" on that assignment or exam. Should the offense be repeated, the student will receive an automatic "F" in the class.

8. EXAMS

There are mid-term and final exams for this course. No make-ups are admitted for the exams and the dates of the exams cannot be changed for any reason. If a student is absent for the mid-term exam the final grade will be lowered by one full letter grade, if a student is absent for the final exam the final grade will be an "F".

9. ATTENDANCE AND BEHAVIOR POLICY

Students are required to attend all classes. If you miss class without an excused absence your grade will be lowered by one letter grade for each unexcused absence. If you are ill you should obtain a doctor's note in order to receive an excused absence. Missing more than four classes will result in an "F" on your transcript.

- Excused absences require a doctor's note or a written note from the Director.
- Tardiness: After 20 minutes into class time, students are considered absent.
- Students who leave 20 minutes before class time ends will be considered absent.
- Arriving in class unprepared to work is considered an unexcused absence.
- The use of cellular phones is prohibited during class time.
- Students are expected to participate in class, act responsibly, and behave properly while on the school premises.
- Classrooms are to be left in order and clean.
- Students must take care of equipment and materials and promptly report any damage and/or loss.
- Students should not be having breakfast during class.

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10. COURSE CALENDAR

Week 1

Introduction to the course.

The meaning of what we call Contemporary Art.

The crisis of traditional languages and of the role of the artist at the turn of 20th century.

The European Avant-gardes: Italian Futurism, Dadaism.

Marcel Duchamp and the aesthetics of the ready-made.

1st home assignment: a short paper (about 500 words)

Week 2

The art scene in USA along the first half of 20th century

The Armory Show and the arrival of European artists.

The totalitarianisms in Europe and the degenerated art.

Surrealism.

The Dawn of Abstract Expressionism and its derivations.

Discussion about the 1st home assignment

Week 3

Abstract Expressionism:

The gestural side, The Color Field Painting, Post Painterly Abstraction, Hard edge Painting

Visit to an exhibition

Week 4

The European way to abstract painting: the Informalism.

Week 5

Other European Masters in 40's, 50's and 60's

Dubuffet, Burri, Fontana

Week 6

The Turn: Artist and theorists at the Black Mountain College.
John Cage and the first Happening.
New Dada.

Week 7

Visit to the exhibition at Secci Gallery
Midterm Deadline

Week 8

Break

Week 9

Art and Politics in Europe in 50's and 60's
Fluxus in Europe and in USA.
Artist lecture

Week 10

The Performance Art.
3rd Home assignment

Week 11

Pop Art
Nouveau Realisme and Arte Povera
Visit to Museo del Novecento
Discussion about the home assignment

Week 12

Minimalism
Conceptual Art
Introduction to final assignment.

Week 13

Land Art.
Postmodernism; Neo-Expressionism; Transavanguardia

Week 14

After the Berlin Wall Crash-down.
How the Art world changed.

Week 15

Final

11. ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

SRISA strives to foster an all-inclusive learning environment that best caters to its students' needs. While faculty frequently work one-on-one with students, there are some situations in which special accommodations are required. Should a student have any academic accommodations regarding test taking or otherwise, they must present an official letter from their home University to the SRISA Director within the first week of class stating the accommodations.

12. DISCLAIMER

This Syllabus may be amended as the course proceeds. You will be notified of any changes.