

SYLLABUS: ARTH 2300-01: Why Art? An Introduction to Art Theory. Fall 2008, MWF, 8-8:50a, Centrum 229. Instructor: Andrew Marvick. email: marvick@suu.edu; tel.: (435) 586-7962. Office: Emma Eccles Jones Education Building, Room 314; office hrs: MW10a-12n.

Course Description:

- Why Art? is an introduction to the literature that helped mold 20th-century art and life. The political, cultural and artistic ideas that inform and pervade our visual culture -- Freud, Lenin, Hitler: art as dreaming, as social mandate, as oppression; additional topics.
Why Art? is a survey of the motives that drive artists to make art and societies and individuals to seek it out. The course material ranges from methodology to personal manifesto -- from the intensely personal impetus that leads a specific artist to create to the broadest intellectual constructs that frame mankind's relationship with visual creations.

Course Objectives:

- To develop the student's understanding of human thought through exposure to the literature of art produced during the twentieth century and through subsequent oral and written responses. Ideas of symbolism, self-expression, classicism, aesthetics, spirituality, modernity, cubism, realism, abstraction, existentialism and the avant-garde will be investigated. Freud and the significance of dreams, Dada and the overt act of rebellion, De Stijl and the idea of "pure art," Trotsky and Lenin and a social realism, Sartre's idea of the existential object and its "essence," Greenberg and the rejection of figuration and kitsch, Sartre and the existential, Dubuffet and the elevation of the crude, John Cage and the notion of the real, Kosuth and art as idea: the march of ideas, the influences of society, politics and other cultural factors on the visual arts and visa versa.
Additional course objectives: to communicate to students the connections between the arts and society, and to give them the tools to articulate those connections; to help the student to understand the artistic process, and the elements and forms of artistic endeavors; to see measurable demonstration of students' knowledge of specific artists, their work, and the style, periods and historical context of their creative work; to find opportunities to develop levels of knowledge through participation as well as through academic experiences and as a consumer of the arts; to measure students' open-mindedness toward developing art forms and new ideas relating to the arts, as well as the ability to self-assess personal effects in the arts; and to encourage students to seek continuing opportunities to experience the arts as an integral part of life beyond the limits of the course curriculum.

Evaluation Method:

- Learning will be assessed through test performance, essay assignments, participation in group projects and class discussions, and short written responses to in-class discussion topics. There will be five objective tests (each test = approximately 10% of the course grade, depending on attendance records, and subject to change in the event of unforeseen circumstances). The tests will contain reference images accompanied by questions relating them to the history of art ideas, theory and methodology -- multiple-choice, true-false and matching questions -- based on material discussed in class and/or covered in the assigned readings. In general, make-up tests are not allowed in this course. In rare circumstances, and only with a valid excuse, a student will be allowed to make up one test, during final exam period. Performance in group projects will determine 30% of the course grade. Two brief essays on topics described below will have a value of 5% each. Participation in class discussions, and attendance will determine the remaining 10% of the course grade. Excessive absences may seriously affect a student's grade. Critical thinking and discussion of topics is strongly encouraged; students will be expected, however, to take a serious and constructive attitude toward course content.

- Extra credit of 3% of the course letter-grade will be awarded to students who visit an approved museum of art while in this class.

Up to three museums may be counted for a possible combined total of 9%. In the state of Utah there are five approved museums:

the Salt Lake City Art Museum; the Springville Museum of Art; the Art Gallery on BYU campus in Provo; the Provo Museum of Art; and the St. George Museum of Art. Students visiting another state are encouraged to consult with the professor regarding an approved museum of art there. Proof of admittance and a list of at least ten works seen, the artists' names, media, a brief description of the works, and their dates of execution are required in order to receive this credit. Museum visits are not required -- they are for extra credit only. Students are encouraged to organize carpools for museum visits.

- As this is a course about ideas, a controlled and precise use of language is important. The way in which ideas are described and assessed in class discussions and in the required essays will therefore play an important part in the determination of a grade in the course. Students are advised to seek clarity in their writing above all; to consider whether any given sentence might better be split into two simpler sentences, and conversely, whether each phrase is a full sentence or only a fragment; and to question their use of jargon and specialized terminology except where that terminology is the actual subject under discussion. Throughout the course the class will

consider the analytical skill with which ideas are presented and argued in the assigned texts. Students will be graded on how well they use those analytical skills in their own projects. The specific essay assignments will be explained in class two weeks before their due dates.

Participation and attendance:

- Because most of the classwork in the course will involve discussion of the readings and their methodological foundations, regular participation in class discussions will be a critical component of the student's performance in the course. Students will be evaluated on their participation in class discussions (both the quality and quantity of contributions) and on a final group oral presentation. Students will be expected to have read the section of the text relevant to the topics scheduled for each class session in advance of the class itself, and to be prepared to participate in the class discussion for that day (see the schedule on the next page).
- Regular attendance will be even more important than active oral participation. While there may be instances in which the University will excuse absences, any missed classes will make it difficult for the student to do well on the writing assignments. Four unexcused absences will automatically result in a lowering of the student's course grade by one-half step (from an A to and A-, for example); and every such absence beyond that threshold will result in a further half-step grade reduction. Unless specifically sanctioned by University policy, absences due to participation in athletic or other non-academic events or activities will not be considered excused absences. There will be no exceptions to this policy without a valid written excuse from a doctor or other medical official. Two late arrivals will be equal to one unexcused absence. It will be the student's responsibility to sign the attendance sheet.

Required text:

- Chipp, Herschel B.: *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* (California Studies in the History of Art). Paper: 680 pages. Publisher: University of California Press (June 13, 1984). ISBN-10: 0520052560, ISBN-13: 978-0520052567. This textbook is available at the SUU Student Bookstore. For comparison's sake, the current price for the book at Amazon.com is \$19.77.

Note on intellectual honesty:

- All work turned in by students must be original intellectual property. All sources must be clearly identified and credited. Any incidence of plagiarism (the use of another writer's work without proper identification of the

original source) will be treated as a serious breach of scholarly ethics, with severe repercussions.

ADA Note:

- If a student has difficulty in attending or meeting course requirements and feels that it may be a result of a disability -- whether medical, psychological or learning-related -- accommodation will gladly be made by the professor provided that the Southern Utah University Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD), located in Room 205c of the Sharwan Smith Center (phone number: [435] 865-8022) is notified of the situation and determines that the student meets ADA eligibility requirements. In other words, SSD -- not the professor -- must determine eligibility for and authorize the provision of services in such circumstances; at which point the professor will do everything possible to accommodate the student.

Disclaimer:

- Information contained in this syllabus, other than grading, late assignments, makeup work and attendance policies, may be subject to change with advance notice as deemed appropriate by the professor.