

Department of Cultural & Religious Studies
Spring Semester 2020
CULS 5401 A/B: Contemporary Arts & Cultural Interactivity



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Room 307
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Office hours Mondays 3pm-5pm

CULS 5401: Contemporary Art & Cultural Interactivity

Section A Wed 1:30pm-4:15pm (AIT G04)

Section B Thursday 18:45-21:30 (ELB 203)

This course will study contemporary art systems and institutions as cultural forms within the broader 'cultural ecology' of modern cities such as Hong Kong. It will consider the development of post-formalist art forms and time-based media such as installation art, digital media art, video art and performance art and how these art forms are employed

within traditional art spaces, public spaces, social media platforms and activist movements.

The aim of the course is also to introduce students to a general historical framework of contemporary art with a focus on dialogic aesthetics and participatory art forms. The students will learn about movements and concepts and how to apply these discourses by researching Hong Kong artists as well as traditional and grassroots institution and cultural precincts. Finally, students will contribute to artistic discourses by curating an innovative work of contemporary art and artist residency. The course will outline institutional and promotional structures of art curating and the benefits of cultural interactivity and exchange.

Credit Units: 3

Course Duration: one semester

Medium of Instruction: English

Teaching/learning activities:

Lectures, tutorials, field trips & online activities

Assessment Details:

1. Class participation, attendance and in-class discussion. This includes short responses to weekly readings, posted **before each class** on the Blackboard news forum. Responses are revised and compiled at end of semester **30% (Individual Assignment)**
2. MIDTERM Life in Art/Art in Life **30 % (Group Research Presentations Week 7. Individual Essays: Week 9)**
3. FINAL My Favorite Artist in Residency **40% (Group Presentations and Group Essay Due week 13/14)**

Learning Activities:

The course combines theoretical lectures with the viewing of documentation of art works that support and reinforce the topic of discussion for each week.

Students are asked to actively respond to the weekly readings and course materials. Besides the lecture slots, there will be designated discussion periods in which all students should participate.

Students are required to complete the readings and post a weekly response before each class.

In addition to the weekly readings, students will conduct research and planning for their mid-term and final projects and oral presentations independently and in groups. Some of the class sessions will be devoted to guided workshops to prepare these assignments

Special aspects of this course:

1. Some of the sessions will contain a showing and discussion of sexually explicit materials, which may be offensive or uncomfortable to students. Students who are bothered by these materials can talk to the teacher and are allowed to leave the classrooms during such screenings.
2. Students are asked to turn off their cellphones in class and to refrain from private activities on tablets, laptops and other computer devices. Students will only be allowed to use electronic devices for preparing groupwork or for note-taking.

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of the course, you will be able to:

1. Explain the development of contemporary art genres and artistic technologies locally and globally.
2. Identify the key characteristics of post-formalist art forms and dialogic aesthetics within contemporary art
3. Discuss particular artists and artworks, using the discourses of art and cultural criticism.
4. Apply ethnographic research methods to observe and study the work of contemporary artists and to initiate exchanges with artists.

5. Describe the structures of diversified contemporary art institutions, art works in public spaces, and dynamic networks and media platforms of contemporary art.

Session Outline and Readings

Week 1. Jan 8/9 Introduction

This session introduces the themes, assignments and learning activities of the course. It also introduces an anthropological theory of art viewing as social ritual in which various elements of museum display and audience participation play a key role.

Tutorial:

Students introduces themselves and their interest in contemporary art

Week 2. Jan 15/16: Can Art be Free of Commodity Desire?

This session introduces a theory of an invisible art market in how it permeates and structures art galleries. It also explains structures of neo-liberalism, consumerism and commodity desire in art and how it applies specifically in mainland China.

Case Studies:

Verbeke Foundation, Belgium
Superdollfie Doll Museum, Kyoto
Charlemagne Palestine
Alake Shilling

Respond to the Lisa Rofel Reading (before class)

Rofel, Lisa, *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality and Public Culture* (Duke University Press, 2007)

Tutorial:

Students comment on each other's writings and get feedback on their own writings.

Week 3. Jan 22/23 Conceptualism, Post-Formalism, Social Sculpture

This session introduces students to the waves of conceptualism, post-formalist art form and social sculpture. The work and philosophy of Joseph Beuys and his theory of social sculpture will be related to Chinese contemporary artists such as Mokhallad Rasam, Anna Witt and Ai Wei Wei.

