



**San José State University
Department of Art & Art
History**

**ART 282A
Seminar in Contemporary Art
(The Archive in Contemporary
Art)
Fall 2021**

Gerhard Richter, *Cage 4* (2006)

Dr. Dore Bowen, Professor of Art History

Email: dore.bowen@sjsu.edu (preferred mode of contact)

Office Hours: Wednesday 10-noon online

Class Days/Times: Thursday 4-6:45pm

Classroom: Zoom

Prerequisites: ARTH 191A and admission to classified MFA status in art or instructor consent.

Acknowledgement:

We respectfully recognize that this class and this University exist on the occupied, traditional lands of the Tamyen-Ohlone (Muwekma) People, who have stewarded this land for generations.

Course Description

This graduate level MFA seminar addresses contemporary art in relation to the archive and related topics, such as memory, history, imagination, testimony, media, and materials. The course will examine contemporary art practices that look to the past as a way to investigate the present and imagine the future. We begin by examining seminal theoretical texts and practices that constitute a “first wave” of artworld interest in the archive in the 1990s. The course then follows the development of archival art with case studies, concluding by examining the complications wrought by Internet and Big Data. Over the course of the semester students will read and discuss texts on archival theory and related topics while considering the various ways that artists engage with these issues. Theoretical texts will be woven into assignments that are both writerly and creative. Students will be asked to respond to the assigned readings and participate in discussion, lead a class, complete a creative research project, and write a short paper on one practice of interest to them.

Course Structure

Reading is the heart and soul of a seminar. Find a comfortable location and read. Reading is a monotonous task, and might be uncomfortable at first. But I recommend you go for it. Turn your phone off. Maybe listen to some music. And read. Take notes. You should read over the assigned material a few times in the week to prepare for seminar. We will discuss reading as a learned practice throughout the seminar.

Note-Taking is essential during class and while reading. Select a notebook for this class right way and make it one that you like. You will get more out of class by taking notes because you will remember and retain information. In addition, taking notes trains you to observe and think carefully about information. Finally, the notes you take will be helpful to refer to in the future when you consider issues addressed this semester. Write notes by hand – refrain from typing them on tablets or computers. Writing by hand will mean that you remember them more coherently –and this will lead you to more developed thoughts. Organize your notes by week/topic. Use the schedule headings.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

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

1. CLO 1: Students will learn to *read, analyze, and discuss* theoretical texts pertaining to contemporary art.
2. CLO 2: Students will learn to apply critical concepts through *hands-on exercises and projects*.
3. CLO 3: Students will learn to *write about contemporary art*.

Textbook

The Archive, ed. Charles Merewether (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006). Available on Canvas.

Other Required Readings

Syllabus/Schedule: <http://www.sjsu.edu/art>. All essays and assignments not available as a hyperlink on this schedule or in the textbook are available through Canvas at <https://sjsu.instructure.com>. You will also use Canvas to upload assignments. Use your SJSU ID and password to log in; Help Desk is at 408-924-2377.

Writing and Research Resources

Writing guides are available through the library website, such as Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*, and *Webster's New World Dictionary*. The library website also links to databases, image banks, and art journals as well. See the Art and Design resources at: <https://libguides.sjsu.edu/Art> .

Library Liaison

Gareth Scott, gareth.scott@sjsu.edu

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

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 at [University Policy S12-3](#) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

1. Participation (CLO 1, 2, 3)

20%

Informed and thoughtful class participation: CLO 1, 2. Participation is measured by the quality of students' contribution to the class. Students are expected to have read the material before class, to

arrive with notes, and to contribute to each class session with the computer camera on. The bulk of the class seminar/discussion is 4-5:30pm. During this period we will have a 15 minute "break." This will be used for directed reading, note-taking on an artwork, or break out room discussion. There will be a 15 minute refresh break from 5:30-5:45pm. After this break I will introduce the next week.

2. Weekly Summary of Readings (CLO 1, 2, 3) P/NP 20%

These 1-page responses must be submitted on Canvas by noon the day before class; students should also use these to "refresh" for discussion on the day of class. Format "Rdg1.Smith.pdf," "Rdg2.Smith.pdf," etc.

