Introduction to Critical Art Theory

**Course code: Art 273/Art 573**

**Semester and year: Spring 2020**

**Day and time: Monday 18:30-21:15**

**Instructor: Dr. Tomáš Hříbek, Phd.**

**Instructor contact:** [**tomas.hribek@aauni.edu**](mailto:tomas.hribek@aauni.edu)**,** [**hribek@flu.cas.cz**](mailto:hribek@flu.cas.cz)

**Consultation hours: 18:00-18:30 and by appointment**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Credits US/ECTS** | 3/6 | **Level** | Choose an item. |
| **Length** | 15 weeks | **Pre-requisite** | Choose an item. |
| **Contact hours** | 42 hours | **Course type** | Bachelor, Master |

# Course Description

This course will introduce students to a range of critical theories from the early modern to the contemporary times. Some of the texts we shall be studying have been influential in a variety of humanistic disciplines, but we shall focus on their uses in the study of visual arts. We shall also examine the limitations of each theory that we shall study.

**2. Student Learning Outcomes**

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

* Identify and articulate the salient critical-theoretical points.
* Analyze artworks in the language of the modern critical theories of art.
* Apply the theoretical tools to art practices, either in the form of critical art writing or art practice.
* Improve their academic writing skills specifically by adopting the language of critical theories of art.
* Create works of art that incorporate the concerns of the critical theories of art (creating a work of art is acceptable as a substitute for an essay from art students – see further sections 4, 5 and 6 below).

# Reading Material

## Required Materials

* Donald Preziosi, *The Art of Art History, A Critical Anthology*. New Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009
* Several additional texts shall be available online and/or photocopies.

## Recommended Materials

* Anne D’Alleva, *Methods and Theories of Art History*. London: Laurence King Publishers, 2009
* Charles Harrison, Paul Wood & Jason Gaiger (eds.), *Art in Theory 1815-1900: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998.
* Charles Harrison & Paul Wood (eds.), *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003

# Teaching methodology

Background information about the texts, their context, and relevant artworks, will be provided by means of PowerPoint presentations. However, the main focus of the course is on a classroom discussion of the assigned texts, and their application to a wide range of works of art. Students will also be encouraged to visit on their own art museums and exhibits, and use their knowledge of the critical theories in interpreting art. Art students will test the acquired theoretical knowledge through creating artworks specifically for the class.

