

**San José State University**  
**Department of Art and Art History**  
**ARTH 191A: *Issues in Contemporary Art***  
**Spring 2021**

**Course and Contact Information**

<b>Instructor:</b>	<b>Dr. Liz Linden</b>
<b>Office Location:</b>	Clark Hall 414K/Zoom
<b>Telephone:</b>	(408) 924 4715 (office)
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:liz.linden@sjsu.edu">liz.linden@sjsu.edu</a>
<b>Office Hours:</b>	Wednesday 1:20pm - 2:30pm and by appointment, on Zoom. See course announcements for link.
<b>Class Days/Time:</b>	Wednesday, 12:00pm – 1:15pm
<b>Classroom:</b>	On Zoom
<b>Prerequisites:</b>	

**Units: 3**

**Additional Contact Information**

- \* E-mail 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 upper-division undergraduate course is devoted to exploring contemporary art practices with a particular focus on conceptual and contextual practices exploring the idea of representation. “Representation” is a word with multiple complex and overlapping meanings, and “ARTH191A/Issues in Contemporary Art” will examine ideas about representation in *at least* two of its senses: both the aesthetic sense of presenting something visual to a viewer; and, also, the political sense, of telling us whose interests are “represented” by particular legislation or actions.

This course will take contemporary art operating at the intersection of representation and politics as its subject, through both case studies of the practices of individual artists, to broad overviews of contemporary modes of practice developed in response to our changing political and technological landscape, to specific examinations of how such artworks are changing the way we curate and exhibit (in other words, represent) such art.

Students are expected to read the required essays before class, attend weekly lectures, participate fully in the group discussions and projects, in-class quizzes, and the final exam. The final exam will be based on the assigned readings and class lectures. Students should take legible notes throughout the semester.

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

### **Course Skill and Content Learning Outcomes**

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

CLO1 - read critical texts (from art history and criticism, but also related disciplines in the humanities, such as anthropology, literature, etc.) and demonstrate an understanding of the ideas therein,

CLO2 - apply these ideas verbally and in writing toward an understanding of contemporary art practices, and

CLO3 - be able to identify significant works of contemporary art.

### **Required Texts/Readings**

#### **Required Readings**

#### **Greensheet:**

<http://www.sjsu.edu/art>

#### **Textbook:**

There is no single textbook for this course. All course readings will be provided as PDFs available on Canvas as excerpted from a variety of texts including, but not limited to:

Grovier, K. *Art since 1989*. Thames & Hudson, 2015.

Kalb, P.R. *Art since 1980: Charting the Contemporary*. Pearson, 2014.

Mitchell, W.J.T., and M.B.N. Hansen. *Critical Terms for Media Studies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Smith, Terry. *What Is Contemporary Art?* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Warren, B. *Photography: The Concise Guide*. Delmar/Thomson Learning, 2003.

#### **Course Web Materials**

- ARTH191a Course materials on-line on the SJSU Canvas site for the course at: <https://sjsu.instructure.com>. Your Username is your 9-digit SJSU ID number, and your password is your SJSU-One account password.
- ARTH191a Course Website. Available at <http://arth.sjsu.edu/>, select **Course Web Pages**. Access through User: and Password: (login instructions to be announced in class).
- Optional Resources include: Electronic Resources links to writing guides and Internet sites will posted to the Course Website and/or to Canvas.

#### **Library Liaison**

Gareth Scott

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

phone: (408) 808-2094

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library

4th Floor Administration Offices

Art and Art History Resources: <https://libguides.sjsu.edu/Art>

## Course Requirements and Assignments

Final grades consist of an assessment in several major areas that count as follows towards a possible 190 points for the course. *More guidelines on grading information and class attendance can be found in the following two university policies:*

[University Syllabus Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>)

[University Policy F15-12](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf>)

Assignment type	Points	TOTAL Points
Participation (in class & on Canvas)		20
Canvas Discussion Posts	1-5 points each	10
Group Project Presentation	25 group, 5 individual	30
Quizzes (one on each module)	20	80
Final Exam		50

### Participation:

For full participation credit, you must: participate in class discussions and also on the course website on Canvas; complete all of the readings in a timely manner & demonstrate basic understanding of content; regularly contribute to class conversations by raising relevant questions or sharing relevant information; note that attendance *per se* shall not be used as a criterion for grading according to University policy—that means it can be neither counted for or against you.