3. Seminar Leader 10%

On an assigned day you and another student will serve as seminar leaders. (You should still upload a response to Canvas, and include the points listed below.) This presentation should be fluid. Notes are helpful but do not read from a script. Prepare by discussing the reading with your teammate and writing down your thoughts, as well as questions. This is intended to be "live." **Your presentation ought to include 1) a *personal* response to the assigned reading; 2) a *personal* response to a related contemporary artwork; 3) a passage from the reading; 4) one or two discussion questions.** Your presentation should follow these points, but you must also coordinate with your teammate. Part of your grade is coordination. **Plan for about ½ hour total. Upload your notes before class.**

4. Archive Project (CLO 1, 2, 3) P/NP 30%

4A. Archive Proposal (CLO 2, 3) P/NP 10%

Select an online archive and write a one-page proposal. You can find your archive from the list below or with your own research. It can also be a personal archive or collection. **Your one-page proposal should explain: 1) a bit about the history of this archive (including its collections); 2) what draws you to it, and; 3) how you plan to creatively engage with it.** Students should be prepared to discuss proposals in class. Format "4A.Smith.pdf."

4B. Archive Sample (CLO 1, 2) P/NP 10%

Create a sample of 20-30 documents from your archive (can be images, objects, text, or sounds, etc.). Then create a one-page list of these documents. You can include thumbnail images. Think about which documents you have chosen and why. How are you organizing your samples (by date, color, file size...)? Are you pursuing a theme? Randomizing? Trying to undo the logic of the archive? Students should be prepared to share their samples in class by sharing the screen. Also discuss the logic of your samples. Format file "4B.Smith.pdf."

4C. Archive Collage (CLO 1, 2) P/NP 10%

A creative collage of the sampled material from your samples in jpg, doc, docx, pdf, or mp3 format. It is recommended that students read the essays for this week *before* completing the assignment. Students should be prepared to present their collage in class and discuss. Format file "4C.Smith.pdf."

5. Paper and Presentation (CLO 3) 20%

A 5-7 page double-spaced paper analyzing your project is due on the last day of class on Canvas. You should weave in your thoughts on the archive and demonstrate your engagement with the readings and artists discussed this semester by drawing on at least one of the assigned essays and comparing your work to at least one artist. A bibliography is not necessary, only footnotes or endnotes for your citations. See "the Owl" at Purdue University for Chicago style end or footnotes. **On one of the last weeks you will present your findings.** Each student should briefly explain their paper topic. Please time your presentation before class and share your screen when appropriate.

Grading Percentages

Participation	20%
Weekly Summary of Readings - Pass/No Pass (8, 2.5 ea)	20%
Seminar Leader	10%
Archive Project - Pass/No Pass	30%
Final Paper and Presentation	20%

Numeric Grade Equivalents

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

GRADING CRITERIA	A	B	C	D	F
(1) Responds appropriately to the assignment	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	ADEQUATE	WEAK	POOR
(2) Presents a clear topic or position	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	ADEQUATE	WEAK	POOR
(3) Focused and organized	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	ADEQUATE	WEAK	POOR
(4) Uses critical thinking	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	ADEQUATE	WEAK	POOR
(5) Uses a variety of appropriate college-level resources and cites sources	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	ADEQUATE	WEAK	POOR
(6) Provides supporting arguments along with examples	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	ADEQUATE	WEAK	POOR
(7) Evidence of research	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	ADEQUATE	WEAK	POOR
8) Free of errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and format	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	ADEQUATE	WEAK	POOR
(9) Originality	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	ADEQUATE	WEAK	POOR
(10) Uses appropriate language for the discipline	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	ADEQUATE	WEAK	POOR

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.

There are no extra credit options for this course.

Personal Responsibility

Timeliness, attention, missed classes. Please arrive to class on time and wait until the break to use the restroom or get a snack. If you miss class for any reason you are responsible for acquiring the lecture notes from a fellow student. If you can’t make it to class do not email me. This is your personal responsibility. If you miss an assignment there is no extra credit.

You are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, withdrawal, etc. above. No adds will be accepted after the deadline. You are responsible for dropping the course.

Plagiarism is taken very seriously and will result in an F on the assignment and possibly the course. Canvas is equipped with plagiarism detection so do not try it! A definition of plagiarism can be found on Judicial Affairs website. If you would like to include material you have submitted, or plan to submit, for another class, you must contact me first for discussion. Note that SJSU's Academic Integrity policy S04-12 requires approval by instructors.