# Course Schedule

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Class Agenda** |
| Feb 10 | **Topic:** Introduction  **Description:** An overview of different theories of art and its history |
| Feb 17 | **Topic:** Art as History  **Description:** Art writing before art history  **Reading:** Vasari, excerpt from *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, Winckelmann, “Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture”, Davis, “Winckelmann Divided: Mourning and the Death of Art History”, Baxandall, excerpt from *Patterns of Intention* |
| Feb 24 | **Topic:** Aesthetics  **Description:** Classical aesthetics as the source of modern art history  **Reading:** Kant, “What is an Enlightenment?”, Kant, excerpts from *The Critique of Judgement*, Hegel, excerpt from *Philosophy of Fine Art*, Rodowick, “Impure Mimesis, or The Ends of the Aesthetic” |
| Mar 02 | **Topic:** Style  **Description:** The early history of art as an evolution of styles  **Reading:** Wölfflin, exceprt from *Principles of Art History*, Summers, “‘Form’, Nineteenth-Century Metaphysics, and the Problem of Art Historical Description”, Gombrich, “Style” |
| Mar 09 | **Topic:** Anthropology as Art History  **Description:** History of art as a set of solutions to common problems  **Reading:** Riegl, “Leading Characteristics of the Late Roman Kunswollen”, Warburg, “Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America”, Iversen, “Retrieving Warburg’s Tradition”  **Assignments/deadlines:** |
| Mar 16 | **Topic:** Iconography and Semiology  **Description:** The study of pictures as texts  **Reading:** Panofsky, “Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art”, Damisch, “Semiotics and Iconography”, Bal and Bryson, “Semiotics and Art History: A Discussion of Context and Senders”  **Assignments/deadlines:** |
| Mar 23 | **Topic:** Formalism and Minimalism  **Description:** Art as form and art as a mere object  **Reading:** Greenberg, “Modernist Painting”, Morris, “Notes on Sculpture”, Fried, “Art and Objecthood”  Mid-term exam in class |
| Mar 30 | **Mid-term break** |
| Apr 06 | **Topic:** Critical Theory and Cultural Materialism  **Description:** On the material preconditions of cultural production  **Reading:** Adorno and Horkheimer, “Enlightenment as Mass Deception”, Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproducibility”, Mitchell, “The Rhetoric of Iconoclasm: Marx, Ideology and Fetishism”  **Assignments/deadlines:** |
| Apr 13 | **Topic:** Modernism and Postmodernity  **Description:** Theory of art after the demise of modernity  **Reading:** Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field”, Foucault, “What is an Author?”, Owens, “The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism”  **Assignments/deadlines:** |
| Apr 20 | **Topic:** Art and the Unconscious  **Description:** The unconscious sources of artistic creativity  **Reading:** Freud, “the Uncanny”, Freud, “Fetishism”, Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”  **Assignments/deadlines:** |
| Apr 27 | **Topic:** Art and Truth  **Description:** The ontological  **Reading:** Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art”, Schapiro, “The Still-Life as a Personal Object—A Note on Heidegger and van Gogh”, Derrida, “Restitution of the Truth in Pointing [*Pointure*]”  **Assignments/deadlines:** |
| May 04 | **Topic:** The Gendered Subject  **Description:**  **Reading:** Salomon, “The Art Historical Canon: Sins of Omission”, Kelly and Smith, “No Essential Femininity”, Jones, “Postfeminism, Feminist Pleasures, and Embodied Theories of Art”  **Assignments/deadlines:** |
| May 11 | **Topic:** Queerness  **Description:** Beyond heteronormativity in art theory  **Reading:** Riviere, “Womanliness as Masquerade”, Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory”, Doyle, “Queer Wallpaper”  **Assignments/deadlines:** |
| May 18 | **Topic:** Postcolonialism and the Other  **Description:**  **Reading:** Mitchell, “Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order”, Duncan, “The Art Museum as Ritual”, Coombes, “Inventing the ‘Postcolonial’: Hybridity and Constituency in Contemporary Curating”  **Assignments/deadlines:** |
| May 25 | **Topic:** Concluding discussion and presentation of artworks created by art students.  **Description:**  Final exam in class |

# Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignment** | **Workload (average)** | **Weight in Final Grade** | **Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes** | **Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes\*** |
| Attendance and Class Participation | 42 | 10% |  | 2 |
| Mid-term test |  | 25% | (see academic outcomes) | 1 |
| Final exam |  | 25% | (see academic outcomes) | 1 |
| Essay/artwork |  | 40% | (see academic outcomes) | 1 |
| **TOTAL** | **150** | **100%** |  |  |

\*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

# Detailed description of the assignments

***Exams***

**Assessment breakdown**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assessed area** | **Percentage** |
| Accuracy of knowledge | 100% |

## Essay

**Assessment breakdown**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assessed area** | **Percentage** |
| Accuracy of exposition | 40% |
| Critical analysis | 30% |
| Composition and structure | 20% |
| Citations and references | 10% |

# General Requirements and School Policies

## General requirements

All coursework is governed by AAU’s academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules available in the Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work.

## Electronic communication and submission

The university and instructors shall only use students’ university email address for communication. It is strongly recommended that any email communication between students and instructors take place in NEO LMS.

Each e-mail sent to an instructor that is about a new topic (meaning not a reply to an original email) shall have a new and clearly stated subject and shall have the course code in the subject, for example: “COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question”.

All electronic submissions are carried out through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS.

## Attendance

Attendance is required. Students who are absent 35 percent of classes will be failed (or administratively withdrawn from the course if most absences are excused). Students might also be marked absent if they miss a significant part of a class (by arriving late or leaving early) as specified in the syllabus.