Case Studies:

Joseph Beuys
Mokhallad Rasam
Ai Wei Wei

Homework:

Respond to the readings (before class)

Barnaby Martin, Hanging Man, *The Arrest of Ai Wei Wei* (Faber and Faber, 2013)

Vivienne Chow, 'Twelve works of art that chart the emotional upheavals of the Hong Kong protests', Quartz, dec 31 2019

<https://qz.com/1773957/12-works-of-art-to-feel-the-emotions-of-the-hong-kong-protests/>

Tutorial:

Student respond to each other's writings and hold an in-class debate

Week 4. Jan 29/30 Lunar New Year Vacation

Week 5. Feb 5/6 Dialogic Aesthetics and Midterm Workshop

This session will explain Grant Kester's theory of dialogic aesthetics and participatory art works as well as notions of network/community and communication in contemporary art.

Homework:

Work in groups of 4 and bring to class to examples of Hong-Kong based contemporary artists whom you would like to interview and write about for your mid-term assignments.

Take a look at the midterm assignment brief posted under course documents and at the assignment from previous semesters located at <http://www.vcs.crs.cuhk.edu.hk/cont-cul>

Week 6. Feb 12/13 The Body and Sexuality in Contemporary Art

In the session will learn how body artists and feminists have applied the theory of dialogic aesthetics. We will debate the unique qualities of the body in how it triggers responses while revealing artistic subjectivity and ideology.

Case Studies:

Carolee Schneemann

Homework:

Respond to Amelia Jones Reading (before class):

Amelia Jones, *Body Art. Performing the Subject*, ch1 "Postmodernism, Subjectivity, and Body Art: A Trajectory." (University of Minnesota Press, 1998)

Tutorial:

Students respond to each other's writings and hold an in-class debate
Feedback session about mid-term assignments

Week 7. Feb 19/20 Midterm Presentations

Week 8. Feb 26/27 Artist Talk Stewart Home

Week 9. March 4/5 Workshop Final Assignment *My Favorite Artist in Residency* (details will be announced)

Week 10. March 11/12 A Borderless World: Colonialism, Transnationalism and Art Exchange

In this session we will look at a model of art exchange that is based on a colonial paradigm of first-world entrepreneurs who exploit and exhibit colonized people and territory. We will then debate to which extent this historical model has led to new forms of cultural hegemony and lack of localized participation or ethnic diversity art forms within contemporary institutions and art fairs.

Case Studies:

West Africa Museum Tervuren, Belgium
Tropenmuseum Amsterdam
Andrea Stultiens and R. Cannon Griffin, Ebifananyi
Isaac Julien

Reading:

Masao Miyoshi, "A Borderless World"
Emma Chubb, "Small Boats, Slave Ship; or, Isaac Julien and the Beauty of Implied Catastrophe"

<http://artjournal.collegeart.org/?p=7197>

Homework

Respond to Masao Miyoshi Reading (before class)

Tutorial: Students read each other's postings and hold an in-class debate

Week 11. March 18/19 No Class

Week 12. March 25/26 Artist Talk Ju Anqi

Week 13 April ½ Art in the Future Network, Social Media

In this session we will think about social media platforms as novel networks studying, producing, curating, exhibiting and art works. We will also discuss new notions of community and affect that go beyond the historical paradigm of post-formalism.

Homework:

Respond to the Brian Reading (before class)

Brian Holmes, Affectivist Manifesto

<http://brianholmes.wordpress.com/2008/11/16/the-affectivist-manifesto/>

Tutorial:

Students read each other's comments and hold an in-class debate

Feedback session final assignments

Week 13 April 8/9 Student Presentations Final Assignments

Week 14. April 15/16 Student Presentations Final Assignments

Honesty in Academic Work: A Guide For Students and Teachers

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on honesty in academic work submitted by students, and adopts a policy of *zero tolerance* on cheating and plagiarism. Any related offence will lead to disciplinary action including termination of studies at the University.

Students must submit their assignments via the Webpage of the Chinese University Plagiarism Identification Engine (CUPIDE)

<http://cupide.cse.cuhk.edu.hk/student> .

Although cases of cheating or plagiarism are rare at the University, everyone should make himself/herself familiar with the content of this website and thereby help avoid any practice that would not be acceptable.

Section 1 What is plagiarism [

<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/p01.htm>

Section 2 Proper use of source material

[<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/p02.htm>]

Section 3 Citation styles

[<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/p03.htm>]

Section 4 Plagiarism and copyright violation

[<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/p04.htm>]

Section 5 CUHK regulations on honesty in academic work

[<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/p05.htm>]

Section 6 CUHK disciplinary guidelines and procedures

[<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/p06.htm>]

Section 7 Guide for teachers and departments

[<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/p07.htm>]

Section 8 Recommended material to be included in course outlines

[<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/p08.htm>]

Section 9 Recommended declaration to be included in every assignment handed in

[<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/p09.htm>]

Section 10 Electronic submission of term papers