Recordings are not acceptable in this class. University Policy S12-7, <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. "You must obtain the instructor's permission to make audio or video recordings in this class."

University Policies: Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs maintains university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc." You may find all syllabus related University Policies and resources information listed at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

SCHEDULE / 282A: The Archive in Contemporary Art, Fall 2021

COURSE SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to change with fair notice. The class will be notified of changes via Canvas.

1st WEEK / 8/19 - Introduction to the Class

The first class will be an introduction to the course structure, its reading material, teaching methods, timetable, and assignments. We begin by introducing ourselves to each other.

2nd WEEK / 8/26 - The Lure of the Archive

Topic: What is the allure of the archive? Is it the feel of paper documents, paint, photographs, or film stock? Is it the organization of these documents into a system? The sense of dust and history? We will consider the allure of archives while pausing to compare archives of old—a place of storage for analog documents—to the digital and online archives of today.

Due: Upload Response 1 by noon the day before class.

Reading:

- Excerpt from Arlette Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, trans. Thomas Scott-Rail, Yale University Press, 2013, pp. 1-17
- Rachel Heidenry, "The Role of Online Archives in Contemporary Art and Activism," *Art 21*, | Jan 24, 2017 <http://magazine.art21.org/2017/01/24/the-role-of-online-archives-in-contemporary-art-and-activism/#.XzHvKUnGoWo> [This will give a glimpse of topics explored during the semester in more depth.]

3rd WEEK / 9/2 – Traces/Archives/Documents/Testimony

Seminar Leaders 1: James and Roston

Topic: Traces are marks caused by something that happened. A mark on the wall, a spill on a canvas, a sound, a bit, a bite. This class period considers traces, their role in documents, and what happens to traces when documents enter archives. Do they serve as testimony? Can archives speak to what "actually" happened? Or do they speak to other traces? Or to the collections they enter? Do they speak directly or do they need to be translated into a language we can understand? This week we will also discuss your Creative Archive Projects.

Due: Upload Response 2 by noon the day before class.

Reading/Looking:

From Charles Merewether, ed., *The Archive*, Chapter 1: "Traces," pp. 20-49 (entire book is uploaded on Canvas):

- Sigmund Freud, "A Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad," 1925, p. 20
- Christian Boltanski, "All that Remains of My Childhood 1944-1950," 1969, p. 25
- Michel Foucault, "The Historical *a priori* and the Archive," 1969, p. 26
- Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 1975, p. 31
- Ilya Kabakov, "The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away," c. 1977, p. 32
- Giorgio Agamben, "The Archive and Testimony," 1989, p. 38
- Susan Hiller, "Working Through Objects," 1994, p. 41

- Renée Green, "Survival: Ruminations on Archival Lacunae," 2002, p. 49
- Susan Hiller's exhibition at the Freud House,
<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hiller-from-the-freud-museum-t07438>
- Kabakovs online, <http://www.kabakov.net/>; Interview
<https://youtu.be/Ugp2cuLUKoE>

4th WEEK / 9/9 - The Archival Impulse in Contemporary Art?

Seminar Leaders 2: Heidi and Laamasha

Topic: We will discuss what Hal Foster calls "the archival impulse" in contemporary art. What is the interest that contemporary artists have for the archive? Why now? We will focus on artists discussed by Foster in his essay, such as Thomas Hirschhorn.

Due: Upload Response 3 by noon the day before class.

Reading/Looking:

- Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110, Fall 2004, pp. 3-22 (on Canvas)
- Thomas Hirschhorn, Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zvNdrBqG-k>
- Thomas Hirschhorn Interview with Okwui Enwezor, 2000, p. 117

5th WEEK / 9/16 – ASST 4A ARCHIVE PROPOSAL DUE WITH IN-CLASS PRESENTATION

Due: Assignment 4A: "Identify Your Archive," a one-page proposal, is due on Canvas. Be prepared to present your ideas in class. Format "3A.Smith.pdf." See description above.

6th WEEK / 9/23 – Power and Knowledge

Seminar Leaders 3: Natalie and Craig

Topic: In this session we consider the archive in terms of power, discussing how archives participate in producing knowledge, or patrolling bodies of knowledge, while seeming to innocently reflect "the truth."