## Absence excuse and make-up options

Should a student be absent from classes for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters), s/he must submit to the Assistant Dean an Absence Excuse Form supplemented with documents providing reasons for the absence. The form and documents must be submitted within one week of the absence. If possible, it is recommended the instructor be informed of the absence in advance. Should a student be absent during the add/drop period due to a change in registration this will be an excused absence if s/he submits an Absence Excuse Form along with the finalized add/drop form.

Assignments missed due to unexcused absences cannot be made up which may result in a decreased or failing grade as specified in the syllabus.

Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean are entitled to make up assignments and exams provided their nature allows for a make-up. Students are responsible for contacting their instructor within one week of the date the absence was excused to arrange for make-up options.

## Late work: No late submissions will be accepted – please follow the deadlines.

## Electronic devices

Electronic devices (phones, tablets, laptops…) may be used only for class-related activities (taking notes, looking up related information, etc.). Any other use will result in the student being marked absent and/or being expelled from the class. No electronic devices may be used during tests or exams.

## Eating is allowed during classes, provided it is not disturbing to either instructor or students.

## Cheating and disruptive behavior

If a student engages in disruptive or other conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment of an institution of learning, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the activity or for the day and shall report the behavior to the Dean.

Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating (e.g. whispering or passing notes) will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misbehavior the student will be expelled from the exam and the exam will be marked as failed.

## Plagiarism and Academic Tutoring Center

Plagiarism is “the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one’s own original work.” (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Random House, New York, 1993)

Turnitin’s White Paper ‘The Plagiarism Spectrum’ (available at http://go.turnitin.com/paper/plagiarism-spectrum) identifies 10 types of plagiarism ordered from most to least severe:

1. CLONE: An act of submitting another’s work, word-for-word, as one’s own.

2. CTRL-C: A written piece that contains significant portions of text from a single source without alterations.

3. FIND–REPLACE: The act of changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source in a paper.

4. REMIX: An act of paraphrasing from other sources and making the content fit together seamlessly.

5. RECYCLE: The act of borrowing generously from one’s own previous work without citation; To self-plagiarize.

6. HYBRID: The act of combining perfectly cited sources with copied passages—without citation—in one paper.

7. MASHUP: A paper that represents a mix of copied material from several different sources without proper citation.

8. 404 ERROR: A written piece that includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources

9. AGGREGATOR: The “Aggregator” includes proper citation, but the paper contains almost no original work.

10. RE-TWEET: This paper includes proper citation, but relies too closely on the text’s original wording and/or structure.

As the minimum policy the types of plagiarism from 1 through 8 results in the failing grade from the assignment and must be reported to the Dean. The Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Allegations of bought papers and intentional or consistent plagiarism always entail disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU.

If unsure about technical aspects of writing, students are encouraged to consult their papers with the tutors of the AAU Academic Tutoring Center. For more information and/or to book a tutor, please contact the ATC at: http://atc.simplybook.me/sheduler/manage/event/1/.

## Students with disabilities

Students with disabilities are asked to contact their instructor as soon as possible to discuss reasonable accommodation.

# Grading Scale

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Letter Grade** | **Percentage\*** | **Description** |
| A | 95 – 100 | **Excellent performance**. The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject. |
| A– | 90 – 94 |
| B+ | 87 – 89 | **Good performance**. The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort. |
| B | 83 – 86 |
| B– | 80 – 82 |
| C+ | 77 – 79 | **Fair performance**. The student has acquired an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has not succeeded in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work. |
| C | 73 – 76 |
| C– | 70 – 72 |
| D+ | 65 – 69 | **Poor**. The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student’s work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives. |
| D | 60 – 64 |
| F | 0 – 59 | **Fail**. The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject matter covered in the course. |

\* Decimals should be rounded to the nearest whole number.

Prepared by and when:

Tomáš Hříbek, 29. 11. 2019

Approved by and when: