

San José State University

Department of Art & Art History ART282a (40657), Contemporary Art Theory and Criticism, Section 1, Fall 2019

Instructor:	Janet Silk
Office Location:	Art 115
Email:	janet.silk@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	Tues/Thurs: 10:30-11:00 a.m. & 3:00-4:00 p.m.
Phone:	(408) 924-4361
Class Days/Time:	Tuesday 12:00-2:45 p.m.
Classroom:	ART 110
Prerequisites:	ARTH 191A and admission to classified MFA status in art or instructor consent.

Additional Contact Information

- * Email is generally the best method of contact during non-office hours.
- * Please allow 48-hours for an e-mail response.
- * Emergency: 911
- * Campus Escort: 42222
- * Individuals with disabilities may contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC), Administrative Building 110, 408/ 924-6000, for a variety of formats such as Braille, large print, sign interpreters, assistive listening devices, audio tape and accommodations for physical accessibility.

Course Description

This graduate course is a historical approach to the thought of major critics and theoreticians of contemporary art and provides an overview of contemporary art theory and criticism. Students will read from a variety of sources such as contemporary art history books, academic journals, and art magazines and publications. Throughout the semester students will discuss and explore ideas from the reading material, write about art and culture with an understanding of

the stakes involved, and situate contemporary artworks within these intellectual currents. By the end of the semester, students will have deepened their knowledge and gained a comprehensive understanding of the major theoretical developments within contemporary art discourse and practice.

Course materials such as syllabus, readings, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found via [Canvas Learning Management System](#). You are responsible for regularly checking on Canvas for course announcements, assignments, and updates.

The first 30-45m of class will be used to recap main points or issues of the weekly topic and related reading assignment. The following hour will consist of a student-led presentation and discussion of the assigned readings for the day.

Course Learning Outcomes (Skills and Content)

On successful completion of this course students shall be able to:

- CLO 1) read theoretical texts pertaining to issues in contemporary art;
- CLO 2) articulate and debate arguments and ideas drawn from these essays;
- CLO 3) elaborate upon these ideas in writing with examples from contemporary art.

Required Texts/Readings

1) All readings, assignment uploads, and extraneous information can be found under the weekly postings on Canvas. All readings will be posted as PDFs online through the Canvas course website and or as a hard copy distributed in class. If necessary, readings may be eliminated, changed, or augmented.

Suggested supplemental material for reading assignments and topic discussion will be communicated through Canvas announcements or as part of the specific assignment posting.

- How to access Canvas: Go to <https://sjsu.instructure.com> and use your SJSU ID and Your Username is your 9-digit SJSU ID number, and your password is your SJSU-One account password to login.
- For problems and issues contact the Help Desk at 408-924-2377

2) You will also need a notebook for taking notes and organizing materials.

USEFUL WEBSITE SOURCES:

Foundational theorists such as Michel Foucault, Frederic Jameson, Jean Baudrillard, Walter Benjamin, etc. can be researched here, as well as overviews of their work and synopses of methodologies.

[Art theory and criticism, art critics and theorists](#)

[Art Theory Timeline](#)

[Illuminations](#) (Frankfurt School links from Univ. of Texas at Austin)

[Leonardo On-line: Art, Science, and Technology](#)

[Lacanian Ink](#) (related to the work of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan)

[New Media Art and Theory](#)

[Voice of the Shuttle](#) is considered the “most comprehensive theory website”

Library Liaison

Gareth Scott

email: gareth.scott@sjsu.edu

phone: (408) 808-2094

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library

4th Floor Administration Offices

Department Advising

For information about majors and minors in Art & Art History, for a change of major/minor forms and a list of advisors: <http://www.sjsu.edu/art/> or the Art & Art History department office in ART116, 408-924-4320, art@sjsu.edu

