

ARTH 401

ART HISTORY METHODOLOGY

Course outline



Art History
School of Art History, Classics and Religious Studies
Victoria University of Wellington

Trimester 2
12 July – 13 November 2010

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Course co-ordinator:	Professor Geoffrey Batchen OK 312, geoffrey.batchen@vuw.ac.nz
Where:	Easterfield 012 EA012
When:	3:10 – 5:00pm Wednesdays

ARTH401 aims to introduce its participants to art historical study at an advanced level. The class will critically examine a variety of interpretive methods associated with the practice of art history, particularly those developed over the past forty years, such as formalism, marxism, social history, feminism, semiotics, deconstruction, visual culture, postcolonialism, and so on. In that sense it will provide students with a necessarily partial typology of recent art historical practices. The class will ask participants to develop their skills in looking, researching, writing, and argumentation, four of the basic components of academic art history. However it will also take account of other common art historical practices, such as those encountered in the studio, in museums, and in galleries. In brief, the motivating principle of the class will be a single crucial question: “what is the purpose of art history today?”

The course is delivered by means of 12 seminar sessions. Each session is structured around the discussion of a group of readings. These include important texts by art historians and theorists, as well as critical commentaries on their writings and methods. As part of the formal assessment you are expected to actively contribute to every seminar as your input is crucial to the success of the course and your own learning experience.

In line with Art History’s learning objectives, ARTH 401:

1. **encourages you to apply your skills of analysis to critically examine visual and textual material;**
2. **develops your capacity for independent work, including the formulation, analysis and refinement of topics;**
3. **ensures the consistent application of the conventions of academic writing and art historical research;**
4. **ensures the full use of library resources;**
5. **refines your skills in presenting and debating ideas in oral situations;**
6. **prepares you for post-graduate research in art history;**
7. **introduces you to the standards required of scholarly articles and papers.**

SEMINAR PROGRAMME

- 1. Introduction? 14 July**
What is art history? What is art history's own history? What are art history's basic components? Where does one find art history in action? What are its effects? Why should we study or practice it?
- 2. Exhibitions and Museums 21 July**
How (by what techniques, to what ends) is art history represented in the form of exhibitions?
- 3. Formalism 28 July**
What is the essence of a work of art (and why does it matter)? What makes good art 'good'?
- 4. Marxism 4 August**
What influence has Marxist thinking had on recent art history? How is art related to economics (and art history to politics)?
- 5. Social History 11 August**
How are social dynamics and political conflicts manifested in a work of art (and in a piece of art-historical writing)?
- 6. Feminism 18 August**
What is a feminist art history? What is 'queer' about queer theory? Is it enough to simply add women or homosexuals to the history of art?

Mid trimester break

- 7. Difference 8 September**
How should art history deal with cultural difference? Is a 'global' art history possible, or even desirable?
- 8. Psychoanalysis 15 September**
How useful is psychoanalysis in the interpretation of works of art? Can there be a psychoanalytic history of art?
- 9. Semiology 22 September**
What is the relationship of form and content in art? Is there a 'language' to art making? What kind of politics is reproduced through that language?

10. Postmodernism

29 September

Is art history about truth or interpretation? In what ways do art works reproduce the world view of their time? How important is knowing the artist's 'intention' to the understanding of a work of art?

11. Deconstruction

6 October

To what extent is art history caught in contradiction with itself, claiming truth but reproducing no more than the projected desires of its art historians?

12. Visual Culture

13 October

What is the role of visual culture within art history? Is one a danger to the other?

<p>End of course, <i>ESSAY DUE</i> Friday 15 October</p>

ASSESSMENT

Assessment for this course is based on two assignments, a long essay and your participation in class. All essays should be typed, double spaced, well illustrated, and should of course employ correct grammar and spelling. *Marks will be deducted for absent or poorly laid out bibliographies and endnotes.* Please come and see me if you are having any problems, or would like to discuss your ideas prior to writing your essay.

ASSIGNMENT 1 (not graded)

due Friday 23 July

Please write a short (1-2 pages maximum) exposition of why you want to be an art historian and what you think it means. Your exposition will necessarily include a definition of the purposes and primary conventions of art history, as you see it. Although this is a required assignment, no grade will be allocated to it (and, thus, no bibliography is necessary). Think of it as a warm-up for future discussions.

ASSIGNMENT 2 (30%)

due Friday 20 August

ESSAY (50%)

due Friday 15 October

PARTICIPATION IN SEMINARS (20%)

Participation in discussions is an important aspect of the class and will be worth 20% of your final grade. You will also be expected to actively contribute to the seminar discussions at all times. This is an opportunity for you to develop your critical reading skills and to demonstrate your ability to present an argument and participate in discussion. You will be graded on the quality of your contribution.

Mandatory course requirements are defined in the University Calendar. You are expected to come to **all** seminar sessions and you should notify the course co-ordinator if you cannot attend, (due to illness or other pressing reasons). Regular attendance of class (at least 75% of sessions) is also a requirement for a passing grade. In addition:

To gain a pass in this course each student must submit:

- two assignments by the due dates;
- one essay by the due date;
- and attend 75% of seminars and participate in seminar discussions.

If you are in any doubt about your ability to meet these deadlines you must see the course co-ordinator immediately. Extensions are not generally granted unless under exceptional circumstances. Papers must be handed in on time. Any paper submitted after the deadline must be accompanied by documentary evidence (eg. medical certificate) of *serious* mitigating circumstances, or it will lose 2% of its final grade for each day it is overdue. Aegrotat passes can only be considered on the provision of a medical certificate.

Marking: The course co-ordinator is responsible for marking all assessment. You may request a second opinion of the assessment of any piece of written work, from another lecturer in Art History. Coursework and the exam 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.

Workload: The University recommends that approximately 20 hours per paper per week, inclusive of lectures and seminars, be given to a one trimester, 4-paper graduate programme in order to maintain satisfactory progress.

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.

Readings: Texts, (available on Blackboard or from e-reserve from the Library website), will be set for each session and must be read by all participants.

GENERAL INFORMATION

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.

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>

ENJOY THE COURSE!