

ARTH 407: READING ARTISTS' WRITING



Joan Miró, *The Body of My Brunette* (*Le corps de ma brune . . .*), 1925. Oil on canvas, 130 x 96 cm

ART HISTORY

School of Art History, Classics & Religious Studies

Victoria University of Wellington

Trimester 1 & 2, 2010

KEY DATES

TRIMESTER DATES

Trimester 1

Teaching dates: 1 March to 4 June 2010

Mid-trimester break: 5 April to 18 April 2010

Study week: 7 June to 11 June 2010

Examination/Assessment period: 11 June to 4 July 2010

Trimester 2

Teaching dates: 12 July to 15 October 2010

Mid-trimester break: 23 August to 5 September 2010

Study week: 18 October to 23 October 2010

Examination/Assessment period: 24 October to 13 November 2010

Withdrawal dates

Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawlsrefunds.aspx>

ARTH 407 READING ARTISTS WRITING

Course coordinator: Raymond Spiteri
Office Location: OK 316,
Telephone: 463 6769
Email: raymond.spiteri@vuw.ac.nz

Office Hours: Monday 1.00 – 3.00 pm.

Seminar Time: Thursday 10.00–11.50 am, in EA012

Trimester Dates: T1: March 1-June 4, 2010
T2: July 12-October 15, 2010

COURSE OUTLINE

COURSE CONTENT

How do we, as art historians, read writings by artists? ARTH 407 addresses this question by focusing on artists as writers. It considers the relation between image and text, figure and discourse, from the artist's perspective, that is, of someone who is actively engaged in the process of fashioning artworks.

Each session will consider a selection of writings by an artist or group of artists, plus relevant secondary texts, to discuss the way artists describe the specific nature of their practices, particularly the way that language may resist articulating certain aspects of the creative process. In 2010 the course focuses on artists and writers associated with the surrealist movement.

Given the nature of artists' writings, the emphasis of this course is not on content, but rather the process of interpretation and its limits. It is about how we read written texts and visual images. Special attention will be paid to the tension between the discursive and figurative as a fundamental element of artistic endeavour.

For the purpose of this course, the term 'writing' is defined rather loosely. We shall look at a number of different genres of writing, from the personal journal, letters and correspondence, published statements and interviews, to more experimental approaches based on collaboration, collage and more creative forms of writing.

The course also addresses problems encountered while conducting advanced research in art history, which often involves the interpretation of artworks in the context of written texts.

The first two seminars look at case-studies of the way artists' writing can be read. The purpose here is to focus your attention on the process of close reading, particularly the way it can lead to surprising results. The next nine seminars focus on selections of writings by artists associated with the surrealist movement. Each week will also include a student presentation on an aspect of the week's material. Seminars thirteen and fourteen look at a

number of later artists who can be related to the legacy of surrealism. The final two seminars are dedicated to student presentations of research essays.

More information on the course content can be found in the section on seminar readings.

COURSE DELIVERY

This course is taught as a series of 16 2-hour seminars. Students are expected to prepare for each seminar by doing the reading, and to participate in the seminar discussion.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course has the following objectives:

- to encourage you to think critically about the nature of artistic endeavour and its relation to art historical scholarship;
- to encourage you to apply your skills of analysis to critically examine visual and textual material;
- to develop your capacity for independent work, including the formulation, analysis and refinement of topics;
- to ensure the consistent application of the conventions of academic writing and research;
- to refine your skills in seminar presentation and debate;
- to prepare you for further postgraduate study in art history;
- to introduce you to the standards required of scholarly articles and papers.

EXPECTED WORKLOAD

The University recommends that approximately 12 hours per paper per week, inclusive of seminars, be given to a full-year, 4-paper graduate programme in order to maintain satisfactory progress.

ESSENTIAL TEXTS

The **ARTH 407 *Handbook of Readings*** contains a variety of readings essential for seminar discussions. It is compulsory for all enrolled students to buy this handbook.

There is no textbook for ARTH 407.