Classroom Protocol

- We all need to work on [classroom civility](#). This is key in order to develop an engaged, mutually respectful learning space.
- Be on time.
- Attend class and keep up with coursework. It is your responsibility to manage your time for this class and your life/work/education endeavors. (See [University Policy S12-3.](#))
- As a courtesy to others, eat before class. Some people may be fasting or have adverse reactions to various foods, and the classroom is not a restaurant. We have a 15-20 minute break usually halfway through class. Beverages are acceptable.
- Participate fully in discussions of the assigned reading material and presentations shown in class.
- Students will turn their cell phones off while in class. They will not answer their phones in class. If you have to use your cell phone for an emergency, leave quietly.
- Laptop and tablets must be used only for note-taking, presentations, and in-class work. I reserve the right to ask students to refrain from device usage if I observe and experience that it is a distraction and counter productive. Students who use electronic devices for activities unrelated to the class will be asked to leave the class. If the behavior continues, the student will be referred to the Judicial Affairs Officer of the University.

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester's [Catalog Policies](http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html) section at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the [current academic calendar](http://www.sjsu.edu/academic_programs/calendars/academic_calendar/) web page located at http://www.sjsu.edu/academic_programs/calendars/academic_calendar/. The [Late Drop Policy](http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/late_drops/policy/) is available at http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/late_drops/policy/. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

Information about the latest changes and news is available at the [Advising Hub](http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/>.

Course Requirements and Assignments

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in [University Policy S12-3](#).

Assignments and Grading Policy

Grades will be assigned according to University policy from A to F as outlined in the SJSU catalog. When necessary, specific grading rubrics will be created for certain assignments and communicated in class and via Canvas. All work must be finished and turned in according to ascribed deadlines and instructions. As of August 7, 2019, I do not use an online accessible grade book; therefore, communicate with me directly about your grade. (If this changes, I will announce in class and on Canvas.)

Verbal participation in class discussion is part of your grade, and you are expected to take initiative to contribute (15%) CLO2

A guideline for participation performance:

A=Excellent work, energetic participation, professional demeanor, sustained effort throughout the semester.

B=Good work, participation, effort

C=Average work, participation, effort

D=Below average work, participation, effort

F=Unsatisfactory work, participation, effort

Weekly responses (20%) CLO1, CLO2, CLO3

Each week by class meeting time, students are responsible for submitting online through Canvas, written responses to questions about assigned readings, educational films, or other materials related to the topic, the specifics of which will be communicated in class and or posted on Canvas. You may be asked for hard copies of your response depending on the assignment.

Student lead discussion and presentation (20%) CLO1, CLO2, CLO3:

Students will be assigned in pairs to lead the second hour of class discussion and questions. As part of this discussion, they will have prepared and present research about specific contemporary artist(s), art movement(s), exhibition(s), project(s), event(s), or other cultural work that is relevant to the topic.

Project (15%) CLO1, CLO2

About mid semester, students will be assigned a project related to the content of the readings.

Research Paper (20%) CLO1, CLO2, CLO3:

For the research paper, students will expand upon one of the weekly topics in relation to their own art practice and or research interests, incorporating into their discussion examples from contemporary art.

Final Exam (10%) CLO2, CLO3

University policy S17-1 (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S17-1.pdf>) states that

“Faculty members are required to have a **culminating activity** for their courses, which can include a final examination, a final research paper or project, a final creative work or performance, a final portfolio of work, or other appropriate assignment.”

The culminating activity for this course will be an informal discussion of research papers followed by an in-class written response to no more than three questions related to course content.

PLEASE NOTE:

- Late or missed assignments will only be accepted under unusual, extenuating, or emergency circumstances. A signed physician’s note explaining why you are not able to fulfill the assignment is required.

- Except in cases of documented emergencies, incomplete grades are not given in this course.
- “All students have the right, within a reasonable time, to know their academic scores, to review their grade-dependent work, and to be provided with explanations for the determination of their course grades.” See University Policy F13-1 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-1.pdf> for more details.
- There are no extra credit options for this course.
- SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit. More details about student workload can be found in University Policy S12-3 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

University Policies

Academic integrity

Your commitment as a student to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University’s Academic Integrity policy](#) requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of [Student Conduct and Ethical Development](#).

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person’s ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include your assignment or any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU’s Academic Policy S07-2 requires approval of instructors.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. [Presidential Directive 97-03](#) requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Accessibility Education Center](#) (AEC) to establish a record of their disability.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the Academic Success Center located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and on the 2nd floor of the Student Union.

Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library.

SJSU Writing Center

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the [Writing Center website](#). For additional resources and updated information, follow the Writing Center on Twitter and become a fan of the SJSU Writing Center on Facebook or their official blog, "[The Write Attitude.](#)"

To access Writing Center resources while on the go, download the SJSU Writing Center app on your Android device in the Google Play Store.

Peer Mentor Center

The [Peer Mentor Center](#) is located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall in the Academic Success Center. The Peer Mentor Center is staffed with Peer Mentors who excel in helping students manage university life, tackling problems that range from academic challenges to interpersonal struggles. On the road to graduation, Peer Mentors are navigators, offering “roadside assistance” to peers who feel a bit lost or simply need help mapping out the locations of campus resources. Peer Mentor services are free and available on a drop-in basis, no reservation required.

ART282a-1 / Contemporary Art Theory and Criticism, Fall 2019, Course Schedule

Agenda as of August 7, 2019. The instructor reserves the right to change the schedule and content if necessary. Any errors in this schedule will be addressed in class and or on Canvas. Every attempt will be made to post all readings as PDFs or links on Canvas. **Texts noted as “Optional” are optional readings for the entire class, but I am asking students who are assigned to lead the discussion each week to review the optional material and be prepared to consider its relevance to the conversation.**

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	August 20	No class
2	August 27	<p>Introductions and Syllabus</p> <p>Emphasis, topic, and or activity: Identify and discuss, in general, major nodes of contemporary art theory and criticism; formalist vs. conceptual issues</p> <p>Reading assignment: <i>Themes of Contemporary Art: Visual Art After 1980: Chapter 1, “The Art World Expands,”</i> Jean Robertson and Craig McDaniel, pp. 1-25 (to “Theory Flexes its Muscles”)</p> <p>Response due: Sept. 3</p>
3	Sept. 3	<p>Discuss <i>Themes of Contemporary Art: Visual Art After 1980: Chapter 1, “The Art World Expands,”</i> Jean Robertson and Craig McDaniel, pp. 1-25 (to “Theory Flexes its Muscles”)</p> <p>Emphasis, topic, and or activity: Art Market/Globalization</p> <p>Reading assignment: 1) <i>Themes of Contemporary Art: Visual Art After 1980: Chapter 1, “The Art World Expands,”</i> Jean Robertson and Craig McDaniel, pp. 25-37</p> <p>Response due: Sept. 10</p>

4	Sept. 15	<p>Discuss <i>Themes of Contemporary Art: Visual Art After 1980: Chapter 1</i>, “The Art World Expands,” Jean Robertson and Craig McDaniel, pp. pp. 25-37</p> <p>Emphasis, topic, and or activity: Visual art practice and emerging technologies</p> <p>Reading assignment: 1) “Postmodernism: A Preface” from <i>The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture</i>, Hal Foster 2) “Postmodern Blackness,” bell hooks</p> <p>Organize student lead discussions</p> <p>Response due: Sept. 17</p>
5	Sept. 17	<p>Student lead discussion #1 (Person 1, 2 names TBA in class)</p> <p>Discuss 1) “Postmodernism: A Preface” from <i>The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture</i>, Hal Foster 2) “Postmodern Blackness,” bell hooks</p> <p>Emphasis, topic, and or activity: Modernism/postmodernism...what’s the difference? Overview of concepts and critique. Compare/contrast writer positions.</p> <p>Reading assignment: “Semiotics and Visual Representation,” Brian Curtin</p> <p>Response due: Sept. 24</p>
6	Sept. 24	<p>Student lead discussion #2 (Person 3, 4 names TBA in class)</p> <p>Discuss 1) “Semiotics and Visual Representation,” Brian Curtin</p> <p>Emphasis, topic, and or activity: Semiotics/Structuralism; Overview of main concepts, historical context. Formal analysis vs. semiotic analysis (see modernism vs. postmodernism).</p> <p>Reading assignment: 1) “An Introduction to Derrida, Deconstruction and Post- Structuralism,” R.Gnanasekaran 2) “Using Deconstruction to Astonish Your Friends & Confound Your Enemies,” Warren Hedges (plus Hedges’ notes) 3) <i>Optional: Glas</i>, Jacques Derrida</p> <p>Response due: Oct. 1</p>