Due: Upload Response 4 by noon the day before class.

Reading/Looking:

- Excerpts in Charles Merewether, ed., *The Archive*, from Chapter 2, "Inscriptions," pp. 58-79
- Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," 1931, p.58
 - Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 1986, p.70
 - Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 1995, p.76
 - Before class watch *The Proposal* by Jill Magid, 2019. Available on Kanopy and accessible via SJSU library website. This is a full length film. Make some popcorn and enjoy! <https://sjsu.kanopy.com/product/proposal>

7th WEEK / 9/30 - Counter-Archives

Seminar Leaders 4: George and Jose

Topic: In this class we consider art practices that rework archives and archival elements (i.e., traces, collections, storage facilities, etc.) in order to create new ways to engage material culture, or to simply provide more access to archives, or to create new stories about who “we” are and “our” history.

Due: Upload Response 5 by noon the day before class.

Reading/Looking:

Excerpts below in Merewether, ed., *The Archive*, Chapter 3, “Contestations,” pp. 82-107; 117-120; 149-153.

- Marcel Broodthaers Interview, 1972, p. 82
- Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska, “From Enthusiasm to...,” 2005, p. 149
- Enthusiast Archive, <https://artmuseum.pl/en/wydarzenia/archiwum-entuzjastow-inauguracja-archiwum-cyfrowego-oraz>
- Tirza Latimer, “Life in the Archives,” <https://openspace.sfmoma.org/2012/01/life-in-the-archives>
- Theaster Gates, Art 21, <https://art21.org/watch/extended-play/theaster-gates-collecting-short/>

8th WEEK / 10/7 - ASST 4B COLLECTION SAMPLING DUE WITH IN-CLASS PRESENTATION

Due: Assignment 4B: “Collection Sampling” due on Canvas with presentation in class. Format “3B.Smith.pdf.” See description above.

9th WEEK / 10/14 – Painting, Photography, Erasure, and Layering: Focus on Gerhard Richter

Seminar Leaders 5: Sydney and Michael

Topic: This week we will focus on the work of German artist Gerhard Richter.

Due: Response 6 by noon the day before class.

Reading/Looking:

Excerpts below in Merewether, ed., *The Archive*, Chapter 3, “Contestations,” pp. 82-107; 117-120; 149-153.

- Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, “Gerhard Richter's Atlas: The Anomie Archive,” 1993, p. 85
- Frances Guerin, “The Gray Space Between: Gerhard Richter’s 18. Oktober 1977 (1989),” *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture*, Wallflower Press, London (2007)
- Video on Richter’s Cage Paintings: <https://www.gerhard-richter.com/en/videos/exhibitions/the-cage-paintings-25>

10th WEEK / 10/21 - Collage as Archival Practice

Seminar Leaders 6: Samuel and Hunter

Topic: In this class session we will consider collage as a form of archival practice while discussing the work of Chitra Ganesh, Jess, and others. We will use Gury Debord's now-classic theory of "détournement" as a theoretical framework.

Due: Upload Response 7 by noon the day before class.

Reading/Looking:

- Chitra Ganesh with Megan N. Liberty, *Brooklyn Rail*, July-August, 2020, <https://brooklynrail.org/2020/07/art/CHITRA-GANESH-with-Megan-N-Liberty>
- Guy Debord, "A User's Guide to Détournement," trans. Ken Knabb, *Situationist Anthology*, 2006 ["Mode d'emploi du détournement," 1956]. <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/detourn.htm>
- Jess, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_WVyS4OsjY

11th WEEK / 10/28 - ASST 4C, COLLAGE EXERCISE DUE WITH IN-CLASS PRESENTATION

Due: Assignment 4C Due: "Collage Exercise" due on Canvas with presentation in class. Format "3C.Smith.pdf." See description above.

12th WEEK / 11/4 – Big Data

Seminar Leaders 7: Cynthia

Topic: This class will consider the impact of data on the archive.

Due: Upload Response 8 by noon the day before class.

