

**San Jose State University**  
**Department of Art and Art History**  
**ART 2, Section 04: The Artist in Contemporary Culture**

**Course and Contact Information**

**Instructor:** Léonie Guyer  
**Office Location:** Art 331 (note: office hour meetings via Zoom this semester)  
**Email:** [leonie.guyer@sjsu.edu](mailto:leonie.guyer@sjsu.edu)  
**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 3-5 pm and by appointment  
**Class Days/Time:** Tues. & Thurs. 10:30–11:45am  
**Classroom:** online

**Additional Information:**

- \* Email is generally the best method of contact outside office hours.
- \* 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 formants such as Braille, large print, sign interpreters, assistive listening devices, audio tape and accommodations for physical accessibility.

For information about majors and minors in Art & Art History, for change of major/minor forms and a list of advisors: <http://www.sjsu.edu/art/> or the Art & Art History department office in ART 116, 408-924-4320, [art@sjsu.edu](mailto:art@sjsu.edu)

**Course Description**

This is an introductory course examining the roles that artists play in contemporary culture. Through critical reading, writing, discussions and problem-solving, students will consider principles of form, theory and research as they are applied to real-world situations confronted by contemporary artists.

**Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives**

Artists think creatively and visually across media, and have many roles in society. This course will expand notions of contemporary art practice – the myriad ways in which artists work and contribute to culture and community life, intellectual and social discourse, and history. Roles to be considered (but not limited to) include artist as philosopher, contemplative, archivist, activist, cultural anthropologist, healer, trickster.

This interdisciplinary seminar will challenge students to consider a complex and inclusive view of contemporary art practice through image-based lectures, directed research, dialogue, studio projects and critique.

## **To successfully complete this course, students will:**

1. Attend all class sessions on time;
2. Be attentive to image presentations; read and be prepared to discuss all assigned readings; pursue assigned and independent research; actively participate in discussions and critiques – **note:** if you never speak in class you will not pass this course;
3. Complete all studio assignments and submit on time;
4. Complete all written assignments and submit on time.

## **Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Build on skills in creative problem-solving, brainstorming, and visual communication
2. Deploy their skills in visual research and in applying theory to new situations
3. Demonstrate familiarity with the language of visual critique
4. Expand skills in writing and speaking to include formats of written proposal, formal description and analysis, and critical essay
5. Decipher the cultural roles played by various contemporary artists

## **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 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

## **Project Deadlines**

Deadlines are listed in the Course Schedule and will be posted on Canvas throughout the semester. Students are responsible for knowing the deadlines and assignment requirements. Deadlines are well-documented – refer to assignment descriptions (in pdf form) on Canvas, ask a fellow student and/or post your questions in the Q/A Forum. If you are having a problem with an assignment, I encourage you to discuss this with me as soon as possible. Any work not turned in on the due date is considered late and may be graded down.

**Special circumstances** will be taken into consideration (e.g. illness, court appearance, death of relative).

The instructor reserves the right to alter assignments and change project due dates with sufficient notice to the students.

## **Classroom Protocol**

Students are expected to be punctual for class and actively engaged during all class meetings. When class meetings are held on campus, cell phones or other devices that detract from full attention should be turned off or silenced, and ideally put away. When class meetings are conducted online, students are expected to give their full attention to the class and not divert their attention to other websites, devices, etc.

Students are expected to attend all class meetings and are responsible for keeping up with the material discussed. **IMPORTANT:** If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to find out what you have missed and how to catch up with the work (e.g. consult course Q/A Forum on Canvas; exchange contact information with a classmate and ask to look at their class notes; speak with me in class and/or during my office hours, etc.).

## **Communication**

To contact me, **use the message function located within Canvas** ([Guide on how to compose and send message in CanvasLinks to an external site.](#)). You can also use my SJSU e-mail: [leonie.guyer@sjsu.edu](mailto:leonie.guyer@sjsu.edu). Either of these options will assure private communications. I will respond to emails within 48 hours during the week and 72 hours on weekends — unless I let you know that I will be away from Internet access.

Please note that most questions can be answered by checking the Syllabus and Assignment descriptions for information. If you need further information, post your questions in the Q/A Forum. If you can't find the answer through these sources, then feel free to contact me.

Throughout the semester I will post announcements with tips, important information, etc. that will help you be successful in the class. If I need a response from you, I will indicate "Please reply." Make sure to check Canvas Announcements each week and read all announcements!

## **Determination of Grades / Grading Policy**

Your grade will be based on my assessment of your effort and your work, attention to learning, development of skills throughout the semester, and participation in class.

Grading determined as follows:

**10% Class Participation**

**40% Weekly Assignments** (details on Canvas)

**10% Short Essay on Required Readings** (details on Canvas)

**20% Studio Project 1: Found Material** (details on Canvas)

**20% Studio Project 2: Imaginary Memorial | Monument | Anti-Monument** (details on Canvas)

**NOTE:** University policy F69-24 states that “Students should attend all meetings of their classes, not only because they are responsible for material discussed therein, but because active participation is frequently essential to insure maximum benefit for all members of the class. Attendance per se shall not be used as a criterion for grading.”

I will assign letter grades; letters correspond to numerical values as follows:

A+ = 97-100, A = 93-96, A- = 90-92, B+ = 87-89, B = 83-86, B- = 80-82, C+ = 77-79, C = 73-76, C- = 70-72, D+ = 67-69, D = 63-66, D- = 60-62, F = below 60

## **Required Reading / Viewing**

Required reading / viewing for this course will be drawn from a variety of sources, including (but not limited to) critical essays, exhibition reviews, interviews, artists' writings, art publications and reliable internet sources (e.g. museum and gallery websites, et al.). These materials will be made available on

Canvas, and will be presented in conjunction with Course Topics. **NOTE:** An assignment in the form of a written response to a required reading will be given. In addition to required reading / viewing, optional materials will be available through the Canvas course website.

## **Other material requirements:**

Students will be required to procure their own materials to complete studio assignments; specific materials needed will depend on how they approach the project(s).

## **Library Liaison**

**Gareth Scott** is the Library Liaison for the Art & Art History Department. He is available to help students with their research. Contact info:

email: [gareth.scott@sjsu.edu](mailto:gareth.scott@sjsu.edu)

phone: (408) 808-2094

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library

4th Floor Administration Offices

Also note, SJSU Research Guides in Art and Visual Culture are available here: [libguides.sjsu.edu/art](http://libguides.sjsu.edu/art).

## **Art & Art History Department Image Database**

For your art research, you may also use the SJSU Art History and Visual Culture VRL Image Database.

This is an excellent resource which you can access here: [http://arth.sjsu.edu/image\\_db/index.php](http://arth.sjsu.edu/image_db/index.php).

username: arth

password: to be given in class

## **Consent for Recording of Class and Public Sharing of Instructor Material**

[University Policy S12-7](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf), <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf>, requires students to obtain instructor's permission to record the course and the following items to be included in the syllabus:

“Common courtesy and professional behavior dictate that you notify someone when you are recording him/her. You must obtain the instructor's permission to make audio or video recordings in this class. Such permission allows the recordings to be used for your private, study purposes only. The recordings are the intellectual property of the instructor; you have not been given any rights to reproduce or distribute the material.”

In classes where active participation of students or guests may be on the recording, permission of those students or guests should be obtained as well.

“Course material developed by the instructor is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his/her approval. You may not publicly share or upload instructor generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, or homework solutions without instructor consent.”

## 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 ART 116, 408-924-4320, [art@sjsu.edu](mailto:art@sjsu.edu)

## University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>”

## How to Take Notes

It is essential to take notes during class. Primarily, because you will get more out of class by taking notes because you will remember and retain more information. Secondly, taking notes trains you to observe and think more carefully about the information the instructor presents. Finally, the notes you take in class may provide helpful language to refer to when you need to write artist statements, proposals, grant applications, etc.

- Don't worry that your notes may not be perfect. There is no way to know what information will be significant to you later. **A good guideline is if something perks your interest, make a note of it.** You can figure out what it means or doesn't mean later.
- The more you do it, the easier it becomes. Taking notes are essential in many art careers, and it is a good skill to have.
- Actually write your notes by hand – refrain from typing them on tablets or computers. Besides being distracting to others, actually writing your notes will mean that you remember them more coherently – and this will lead you to more developed thoughts and responses.
- If you take them seriously, your notes will start to reveal to you what you are paying the most attention to, what you are most interested in, what you are the most intrigued by – they may even start to reveal something about yourself. Reading someone else's notes, or just sitting there during lectures, group discussions and critiques, is no substitute for applying your own perceptions and thoughts. Becoming an active critical thinker is an important part of your artistic development.

## ART 2, Section 04: The Artist in Contemporary Culture, Fall 2020

**NOTE:** The instructor reserves the right to make adjustments at her discretion; schedule is subject to change with fair notice.

### Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	8/20	<p><b>Introduction</b> to course: student &amp; professor introductions; syllabus &amp; course materials; artist research: John Cage, 4'33; <i>The Artist Project</i>   <i>The Metropolitan Museum of Art</i>.</p> <p><b>Assignments:</b> review course materials; weekly assignment (to be discussed), short essay on required reading (to be discussed) <b>DUE: 11/10</b></p>
2	8/25	<p><b>Topic I: Materia Prima   Abstract</b> Artist as philosopher, contemplative</p> <p><b>Lecture / Discussion:</b> Tantra paintings, Zen <i>ensō</i>, Hilma af Klint, Mondrian, Agnes Martin, Ad Reinhardt, Myron Stout, Forrest Bess, Gee's Bend Quiltmakers, Dansaekhwa, Ryman, Fred Sandback, Stanley Whitney, et al.</p> <p><b>Assignments:</b> weekly assignment; required reading: writings by Franck André Jamme and Lawrence Rinder</p>
3	9/01	<p><b>Topic II: Materia Prima   Object</b> Artist as alchemist, archivist, cultural anthropologist</p> <p><b>Lecture / Discussion:</b> Duchamp, Schwitters, Hannah Höch, Piero Manzoni, Yves Klein, Anne Ryan, Joseph Cornell, James Castle, Bruce Conner, Mark Bradford, Arte Povera, Doris Salcedo, Jimmie Durham, El Anatsui, et al.</p> <p><b>Assignments:</b> weekly assignment; required reading (tba); <b>Studio Project 1: Found Material, DUE: 10/05; IMPORTANT:</b> Image files of your work for this project must be submitted on Canvas by 10/05 in correct format — e.g., jpeg, mp3, mp4; <b>Midterm Critique: 10/06 and 10/13</b></p>
4	9/08	<p><b>Topic III: Materia Prima   Action / Site</b> Artist as environmentalist, activist: Land Art, ecofeminism, social practice</p> <p><b>Lecture / Discussion:</b> Arte Povera, Jo Hanson, Agnes Denes, Robert Smithson, Michelle Stuart, Gordon Matta-Clark, Mierle Ukeles, Theaster Gates, et al.</p> <p><b>Assignments:</b> weekly assignment; reading: “Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings” by Eileen Myles; continue work on Studio Project 1: Found Material</p>
5	9/15	<p><b>Topic IV: Art, Ritual and the Body</b> Artist as shaman, healer, trickster</p> <p><b>Lecture / Discussion:</b> Yoko Ono, Joseph Beuys, Carolee Schneeman, Tehching Hsieh, Gina Pane, Terry Fox, Tehching Hsieh, Linda Montano, Ana Mendieta, Marina Abramovic, Eleanor Antin, Lorraine O’Grady, James Luna, David Hammons, Guillermo Gomez-Pena and Coco Fusco, Nick Cave, et al.</p> <p><b>Assignments:</b> weekly assignment; reading (tba); continue work on Studio Project 1: Found Material</p>