7	Oct. 1	<p>Student lead discussion #3 (Person 5, 6, 7 names TBA in class)</p> <p>Discuss 1) “An Introduction to Derrida, Deconstruction and Post-Structuralism,” R.Gnanasekaran 2) “Using Deconstruction to Astonish Your Friends & Confound Your Enemies,” Warren Hedges (plus Hedges’ notes) 3) <i>Optional: Glas</i>, Jacques Derrida</p> <p>Emphasis, topic, and or activity: Poststructuralism/Deconstruction; Historical context. Discuss exercise: “Using Deconstruction to Astonish Your Friends & Confound Your Enemies,” Warren Hedges</p> <p>Reading assignment: Reading from <i>Art History: A critical introduction to its methods</i>: “Marxism and the Social History of Art,” Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk</p> <p>NOTE NEXT WEEK IS FIELD TRIP Response due: Oct. 15</p>
8	Oct. 8	<p>Field Trip: Location TBA Discuss & organize Project Assignment due weeks 13-15</p>
9	Oct. 15	<p>Student lead discussion #4 (Person 8, 9 names TBA in class)</p> <p>Discuss Reading from <i>Art History: A critical introduction to its methods</i>: “Marxism and the Social History of Art,” Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk</p> <p>Emphasis, topic, and or activity: Social practice art</p> <p>Reading assignment: 1) Reading from <i>Art History: A critical introduction to its methods</i>: “Feminism,” Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk</p> <p>Response due: Oct. 22</p>

10	Oct. 22	<p>Student lead discussion #5 (Person 10, 11 names TBA in class)</p> <p>Discuss Reading assignment: 1) Reading from <i>Art History: A critical introduction to its methods</i>: “Feminism,” Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk</p> <p>Emphasis, topic, and or activity: feminist and queer performance art; (consider Bay Area 4th wave performance art); cyborg culture</p> <p>Reading assignment: Reading from <i>Art History: A critical introduction to its methods</i>: “Postcolonialism,” Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk (NOTE: Due to time restraints of syllabus publication deadline, this reading subject to change depending on instructor’s further research throughout the semester.)</p> <p>Response due: Oct. 29</p>
11	Oct. 29	<p>Student lead discussion #6 (Person 12, 13 names TBA in class)</p> <p>Discuss Reading from <i>Art History: A critical introduction to its methods</i>: “Postcolonialism,” Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk (or TBA)</p> <p>Emphasis, topic, and or activity: Postcolonialism; border culture art activism, gringostroika, Otherness</p> <p>Reading assignment: 1) “Posthumanism,” Francesco Ferando 2) “Posthumanism and Contemporary Art,” Widewalls editorial and 3) <i>Optional</i>: “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-feminism in the late 20th Century,” Donna Haraway</p> <p>Response due: Nov. 5</p>
12	Nov. 5	<p>Student lead discussion #7 (Person 14, 15, 16 names TBA in class)</p> <p>Discuss Reading assignment: 1) “Posthumanism,” Francesco Ferando 2) “Posthumanism and Contemporary Art,” Widewalls editorial and 3) <i>Optional</i>: “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-feminism in the late 20th Century,” Donna Haraway</p> <p>Emphasis, topic, and or activity: Posthumanism; discussion of concepts with contemporary art examples. Cyborg culture</p> <p>Discuss Research Paper Assignment: Due December 17</p>

13	Nov. 12	<i>(NOTE: Depending on class discussion, the project scheduling may change, e.g., we work in class on Nov. 12 and projects presented Nov. 19-26.)</i> Project presentation Group 1 & 2
14	Nov. 19	Project presentation Group 3 & 4
15	Nov. 26	Project presentation Group 5 & 6
16	Dec. 3 Last day of instruction	Last day of class Peer review research paper draft/work in class Optional: CMS overview Final Exam study guide
17	Dec. 17 9:45-12:00	Research Paper due & discussion Final Exam questions