Reading/Looking:

- Wolfgang Ernst, "Cultural Archive versus Technomathematical Storage," *The Archive in Motion: New Conceptions of the Archive in Contemporary Thought and New Media Practices*, ed. Eivind Røssaak, Novus Press: Oslo, 2010, pp. 53-73
- Susanne O. Sæther, "Archival Art: Negotiating the Role of New Media," *The Archive in Motion*, pp. 77-108
- "Orbits of Known and Unknown Objects: SFAl Histories," [Hosted by Berkeley Art Museum - https://bampfa.org/event/website-orbits-known-and-unknown-objects-sfai-histories-matrix-277](https://bampfa.org/event/website-orbits-known-and-unknown-objects-sfai-histories-matrix-277)
- Hito Steyerl, *Factory of the Sun* @ SJMA, <https://sjmusart.org/exhibition/hito-steyerl-factory-sun>
- Identity Factory, SJSU contribution to above exhibition, <https://newart.city/show/the-identity-factory>

13th WEEK / 11/11 - NO CLASS – VETERANS DAY

14th WEEK / 11/18 – FINAL PAPER PRESENTATIONS

DUE: IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS OF FINAL PAPER TOPICS: In-class presentations of final paper topics: each student will have approximately 10 minutes and should be prepared to share screen to show images of the artwork.

15th WEEK / 11/25 – NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING

16th WEEK / 12/2 – PAPER DUE AND FINAL PRESENTATIONS (CONT)

ASSIGNMENT 5 DUE – FINAL PAPER: See assignment details above. The Final Paper is due on Canvas by class on 12/2. Files should be formatted with the assignment number and student name [example: “5.Smith.pdf”].

PRESENTATIONS OF FINAL PAPER TOPICS CONTINUE: In-class presentations of final paper topics: each student will have approximately 10 minutes and should be prepared to share screen to show images of the artwork.

12/9 2:45-5PM FINAL EXAM DAY – CLASS WRAP UP

APPENDIX RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

Sample of Online Archives (I've listed some but you are also encouraged to seek out others):

- Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/>
- Online Archive of California, <https://oac.cdlib.org/>
- Google Arts & Culture, <https://artsandculture.google.com/>
- NY MOMA, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/history?=&direction=fwd>
- [See this article https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2016/09/the-museum-of-modern-arts-miraculous-new-online-archive/500681/?utm_source=share&utm_campaign=share]
- Artists Archive Initiative (thus far David Wojnarowicz and Joan Jonas in production), <http://artistarchives.hosting.nyu.edu/Initiative/>
- Whitney Museum Artport, <https://whitney.org/artport>
- List of Digital Photography Collections in the US, <https://www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/photography>
- Wildlife Media Archive, Macaulay Library, <https://www.macaulaylibrary.org/>
- British Museum Sound Archive, <https://sounds.bl.uk/>

An Incomplete List of Artists Who Use Archives (some studied this semester):

- Jill Magid
- Andy Warhol
- Tacita Dean
- Harun Farocki
- Hito Steyerl
- Felix Gonzalez-Torres
- Lamia Joreige
- Zoe Leonard
- Glenn Ligon
- Thomas Hirschhorn
- Anri Sala
- Fazal Sheik
- Lorna Simpson
- Eyal Sivan
- Vivan Sundaram
- Elizabeth Moran, *Against the Best Possible Sources*
<https://elizabethmoran.com/against-the-best-possible-sources>
- Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas
- Larry Sultan and Mike Mandel, *Evidence*
- Fred Wilson
- Katsushige Nakahashi
- Christian Boltanski
- Lewis Watts, *Harlem Archive*
- Adrian Piper
- Alan Sekula
- Suzanne Lacy
- Joan Jonas
- Heath Bunting
- Hilla and Bernd Becher
- Mark Dion
- Ilya and Emilia Kabakov
- Fluxus ("Fluxfilms")
- Robert Smithson, "Nonsites"
- Ed Ruscha
- Jason Salavon
- Agnes Hegedus, "Things Spoken"
- Kara Walker
- Martha Rosler
- Edgar Heap of Birds
- DJ Spooky
- Nina Zurier
- Akram Zaatari
- The Atlas Group / Walid Raad
- Marysia Lewandowska and Neil Cummings
- Nina Katchadourian
- George Legrady
- Lynn Hershman-Leeson
- Eduardo Kac
- Matthew Coolidge (the Center for Land Use Interpretation)
- Tammy Rae Carland
- Bryndís H Snæbjörnsdóttir and Mark Wilson
- Renée Green
- Susan Hiller
- Guy Debord

