

Contemporary Issues in the Visual Arts (Spring 2018)

ARTS 724. Mondays, 6 – 9 PM
Klapper Hall 672 and various locations

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Why would someone make an all black painting? Who cares if the Nike *swoosh* or the Google logo is more recognizable to most Americans than a map of the Middle East? Must everyone in a democracy have an equal right to his or her own cultural expression? Just how can the artist relate to contemporary society with its rapidly accelerating technology, crowd-sourced imagery and click-happy attention deficit disorder? Is there such a thing as art at all? Or oneself for that matter? This research seminar examines these issues as well as questions of ethics, beauty, cultural inclusion, and critical resistance among other topics including the transformation of art into a global marketplace where a few artists command huge sums of money, and the vast majority are ignored, and yet still expected to help maintain the existing art system as is, no questions asked. Tailored to the needs of working artists as well as curators and historians this seminar is structured around weekly readings and lectures. Students are responsible to read, enter into discussion, engage in their own research and present their insights by leading one class discussion on a selected date.

Art as History? Art as Thinking? Art as Research? Art as Work?

This seminar seeks to:

1. Build scaffolding for engaging with debates about contemporary art and culture.
2. Create a space of research to more deeply explore ones practice & ideas.
3. Provide a basic overview of the discourse & terminology of art theory.

This seminar asks:

What does it feel like to think?

This seminar wants you to find X:

- What is the value of X for you?
- What system or machine will you build to derive the value of X?
- How will your X machine morph over the course of the semester and beyond?

REQUIREMENTS

Your participation in all class discussions is essential. Always have at least one specific question ready about each week's readings linked to a specific paragraph in the assigned text.

An oral presentation/project on your research topic (to be scheduled starting mid-semester) and a ten to fifteen page, footnoted research paper (turned-in end of semester).

RULES OF CONDUCT

1. More than three unexcused absences will result in a grade point loss.
2. No more than three unexcused lateness allowed without penalties
3. Cell phone use and emailing are not permitted during class time.

GRADE COMPOSITION

1. Attendance and engagement in class discussions 50%
2. Research project 50%

THE SYLLABUS

01/29: Week One: *Introductions & Other Minds: Portia & homo economicus:*

We meet at the classroom and introduce ourselves to each other, describe our interests and expectations for the class, and agree on how to accomplish these goals over the course of the seminar. Dates will be selected for your presentation (see c. below.)

Readings for first session:

Peter Fleming excerpts from *The Death of Homo Economicus: Work, Debt and the Myth of Endless Accumulation* [Theater of Loss](#)

Watch video: [Fleming speaking](#)

Listen to this story: Excerpt of *Children of Time* by Adrian Tchaikovsky: Audio Player

02/5 Week Two: *The Artist as Public Enemy?* One would think a scholar dead many hundred years would have little to offer contemporary culture, but think again. Socrates, according to Plato, wanted to ban artists from his ideal notion of the Republic and we want to know today, is there any kind of culture that should perhaps be excluded from society or civilization?

Readings for next week: [Plato Book Ten \(selection\)](#)

Meet at Trump Tower: [735 5th Avenue Avenue at 57th Street in the Public Garden space downstairs.](#)

Reading for **TWO** Weeks: (in 2 weeks): Beauty and the Sublime [Kant Sublime](#)

02/12 **NO CLASS TODAY**

02/20 Week Three: CLASS IS ON **TUESDAY** This Week Only: Kant: aesthetic of the sublime *Meeting at the Grad Center or nearby* [CUNY Graduate Center](#). (365 5th Ave: details to follow.) **Kant on the Sublime.**

02/26 Week Four: Guest Stephen Wright: Duchamp and the Reverse Readymade

Street Corner meeting: [210 West 14th Street, 5th Floor](#) (where Duchamp kept a studio until death) *Possible meeting spot:* [Jefferson Market Library at 10th Street & 6th AVE](#)

Reading: Stephen Wright: [Towards a Lexicon of Usership](#)

03/5 Week Five: Marx: world viewed upside down/camera obscura: [Trump Tower](#)

Reading: [Marx.Ideology.excerpt.](#)

03/12 Week Six: Meet with curator Olga Kopenkina

Reading: texts by Olga Kopenkina TBD
[Trump Tower](#) OR [60 wall street between Peal and William Streets](#)

03/19 Week Seven: TBD

03/26 Week Eight: TBD

Readings for two weeks from now on April 9 with Kurt Kauper:

David Geers (Peter Rostovsky) "Neo-Modern" 2013 Page 24 of [Golden Age PDF](#)
Selections for Roland Barthes: [The Neutral R. Barthes](#)
"What is Poetry?" by Roman Jakobson [jakobson-what is poetry?](#)
"Art, as Device," Viktor Shklovsky [SHKLOVSKY](#)
See also: Geers blog: <http://spinninggeers.tumblr.com/>

04/2 NO CLASS: SPRING RECESS

04/9 Week Nine: Special Guest Kurt Kauper at MoMA [meet in the Afternoon at 3PM!]

04/16 Week Ten TBD

04/23 Week Eleven: TBD

04/30 Week Twelve: TBD

05/7 Week Thirteen: TBD

Thursday May 10 Art as Social Action book launch [The 8th Floor, Rubin Foundation](#)
17 West 17th Street bet. 5th & 6th Avenues.

Fri, Sat & Sunday May 11 to 13: [Open Engagement at Queens Museum](#)

? **Friday, May 18: POSSIBLE VISIT/FOOD WITH WORKERS ART COALITION**