For the first two weeks of trimester all undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from the Memorial Theatre foyer, while postgraduate textbooks and student notes will be available from the top floor of vicbooks in the Student Union Building, Kelburn Campus. After week two all undergraduate textbooks will be sold from vicbooks and student notes from the Student Notes Distribution Centre on the ground floor of the Student Union Building.

Customers can order textbooks and student notes online at www.vicbooks.co.nz or can email an order or enquiry to enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz. Books can be couriered to customers or they can be picked up from the shop. Customers will be contacted when they are available.

Opening hours are 8.00 am – 6.00 pm, Monday – Friday during term time (closing at 5.00 pm in the holidays). Phone: 463 5515.

GENERAL UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS

Information about the University's general requirements can be found at the end of this course outline. This includes information about the University's policy on plagiarism, grievance procedures and facilities to assist students.

CLASS REPRESENTATIVE

A class representative will be elected in the first class, and that person's name and contact details will be available to VUWSA, the Course Coordinator and the class. The class representative provides a communication channel to liaise with the Course Coordinator on behalf of students. Contact details for the class representative will be available from Pippa in the ARTH office.

COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Art History is on level 3 (ground floor) of the Old Kirk building. Pippa Wisheart, Art History's Administrator, has her office in OK 306 (463-5800). Notices regarding the course will be posted on the board adjacent to her office.

ASSESSMENT

ARTH 407 is internally assessed. There are three components to the assessment:

1. Seminar presentation and paper	30 %
2. Reading journal	20 %
3. Research essay (5000 words)	50 %

Information about the specific requirement for each piece of assessment follows.

Students are encouraged to discuss their research plans with the course coordinator, who can advise on the suitability of a topic and indicate possible problems.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Mandatory course requirements are defined in the University Calendar. You are expected to come to all seminar sessions and you should notify the course coordinator if you cannot attend (due to illness or other pressing reasons). In addition:

- Each student must give a seminar presentation, followed by a written paper, responding to an assigned question.
- Regularly keep a reading journal on the assigned readings for ARTH 407.
- Complete a research essay. As part of the research essay, you also have to submit a proposal with bibliography, and give a brief presentation on your research to the seminar.

MARKING

The course coordinator is responsible for marking assignments. You may request a second opinion of the assessment of any piece of written work, from another lecturer in Art History. Coursework will be reviewed by an external assessor in order to ensure that academic standards at honours level are met. Your final grade for the course may be adjusted both to reflect your overall contribution to and achievement in the course and in response to the feedback from the external assessor.

AEGROTAT PASS

There are limited aegrotat provisions for internally assessed courses. If you are in any doubt about your ability to complete any assessment on time, you must see the course coordinator immediately. Extensions are not generally granted unless there are exceptional circumstances.

PENALTIES

If you require an extension you must contact the course coordinator before the due date. Late assignments may be penalized by 2% per day. All work must be submitted before October 15, 2010.

1. Seminar presentation (during Trimester 1, date to be arranged)

Each student is required to give a seminar presentation during the first trimester.

The seminar presentation requires you to discuss the relation between a specific essay or writing by an artist and his or her artistic practice. You should focus on the way that the writing addresses the process of artistic endeavour, particularly on the way that writing frames the work's significance.

You should discuss your presentation with the course coordinator in advance of the seminar. This will allow the coordinator to facilitate the week's seminar and incorporate your presentation as part of the class.

The seminar presentation is an opportunity for you to develop your critical reading skills and to demonstrate your ability to present an argument and lead discussion. The aim is to encourage students to take responsibility for presenting and contextualising a set of readings. Your ability to generate and lead the ensuing discussion is as important as your prepared remarks. Your presentation is an important contribution to the course, which will enable you to exercise your analytical skills and refine your abilities in oral presentation and debate.

You are also required to submit a 2000 word essay responding to the seminar question.

Assessment for seminar presentation and paper will be based on the following criteria:

- ability to formulate and develop the seminar topic;
- the selection of appropriate readings;
- the clarity of your presentation and your ability to lead discussion;
- and use of visual resources.

