Contemporary Art (HSAR S223)
Yale College Summer Session 2017
Session B: July 4-August 3, 2017
Tues/Thurs, 1–4.15pm

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Course Description
This seminar surveys art from 1950 to the present, organized around key issues that shaped artistic practice during this period. Students will develop visual analysis skills and we will look closely at a range of media, from painting, sculpture, and photography to video art, performance, and other time-based works. The course covers major artists and movements, primarily in Europe and America, including the legacy of Abstract Expressionism, Pop, Conceptual Art, Minimalism, and Land art. The course will proceed generally chronologically, but the organization, readings, discussion, and assignments will emphasize thematic stakes in order to think carefully about the intersections (and divergences) among different creative practices of the time and contemporaneous social, political, and technological developments. Specific topics include the mediation of perception by technology, concepts of the city, constructions of gender, race, and sexuality, and the global circulation of contemporary images, among others.

The final 75 minutes of each class meeting will be held at the Yale University Art Gallery, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, or the Yale Center for British Art, where encounters with relevant works of art serve as a testing ground for the ideas presented in the readings and discussed in seminar. Object-based inquiry at the museums fosters students’ confidence in discussing contemporary works of art. For the course readings, art historical accounts and critiques will be supplemented with artists’ own writings and art criticism from the period. Through its historical scope and thematic orientation, this course will provide students with a sophisticated understanding of artistic practice in relation to cultural, critical, and sociopolitical developments since the Second World War.

Course Requirements and Assignments

There are no prerequisites for taking this class.

Participation (20%): Attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to come to class having completed all of the assigned reading and prepare to actively engage in discussion, both in the classroom and in the galleries. For each meeting, two students will be assigned to prepare brief, informal comments responding to the assigned readings, in order to help guide class discussion (each student will be responsible for opening class in this manner two times).

Short paper (10%): 4-5 page discussion of an artwork of your choice from the Yale Art Gallery collection, conducting visual analysis and drawing on methods and concepts developed through course readings and discussions. Due in class Thursday, July 13.

Midterm examination (30%). The midterm is comprised of two sections: a comparison section, which asks you to compare a number of art works (the specific works will be given to you); and an essay sections, which asks you to discuss a larger theme that has come up in class (you choose which
artworks you wish to discuss, and will be expected to reference course readings). The aim of this course is to equip you to think critically; to that end, there is no slide ID section on the midterm, as is common in art history exams. However, you will be expected to indicate the title, artist, date, and medium of all the artworks you discuss in the exam. First half of class Thursday, July 20.

Final paper (40%): 8-10 page research paper on a topic of your choice, related to the course material. Topic to be approved in advance by the instructor. Due at start of final class, August 3.

Readings


All other readings will be posted as PDFs to the Yale Canvas server.

Statement on Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the foundation of scholarly community. All assigned work must be completed by the student. Disciplinary action will be taken for any instance of plagiarism, cheating, and improper conduct in violation of Yale College policies. Further resources regarding academic integrity can be found at: http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/advice-students/using-sources/understanding-and-avoiding-plagiarism

Course Schedule

July 4—Introduction
Overview of course; discussion of relevant art historical terms and methods; setting the stage for the postwar period. Visit Yale Art Gallery.

Readings: Art Since 1900, pp. 15–48; 393–398.
Hal Foster, ed., “Questionnaire on ‘The Contemporary,”’ October 130 (Fall 2009). [selections]

July 6—Gesture
“Problems in painting”; off the wall and onto the floor (Jackson Pollock); Abstract Expressionism and Cold War culture. Visit Yale Art Gallery.

July 11—Appropriation
*Pop; neo-Pop; the Pictures Generation. Visit Yale Art Gallery.*

Readings:
*Art Since 1900*, pp. 423-428; 483-487; 513-518.

July 13—Dematerialization
*Conceptual art; relational aesthetics. Visit Yale Art Gallery.*
*Short paper due in class.*

Readings: *Art Since 1900*, pp. 584-603; 614-619.

July 18—Everyday Objects
*Minimalism; post-minimalism and process art; making objects act (from Fluxus to Beuys). Visit Yale Art Gallery.*

Readings: *Art Since 1900*, pp. 494-501; 508-513; 524-529; 536-539.

July 20—Feedback
*Video art; film; expanded cinema; sound art.*
*Midterm exam during first half of class.*

Readings: *Art Since 1900*, pp. 698-703; 712-723.
July 25—Environment  
Land art; the city as artwork; large-scale site-specific installation. Visit Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library.


July 27—Body  
Performance; Judson School circle; feminist critique. Visit Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

Readings: Art Since 1900, 488-493; 502-507; 609-613; 689-693.  

August 1—Performing Identity  
Constructing race, gender, sexuality; feminist critique; global cross-pollination and “the other.” Visit Yale Art Gallery and Yale Center for British Art.

Readings: Art Since 1900, pp. 639-649.  

August 3—Collectivity  
Social practice; institutional critique; art and politics for the contemporary moment; where do we go from here?  
* Final paper due at the beginning of class.

Readings: Art Since 1900, pp. 637-638, 664-669.  
Philippe Dubois, “Trace-Image to Fiction-Image: The Unfolding of Theories of Photography form the ‘80s to the Present,” in October 158 (Fall 2016): 155–166.  