### Assignments:

Class time consists of some lectures, discussion of the readings, activities, small group discussions and projects in breakout rooms, and student presentations. All assignments and quizzes are turned in electronically on Canvas; in the event that something is due but Canvas is not working, feel free to email it to me directly at [liz.linden@sjsu.edu](mailto:liz.linden@sjsu.edu).

Note that Canvas will automatically mark late assignments down by 10% for each day they are late, down to a 50% grade. That said, I will always accept/grade late work, right up until the last day of instruction. (Even 50% points is better than 0!)

### Canvas Discussion Posts

Occasionally throughout the term, students will be asked to reflect on some idea from class in a brief discussion post response. Posts may vary from images made or sourced by students, brief written reflections of 100-200 words, etc. Posts are graded largely on participation and range from being worth 1 to 5 points each. [CLO1, CLO2]

### Group Project Presentation

For the Group Project Presentation, students will be assigned a small group to work with to research and present to the class a contemporary public artwork. Group presentations will take place on Zoom and may be pre-recorded and screened during class if that is the group's preference. More details to be provided on a prompt in class. [CLO2, CLO3]

### Module Quizzes

There will be quizzes administered at the end of each of the four modules of the term. Each of these four quizzes is open book and students have one hour in which to take them. These quizzes may include multiple choice questions, true-or-false questions and/or short essay questions, and are administered on Canvas. [CLO1]

### Final Exam

The final exam will be administered on Canvas and will include a number of multiple choice questions, true-or-false questions and one or more short essay questions, building on the work we have done over the semester. [CLO1, CLO2, CLO3]

“Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities,

including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.”

### **Final Examination or Evaluation**

We will have our final required class meeting during exam week. More details can be found in [University Policy S06-4](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S06-4.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S06-4.pdf>), which states that “There shall be an appropriate final examination or evaluation at the scheduled time in every course, unless specifically exempted by the college dean who has curricular responsibility for the course.”

### **Additional Grading Information**

No extra credit assignment is planned for this class at this time. If a student requests extra credit and the request is honored, that extra credit assignment will be offered to the entire class at that time.

If you are going to miss class or an assignment, it is always better to tell me in advance so that we can work out an alternative way for you to receive the materials or turn in your work with a minimum of points lost for tardiness.

Work turned in late WILL be marked down unless an alternative plan for submission is discussed in advance of the due date.

### **Relative weight of course requirements:**

- 1) Class Participation (11%)
- 2) Canvas Discussion Posts (5%)
- 3) Group Project Presentation (16%)
- 4) 4x Quizzes (42% total)
- 5) Final Exam (26%)

Late assignments will only be accepted under unusual, extenuating, or emergency circumstances.

### **Numeric grade equivalents:**

93% and above	A
92% - 90%	A-
89% - 88%	B+
87% - 83%	B
82% - 80%	B-
79% - 78%	C+
77% - 73%	C
72% - 70%	C-
69% - 68%	D+
67% - 63%	D
62% - 60%	D-
below 60%	F

**Please note:** 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.

**Additional Note:**

This syllabus is subject to change, in the event of unforeseen circumstances, or in the case that changes will significantly enhance the quality of the course. Students will collectively have the opportunity to shape the ways in which the course unfolds.

**Department Advising**

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(H)/(PHOT) 116, 408-924-4320, [art@sjsu.edu](mailto:art@sjsu.edu)

**Classroom Protocol**

Students are expected to be punctual for class and actively engaged during all class meetings. Students need to have access to the internet throughout class, and students are strongly encouraged to keep their webcams on throughout class. Note that while I generally record the class on Zoom, I do not programmatically share those recordings after the fact; they are recorded specifically to share with students who miss class due to illness or emergency. If you do miss class and would like to see the recording, please email me.