2. Reading journal (due Friday, July 30)

As part of the assessment for ARTH 407, you are required to keep a reading journal that records your response to the assigned readings and other relevant material. The journal should not include notes taken during class (although you may wish to discuss points raised in class in your journal), nor should it include photocopies of the reading, etc.

The purpose of the journal is to promote critical engagement with the course material. It should present your response to what you are reading, focusing on what you find interesting in the reading and the questions raised by the material.

There is no single way to keep a journal, so you are free to develop your own approach. I would recommend that you include basic information about what you are reading, the date, and suggestions or questions for further research.

I will review your journals during the first trimester to give you feedback on your progress.

Further information about the reading journal will be provided in the first class.

Assessment for the reading journal will be based on the following criteria:

- critical engagement with the assigned readings
- ability to develop connections between different readings
- regular and timely contributions to the journal

3. Research essay

The research essay is a major part of the assessment for ARTH 407. Given its weight, I have divided the process into three elements: 1) a research proposal and bibliography; 2) a research presentation; and 3) the final essay. Each element is mandatory, although only the final essay will be formally graded. The purpose of this approach is to give you guidance during the year as you develop your research essay, and identify any potential problems in advance so you are able to address them before the submission of the final essay.

3.1: Proposal and bibliography (due Friday, June 18)

In discussion with the course coordinator, develop a 300 word proposal (one page) for a 5000 word research essay. You need to identify a body of artists' writings and works to consider and formulate a problem to investigate. The proposal should be stated in the form of a question: for instance, you could begin with the question "What role do artists' writings play in understanding the historical significance of Abstract Expressionism?" and then develop the implications of this question in the body of the proposal, considering the initial critical reception of Ab-Ex and its pivotal role in the construction of a particular history of modernism.

The proposal must also include a bibliography of relevant writings. The bibliography should be divided into primary and secondary sources; the primary sources should be writings by an artist or group of artists (in the above example, writings by Ab-Ex artists), while the secondary sources are critical or scholarly writings that discuss the artist or writings (e.g., for Ab-Ex, critics like Greenberg and Rosenberg, historians like Fried, Krauss, Clark, etc.).

In framing and developing your proposal, you will need to consider the topic's ability to fulfil the requirements of the research essay. Although the topic should not be too broad as to prevent a detailed discussion of the artist's writings, it should not be so limited as to focus exclusively on the interpretation of a single text. If you have any doubts about a topic's suitability, discuss it with the course coordinator.

There is a list of published artists' writings later in the course guide, which you can consult in the formulation of a topic.

The purpose of the proposal is to demonstrate your ability to think critically about the nature of artistic endeavour and its relation to art historical scholarship, and to formulate and refine a research and seminar topic.

The proposal should not address topics covered in other ARTH 407 seminars, nor be based on research being undertaken for another course or your ARTH 489 research essay.

Given that this course is focused on artists' writings, the research proposal should address existing writings and not involve correspondence or interviews with living artists. This will also avoid the need to obtain ethics approval from the University Ethics Committee for the research project.

3.2: Research presentation (August 12 or 19, date to be arranged)

Each student is required to give a 15 minute presentation on their research essay during week 5–6 of the second trimester. The presentation should outline your topic and summarize your methodology and conclusions. This is an important opportunity to receive informal feedback from the class about your topic before you have to submit the final version of your research essay.

3.3: Research Essay (5000 words; due Friday, September 10)

The research essay is a 5000 word essay in response to the question formulated in your proposal (see above). The research essay is a major piece of work. It is worth 50% of your final grade. The research essay should build on the feedback received for the proposal and presentation.

The purpose of the research essay is to enable you to develop your knowledge and understanding of a particular topic in depth. It is designed to encourage you to demonstrate your ability to undertake a piece of independent research through the formulation and refinement of a topic, to think critically about the nature of artistic endeavour and its relation to art historical scholarship, to apply your analytical skills to a range of written and visual sources, and demonstrate your ability to follow the conventions of academic writing.

