



AHST 2331.002
(20621)
Understanding Art
Dr. Charissa N. Terranova
Spring 2012
Tu-Th 2:30-3:45
Class Location: JO 4.102
Office Location: JO 3.920
Office Hours: Thursday 4:00-6:00
terranova@utdallas.edu

"Art is not a mirror held up to reality,
but a hammer with which to shape it."

Bertolt Brecht

Lawrence Wiener, Matter Caused to Cease to Function As It Had, Installation view, Regen Projects, Los Angeles, 1995

Description:

This course offers an introduction to art as both object and experience. We will be guided this semester by the fundamental thesis that art is a means of **critical thinking**. We think through art as it relates us to other people and the rest of the world. We think through art as it is an object, experience, discourse, market, and belief system. Under the umbrella of "critical thinking," the course is organized according to the following themes: form, media, idea, heritage, history, style, "-ism," modernism, postmodernism, the contemporary, power, institution, and business. Your grade is based on three components: note-taking; short written assignments; and two short exams.

Goals:

- general familiarity with and comfort around "art"
- to think critically about the world by way of art
- ability to identify salient characteristics of a given 'work' of art
- clarity of thinking and writing about works of art
- familiarize students with public institutions of art
- familiarize students with art criticism
- habituate engagement with public institutions of art
- habituate close and careful readings of text
- habituate close and careful readings of works of art
- habituate keen phenomenological awareness (understanding through the five senses) of surrounding environment

Requirements:

Students are required to attend every class, complete all assignments, and participate with candor and verve in class. Students are allowed two unexcused absences after which each absence will result in the lowering of the final grade by one full letter. Students with illnesses that require extended periods of absence are encouraged to officially withdraw from class. **Under no circumstances do I accept late assignments. All written assignments must be printed and submitted in class on paper: I do not accept digital documents.**

Required Textbook:

1. John Berger. *Ways of Seeing*. New York: Penguin Classics, 1990.

Readings available at DOCUTEK:

The URL for the page with the electronic course reserves is:

<http://utdallas.docutek.com/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=1228>

Password: revision

1. Walter Benjamin. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." (1936) available at: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm>
2. Guy Debord. "Separation Perfected" and "The Commodity Spectacle." *Society of the Spectacle*. Detroit: Black & Red, 1983. 11-24; 25-34.

Graded Assignments and Exams:

1. Notebook: In this class you must take hand-written notes during each meeting. **Computers and hand-held devices – laptops, phones, ipads, ipods, MP3 devices – are banned. If a student brings a computer or hand-held device to class, it will be removed for the duration of class.** You will be graded twice – for clarity and contents – on your hand-written notebooks. Due dates: February 28 and May 3.

2. Written Assignments and In-Class Grading Exercises: There are five 200-word written assignments. The TA and I will grade the first two. You will grade the final three papers in class; thus, your active and critical-minded participation in these grading exercises is part of your own final grade.

The writing in your papers should be analytical, descriptive, and in the third-person voice. Please do not write sentences starting with "I think..." or "I believe..." Each assignment should be typed in 12 pt. font and double-spaced with standard margins.

Under no circumstances do I accept late assignments. All written assignments must be printed and submitted in class on paper: I do not accept digital documents. If you plagiarize, you will be expelled from the class and receive an "F" for the course.

Due Tuesday January 31: Written Assignment #1 Please summarize the primary ideas of John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*.

Due Tuesday February 14: Written Assignment #2 This assignment requires you to go to the Dallas Museum of Art, 1717 North Harwood Street, Dallas, TX 75201 to see the exhibition, *Fashion World of Jean-Paul Gaultier*. Please explain the relationship between art and everyday culture in this exhibition. Concepts of importance: fashion, haute couture, kitsch, holographic/video projection, high culture versus low culture. Take note that the exhibition closes February 12. Further details on admission:

- Students (with a current school ID): \$5
- FREE First Tuesday of each month (Special ticket prices may apply to exhibitions)
- Thursday Nights, 5–9 p.m., are FREE for students with a current school ID

Due Tuesday March 6: Written Assignment #3 After reading and discussing in class Walter Benjamin's essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," please choose one quote or passage from the essay and write about its significance to the entire text and, if pertinent, everyday life. Concepts of importance: authenticity, originality, aura, reproduction, revolution. The quote you choose should appear at the top

of the first page of your essay. Please be prepared to grade a colleague's paper in class with guidance of the professor and TA.