**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/>."

## Course Schedule

### ARTH 191A: Issues in Contemporary Art, Spring 2021

WEEK	DATE	IN CLASS WE WILL COVER:	AFTER CLASS, FOR THE FOLLOWING WEEK, YOU WILL:
1	1/27	<p><b><u>WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY ART?</u></b></p> <p><b>INTRODUCTION</b></p> <p>to the class, and each other</p>	<p>READ: Peter Kalb, "Introduction" (excerpt), <i>Art Since 1980: Charting the Contemporary</i>, pp. 10-17</p> <p>READ: Drucker, Johanna. "Art," in <i>Critical Terms for Media Studies</i>, WJT Mitchell and Mark RB Hansen (eds)</p>
2	2/1	<p><b>STRUCTURES OF CONTEMPORARY ART: Some Definitions</b></p> <p>What is an exhibition? What is a curator? What is the "artworld"? What is the art market?</p>	<p>READ: Smith, Terry. "Going Global: Selling Contemporary Art," <i>What Is Contemporary Art?</i>, pp. 117-132</p>
	2/3	<p><i>The Price of Everything</i>, dir. Nathaniel Kahn (2018)</p>	<p>DISCUSSION POST: Your questions about the contemporary art market/artworld (Due on Canvas by 2/7 at 11:59pm)</p>
3	2/8	<p><i>The Price of Everything</i>, dir. Nathaniel Kahn (2018) (continued)</p> <p>DISCUSSION</p>	<p>QUIZ on Canvas: Due by 11:59pm on 2/9</p>
	2/10	<p><b><u>REPRESENTING REPRESENTATION: FORMATS AND STRATEGIES</u></b></p> <p><b>PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION: a Case Study in the Interconnectedness of Aesthetics and Politics</b></p> <p>(How) Is photography art?</p> <p>READING LAB: Baudelaire, Charles "On Photography" from the Salon of 1859</p>	<p>READING LAB: Sontag, Susan. "Photography Within the Humanities" in Wells, L. <i>The Photography Reader</i>. Routledge, 2003.</p>

Syllabus: ARTH 191A

WEEK	DATE	IN CLASS WE WILL COVER:	AFTER CLASS, FOR THE FOLLOWING WEEK, YOU WILL:
4	2/15	PHOTO discussion/activity...?	READ: Kalb, Peter. "Taking Pictures: Appropriation and Its consequences," <i>Art Since 1980: Charting the Contemporary</i> , pp. 46-64.
	2/17	<b>APPROPRIATION</b>  If photographs represent what is in front of a camera, what does an appropriated photograph represent?  The <i>Pictures</i> exhibition and postmodernism	DISCUSSION POST: Your appropriations (Due on Canvas by 2/21 at 11:59pm)
5	2/22	Richard Prince spotlight	READ: Linden, Liz. "Reframing <i>Pictures</i> : Reading the Art of Appropriation." <i>Art Journal</i> 75, no. 4 (2016).
	2/24	<b>TEXT</b>  Up until now we have mirrored art world tradition of thinking about images as representations—but (how) is text a representation too?	READ: Grovier, K. "The Language Generation: Using Words in Art," <i>Art since 1989</i> . Thames & Hudson, 2015, pp. 179-196.
6	3/1	Barbara Kruger, Jenny Holzer, Martin Creed, Glenn Ligon, and more...	QUIZ due on canvas on 3/2 by 11:59pm
	3/3	<b><u>REPRESENTATION, IN THE POLITICAL SENSE</u></b>  <b>GENDER AND SEXUALITY</b>  One thing feminist art does is interrogates representations of women in the (art) world, but how do some feminist theorists (namely Judith Butler, below) frame performing one's gender as a representation itself?  READING LAB: Judith Butler, <i>Gender Trouble</i> , pp. 1-16  Zanele Muholi, Catherine Opie	READ: Peter Kalb, "Feminist Statements," and additional excerpts from <i>Art Since 1980: Charting the Contemporary</i> , pp. 38-45, 171-173, 175-181
7	3/8	On the (male) gaze...	DISCUSSION POST: The gaze... (Due on Canvas by 3/9 at 11:59pm)