The essay should discuss both artists' writings *and* appropriate visual images.

Assessment for the research essay will be based on the following criteria:

- appropriateness of approach to the topic (relevance of question);
- critical engagement with written *and* visual sources;
- relation between proposal and essay;
- quality and development of argument;
- originality and independence of thought;
- quality and accuracy of referencing;
- style and mechanics (legibility, presentation, grammar, spelling).

SEMINAR SCHEDULE

TRIMESTER ONE (March 1-June 4, 2010)

SEMINAR	WEEK	TOPIC	DATE
1	1	Introduction	March 4
2	2	Cézanne's Truth	March 11
3	3	Clark on Delacroix	March 18
4	4	Picasso and Duchamp	March 25
5	5	Origins of Surrealism	April 1
		<i>Mid-Trimester break</i>	
6	6	Automatism and Painting	April 22
7	7	Max Ernst and Surrealism	April 29
8	8	Nadja	May 6
9	9	Artaud and the Limits of Surrealism	May 13
10	10	Bataille and Surrealism I	May 20
11	11	Bataille and Surrealism II	May 27
12	12	Surreal Objects	June 3

Research proposal due Friday, June 18

TRIMESTER TWO (July 12-October 15, 2010)

SEMINAR	WEEK	TOPIC	DATE
	1	No seminar	July 15
13	2	Writing the Body	July 22
14	3	Towers Open Fire	July 29
	4	No Seminar	August 5
15	5	Research Presentations I	August 12
16	6	Research Presentations II	August 19
		<i>Mid-Trimester break</i>	

Reading journal due Friday, July 30

Research essays due Friday, September 10

GENERAL INFORMATION

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the internet
- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such material

Find out more about plagiarism, how to avoid it and penalties, on the University's website:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

GENERAL UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND STATUTES

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar or go to the Academic Policy and Student Policy sections on:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy>

The AVC(Academic) website also provides information for students in a number of areas including Academic Grievances, Student and Staff conduct, Meeting the needs of students with impairments, and student support/VUWSA student advocates. This website can be accessed at:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcacademic/Publications.aspx

Taping of Lectures

All students in the School of Art History, Classics and Religious Studies are welcome to use their own audio-tapes to record lectures. If you want to do this, please see your lecturer, tutor or the relevant programme administrator and complete a disclaimer form, which advises of copyright and other relevant issues.

THE CHARTWELL TRUST STUDENT ART WRITING PRIZE 2010

The Adam Art Gallery invites students to participate in the Chartwell Trust Student Art Writing Prize, an annual writing initiative focusing on visual art and culture.

ELIGIBILITY

The prize is open to **all** VUW students studying Art History, Classics, Religious Studies, Museum and Heritage Studies, English, Film, Theatre, and Media Studies.

PRIZE

The winning entry will receive the cash prize of **\$500** and have their essay published on the Adam Art Gallery website **www.adamartgallery.org.nz**.

The 2010 winner will be announced at the Adam Art Gallery exhibition opening on **15 October 2010**.

GUIDELINES/CRITERIA

- Entries should be in the form of a review or essay addressing an exhibition at the Adam Art Gallery or a work from the Victoria University of Wellington Art Collection
- Check **www.adamartgallery.org.nz/learning-opportunities/chartwell-trust-student-writing-prize** for previous winning entries
- Submissions should be no more than 1,500 words
- Texts should be clearly labelled with author's name, contact details, course of study and student ID
- Texts must be submitted in both hard copy form and in Microsoft Word format (A4, single sided and 1.5 spaced).

DEADLINE

Entries are **now open** and will be accepted up until the closing date.

The closing date for submissions is **1 October 2010**.

Entries should be sent to:

The Chartwell Trust Student Art Writing Prize
c/- Adam Art Gallery
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 600
Wellington 6140
or via email adamartgallery@vuw.ac.nz