6	9/22	<p><b>Topic V, Part 1: Mark Making and Text</b>  Artist as scribe, scholar, poet  <b>Lecture / Discussion:</b> Rudolf Steiner, James Castle, Cy Twombly, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Hanne Darboven, Mark Lombardi, Ellen Gallagher, et al.  <b>Assignment:</b> weekly assignment; required reading (tba); continue work on Studio Project 1: Found Material</p>
7	9/29	<p><b>Topic V, Part 2: Conceptual Art and Text</b>  Artist as philosopher, poet, activist  <b>Lecture / Discussion:</b> Concrete Poetry, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Yoko Ono, Sol LeWitt, Bruce Nauman, Lawrence Weiner, Hans Haacke, General Idea, Guerilla Girls, Jenny Holzer, Glenn Ligon, Tracy Emin, et al.  <b>Assignments:</b> weekly assignment; required reading (tba); continue work on Studio Project 1: Found Material; prepare image files for Midterm Critique</p>
8	10/06	<b>Mid-Term Critique, Part 1:</b> Everyone is required to attend all critique sessions
9	10/13	<b>Mid-Term Critique, Part 2:</b> Everyone is required to attend all critique sessions
10	10/20	<p><b>Topic VI: Memorials, Monuments, Anti-Monuments</b>  <b>Lecture / Discussion:</b> throughout history, public monuments have embodied the perspective of those in power — how can contemporary artists, thinkers and activists critique, subvert and transform this paradigm? Black Lives Matter, Robert Arneson, Maya Lin, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Gunter Demnig   <i>Stumbling Stones</i>, Hans Haacke, Michael Rakowitz, Miranda July, et al.  <b>Assignments:</b> weekly assignment; <b>Studio Project 2: Imaginary Memorial   Monument   Anti-Monument; DUE: 11/24; IMPORTANT:</b> Image files of your work for this project must be submitted on Canvas by 11/24 in correct format — e.g., jpeg, mp3, mp4; <b>Final Critique: 11/24 and 12/01</b></p>
11	10/27	<p><b>Topic VII: The Figure   Archetype, Identity, Narrative</b>  Artist as observer, storyteller, constructor / deconstructor of identity  <b>Lecture / Discussion:</b> Claude Cahun, Lee Friedlander, Beauford Delaney, David Park, Bob Thompson, Albert York, Alice Neel, Philip Guston, Gerhard Richter, Luc Tuymans, Marlene Dumas, Laylah Ali, Chris Ofili, Kerry James Marshall, Louise Bourgeois, Simone Leigh, et al.  <b>Assignments:</b> weekly assignment; required reading: writing by Bill Berkson; continue work on Studio Project 2: Imaginary Memorial   Monument   Anti-Monument</p>
12	11/03	<p><b>View:</b> Tracey Emin on Louise Bourgeois: <i>Women Without Secrets – Secret Knowledge</i>  <b>Assignments:</b> weekly assignment; continue work on Studio Project 2: Imaginary Memorial   Monument   Anti-Monument</p>
13	11/10	<p><b>Class discussion re:</b> Studio Project 2: Imaginary Memorial   Monument   Anti-Monument; students may share work-in-progress, ask questions, etc.  <b>DUE:</b> short essay on required reading</p>
14	11/17	<p><b>View:</b> Sol LeWitt: <i>Wall Drawings</i>  <b>Assignments:</b> weekly assignment; continue work on Studio Project 2:</p>

		Imaginary Memorial   Monument   Anti-Monument; prepare image files for Final Critique
15	11/24	<b>FINAL CRIT, Part 1:</b> Everyone is required to attend all critique sessions
16	12/01	<b>FINAL CRIT, Part 2:</b> Everyone is required to attend all critique sessions
17	12/15	<b>FINAL CLASS: Tuesday, Dec. 15th 9:45-12:00</b> *note time & day as listed on Final Exam Schedule Discussion (tba)