Syllabus: ARTH 191A

WEEK	DATE	IN CLASS WE WILL COVER:	AFTER CLASS, FOR THE FOLLOWING WEEK, YOU WILL:
		READING LAB: Laura Mulvey and/or John Berger on the gaze	
	3/10	<b>POSTCOLONIALISM, DIASPORA, AND RACE</b>  Art representing colonial histories and their consequences come in all formats and media. In this module we'll look at a diverse set of practices dealing with the legacies colonialism, including practices that deal with racism, militarism, diaspora, internationally and in the United States  Yinka Shonibare MBE, Nanna Debois Buhl, and more...	READ: Jennifer González, <i>Subject to Display</i> , pp. 165-202
8	3/15	Pepon Osorio, Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla...	READ: Ian McLean, "Chapter 7: Post-Identity: Urban Indigenous Art, 1987-2015," <i>Rattling Spears</i>
	3/17	Urban Aboriginal Art in Australia	READ: Jessica Baran, "Openings: Stephanie Syjuco," <i>Artforum</i> , Nov. 2019, pp.196-203.
9	3/22	Kara Walker, Stephanie Syjuco, Arthur Jafa	READ: Brian Wallis, "A Product You Could Kill For," (excerpt) <i>Damaged Goods</i> , pp. 24-34
	3/24	<b>GLOBALIZATION AND CONSUMER CULTURE</b>  <i>Damaged Goods</i> , then and now	QUIZ due on canvas by 3/26 at 11:59pm  ...then ENJOY YOUR BREAK!
Spring Break			
10	4/5	<b>REPRESENTING RELATIONSHIPS: Art Outside the White Cube</b>  <b>LAND ART: REPRESENTING THE ANTHROPOCENE</b>  Agnes Denes, Robert Smithson	TBA
	4/7	Olafur Eliasson, Pierre Huyghe	READ: Tom Finklepearl, "The City as Site," in <i>Dialogues in Public Art</i> , pp. 3-45.
11	4/12	<b>PUBLIC ART</b>  – lecture on finklepearl reading	PREPARE for Wednesday's visiting artist talk with James Angus by looking at his work online at jamesangus.net. In class he will speak specifically about his public art practice—bring your questions.
	4/14	ARTIST'S TALK: sculptor James Angus	Reading: Paul B. Preciado, "When Statues Fall," <i>Artforum</i> , pp. 151-157.
12	4/19	Intro to Group Project on Public Art	Work on Group Project on Public Art (Due in-class and on Canvas at noon on 4/28)
	4/21	*Time to work on group projects*	Work on Group Project on Public Art (Due in-class and on Canvas at noon on 4/28)
13	4/26	*Time to work on group projects*	Work on Group Project on Public Art (Due in-class and on Canvas at noon on 4/28)

Syllabus: ARTH 191A

WEEK	DATE	IN CLASS WE WILL COVER:	AFTER CLASS, FOR THE FOLLOWING WEEK, YOU WILL:
	4/28	In-class presentations	
14	5/3	In-class presentations	READ: Nicolas Bourriaud, <i>Relational Aesthetics</i> , pp. 11-48
	5/5	<b>RELATIONAL ART PRACTICES</b>  (When) Is participation inherently utopian?  Rirkrit Tiravanija, Andrea Zittel, and more...	READ: Lambert-Beatty, Carrie. "Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility." <i>October</i> 129 (2009/08/01 2009): 51-84.
15	5/10	<b>PARAFICTIONAL PRACTICES</b>  Parafictional practices are sometimes cynical hoaxes, sometimes magical moments where disbelief is suspended. They are also often politically motivated. Why?	DISCUSSION POST: The ethics of parafictions (Due on Canvas by 5/11 at 11:59pm)
	5/12	<i>The Yes Men Fix the World</i> , dir. Kurt Engfehr (2009)	QUIZ due on Canvas by 5/16 at 11:59pm
16	5/17	In-class exam review	Exam review
EXAM	5/20	FINAL EXAM administered on Canvas Thursday 5/20 from 9:45am to 12:00pm	