Due Tuesday April 3: Written Assignment #4 This assignment requires you to go to North Park Mall, 8687 North Central Expressway, Dallas, TX 75225 and look at the large red-orange sculpture, Mark di Suvero's *Ad Astra* (2005). In your paper, you should describe the work and briefly explain its function in the mall. Concepts of importance: consumerism, place-making, and art in public space. Please include a photograph of the sculpture with your paper. Please be prepared to grade a colleague's paper in class with guidance of the professor and TA.

Due Thursday May 3: Written Assignment #5 After our discussion of the Guy Debord reading, choose one quote or passage in the text and write 200 words about its significance to the entire text and, if pertinent, everyday life. The quote you choose should appear at the top of the first page of your essay. Concepts of importance: spectacle, consumerism, separation, alienation, commodity, Marx. Please be prepared to grade a colleague's paper in class with guidance of the professor and TA.

3. Exams: There are two short exams in this class, a mid-term and final. Both tests require students to memorize works of art by title, name of the artist or architect, and the date (within five years) in which it was made. The exam will consist of ten slide identification; students will be given a review sheet one week prior to each exam. All slide presentations are loaded weekly to Dr. Terranova's website: www.charissaterranova.com

- Tuesday February 28 regular class time: Mid-Term Exam
- Saturday May 12 2:00 pm: Final Exam

Grading:

Written Assignment #1:	12%
Written Assignment #2:	12%
Written Assignment #3:	12%
Written Assignment #4:	12%
Written Assignment #5:	12%
Notebook Grading #1:	10%
Notebook Grading #2:	10%
Mid-Term Exam:	10%
Final Exam:	10%
TOTAL	100%

Standard UTD policies regarding classroom behavior, religious holidays, withdrawals, etc.:

<http://www.utdallas.edu/deanofstudents/conductguidelines.html>
<http://provost.utdallas.edu/>
<http://www.charissaterranova.com/syllabi/utd-policies.htm>

Schedule:

Tuesday January 17: Introduction, Syllabus, and Defining Terms

Thursday January 19: Art and Critical Thinking
Reading and Discussion: Berger Ch. 1-2

Tuesday January 24: Art and Critical Thinking
Reading and Discussion: Berger Ch. 3-4

Thursday January 26: Art and Critical Thinking
Reading and Discussion: Berger Ch. 5-7

Tuesday January 31 Art and Culture
Written Assignment #1 Due

Thursday February 2 Art and Culture

Tuesday February 7 Art and Culture

Thursday February 9 Art and Culture

Tuesday February 14 Originals, Authenticity, and Reproduction
Reading and Discussion: Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical
Reproduction"
Written Assignment #2 Due

Thursday February 16 Originals, Authenticity, and Reproduction
Reading and Discussion: Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical
Reproduction"
Distribution of Mid-Term Exam Review Sheet

Tuesday February 21: In-Class Film: *Man with a Movie Camera*

Thursday February 23: In-Class Film: *Art 21 Protest*, a PBS documentary on four contemporary
artists

Tuesday February 28: Mid-Term Exam
Notebook Due

Thursday March 1: Architecture/Design

Tuesday March 6
Written Assignment #3 Due
In-Class Grading Exercise

Thursday March 8 Architecture/Design

Tuesday March 13 Spring Break: No Class

Thursday March 15 Spring Break: No Class

Tuesday March 20 Architecture/Design

Thursday March 22 Architecture/Design
In-Class Film Shorts by Charles and Ray Eames

Tuesday March 27 Painting to Minimalism

Thursday March 29 Painting to Minimalism

Tuesday April 3
Written Assignment #4 Due
In-Class Grading Exercise

Thursday April 5 Institutions and Collecting Art

Tuesday April 10 Institutions and Collecting Art
In-Class Film: *Herb and Dorothy* (2008)

Thursday April 12 Modernism

Tuesday April 17 Modernism

Thursday April 19 Modernism

Tuesday April 24 Postmodernism

Thursday April 26 Consumer Spectacle and Art
Reading and Discussion: Guy Debord, "Separation Perfected" and "The Commodity Spectacle"
from the *Society of the Spectacle*

Tuesday May 1 Consumer Spectacle and Art
In-Class Film *Art 21 Consumerism*, a PBS documentary on four contemporary artists

Thursday May 3 Contemporary Art
Written Assignment #4 Due
In-Class Grading Exercise
Notebook Due
Distribution of Final Exam Review Sheet

Saturday May 12 2:00 pm: Final Exam