

**Penn State University – School of Visual Arts**

**Fall 2012**

**ART 411 Contemporary Art Seminar**

**Professor: Eduardo Navas (eduardo@navasse.net)**

**W 06:00P - 09:00P**

**Course Description (As Defined by Penn State – School of Visual Arts)**

This seminar on contemporary art exposes students to artistic practices and to the advanced-level critical discourses accompanying them. It is relevant to all students interested in expanding their knowledge of contemporary art and essential to BFA students who are encouraged to take the course more than once. The only prerequisite for this course is ART 122W. The seminar's intimate format allows for discussions and a convivial examination of the pluralistic expressions of contemporary art while articulating it with theory and criticism.

From an international perspective, this seminar focuses on art since the 1960s. Besides more traditional artistic expressions such as painting, sculpture, photography, installation, performance and video, the course examines networked collaborations before and after the Internet, art and social activism, and a range of new media and new genre artistic practices. The conceptual issues these works raise include among others the dematerialization of the art object, issues of site-specificity and public art, and institutional critique. The course approaches these developments through artists' writings and essays in contemporary theory and criticism. Works of art are presented through videos, power points, films, performances, gallery visits, field trips, and discussions of related essays. Critical "reading" includes an extensive introduction to the work's historical contexts, readings from primary source materials, and the exploration of critical methods of analysis. From a cross-disciplinary perspective—including historical, esthetic and philosophical approaches—this course examines principles, assumptions, and tensions inherent in artist's works as well as in our responses to them.

**Class Structure**

Class sessions consist of discussions of assigned texts. Student(s) will select texts from the reading list and will lead the discussion in corresponding class sessions. Student evaluation is also based on short written papers such as an exhibition, or an interview, participation in class discussions, and a creative project (ranging from a web site to an installation, artist's book, or a performance), which must reflect a general understanding of the issues addressed in the course.

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. Conceptually map and critique specific theoretical frameworks of cultural criticism in relation to contemporary cultural production.
2. Organize and present thoughts in a clear, systematic, and convincing manner through written and oral presentation.
3. Engage cultural production and criticism intertextually and discuss the cultural contexts to which they speak.

4. Focus a critical context in which to situate art practice.

### **A Note on Plagiarism**

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. A student who commits plagiarism will be reported to the office of the visual arts. The student's behavior will be taken very seriously and dealt with according to the guidelines provided by Penn State University – School of Visual Arts. To avoid plagiarism, please cite your sources when appropriate.

### **Required Readings**

To be given throughout the semester. See list in the semester schedule.

### **Course Requirements**

Please note that final grades are dependent upon consistent performance in all course requirements.

- Attend every class session. (See attendance below for more details.)
- Read all material on time and participate in class discussion.
- Text: Write a paper or interview an artist. The text can be no longer than 1500 words, and must be developed in reaction to the readings and/or artwork discussed in class.
- Art Project: Develop an art project which reflects some of the issues discussed in class.
- There are no make-ups. Please check with me for possible exceptions. Not consulting with me prior to the dates when assignments are due will lead to an automatic F. Final papers cannot be late—no exceptions.

### **Grading**

- Attendance 20%
- Class Participation (affects attendance) 20%
- Growth and Development 10%
- Paper 25%
- Final Project 25%

Total 100%

### **Grade Scale**

Letter grade assignments are as follows:

- 94-100 = A
- 90-93 = A-
- 87-89 = B+
- 84-86 = B
- 80-83 = B-
- 77-79 = C+
- 74-76 = C
- 70-73 = C-
- 60-69 = D
- 0-59 = F

### **Attendance**

- Three Absences = F, Three tardies (15 minutes late or early departure) = one absence.
- One Absence will take away 1.5% from attendance grade and 1.5% from class participation.
- There are no excused absences unless it is an extreme case. Please check with me for exceptions.

### **Office hours: Wednesdays and Thursdays, by appointment**

### **Semester Schedule**

*Please note that I will provide images directly related to the theoretical texts listed below. Students who lead the conversation should also provide images to support their presentation. The texts listed below will also be complemented by artist writings, chosen by the students or me.*

#### **Week 1:**

**Wednesday, August 29, 2012**

Introduction to class

#### **Week 2:**

**Wednesday, September 5, 2012**

Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," *Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978).

Giorgio Agamben, "What is An Appartus?" *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays* (Stanford, Stanford Press, 2009).

#### **Week 3:**

**Wednesday, September 12, 2012**

Eduardo Navas, "Regressive and Reflexive Mashups in Sampling Culture," Stefan Sonvilla-Weiss, ed. *Mashup Cultures* (New York: Springer Press, 2010).

#### **Week 4:**

**Wednesday, September 19, 2012**

Theodor Adorno, Excerpts from *Aesthetic Theory* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 1997).

#### **Week 5:**

**Wednesday, September 26, 2012**

Burger, Peter. "On the Problem of the Autonomy of Art in Bourgeois Society." Franscina, Francis and Jonathan Harris eds. *Art in Modern Culture: an Anthology of Critical Texts*. New York: Phaidon Press, 1992.

#### **Week 6:**

**Wednesday, October 3, 2012**

Rosalind E. Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: MIT Press, 1999).

#### **Week 7:**

**Wednesday, October 10, 2012**

Fredric Jameson, "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1991).

**Week 8:**

**Wednesday, October 17, 2012**

Jurgen Habermas, "Modernity: an incomplete project," *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Hal Foster, Editor (New York: The New York Press, 1983).  
Excerpts from the *Postmodern Condition* by Jean-Francois Lyotard (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 1984).

**Week 9:**

**Wednesday, October 24, 2012**

N. Katherine Hayles, "The Materiality of Informatics," *How We Became Posthuman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).  
Excerpts from *The Language of New Media* by Lev Manovich (Massachusetts: MIT Press 2000).

**Week 10:**

**Wednesday, October 31, 2012**

Mark B. N. Hansen, "Between Body and Image: On the Newness of New Media Art," *New Philosophy for New Media* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2004).

**Week 11:**

**Wednesday, November 7, 2012**

Jacques Attali, "Listening," *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (Minneapolis and London, Minnesota Press: 1977)

**Week 12:**

**Wednesday, November 14, 2012**

Marc Augé, "From Places to Non-places," *Non-Places* (New York: Verso, 1995).

**Week 13:**

**Wednesday, November 21 2012**

Eduardo Navas, excerpts from *Remix Theory: The Aesthetics of Sampling* (New York: Springer, 2012).

**Week 14:**

**Wednesday, April 28, 2012**

**Thanksgiving**

**Week 15:**

**Wednesday, December 5, 2012**

Discuss final art projects

**Week 16:**

**Wednesday, December 12, 2012**

Discuss final art projects | Term paper due.

**Week 17, December 19, 2012:**

Final Project due, see Penn State's Final Schedule