

ARTH 401

ART HISTORY METHODOLOGY

Course outline



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

Trimester 1 & 2, 2012
5 March to 17 November

KEY DATES

Trimester Dates

Trimester dates: 5 March to 17 November 2012

Teaching dates: 5 March to 19 October 2012

Mid-trimester break 1/3: 6–22 April 2012

Mid-trimester break 2/3: 27 August to 9 September 2012

Examination/Assessment Period: 26 October to 17 November 2012

Withdrawal dates

Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at

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

Course Prescription

ARTH 401 investigates the approaches art historians have developed from art history's beginnings to the present. It critically examines the work of significant art historians in relation to key topics: the construction of the artistic subject; the question of style, the interpretation of meaning; theories of perception and visual culture; the role of context and the social production of art.

ARTH 401 ART HISTORY METHODOLOGY

Course co-ordinator: Professor Geoffrey Batchen
OK 312, geoffrey.batchen@vuw.ac.nz
Where: Old Kirk 301
When: 9 – 11 am Tuesday

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course 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 21 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

*** readings marked with an asterisk will be available in electronic format through Blackboard**

1. Introduction (March 6)

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. Museums (March 13)

How (by what techniques, to what ends) is art history represented in art museums?

3. Exhibitions (March 20)

What contribution to the history of art is made by modern art exhibitions and their curators?

4. Connoisseurship (March 27, Te Papa 10am)

What kind of art history can be deduced from a close examination of the art work itself?

5. Biography (April 3)

Can art history be told through the biography of artists? Does biography matter?

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| Mid-trimester break 6 – 22 April |
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7. Iconography (May 8)

What does iconography tell us about a work of art?

8. Formalism (May 15)

What is the essence of a work of art (and why does it matter)? What makes good art 'good'?

9. Marxism (May 22)

What influence has Marxist thinking had on recent art history? How is art related to economics (and art history to politics)?

10. Reproduction (May 29)

What does reproduction do to a work of art, or to its audience?

11. Social History (June 5)

How are social dynamics and political relations manifested in a work of art (and in a piece of art-historical writing)?

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| Mid-year break 11 June – 15 July |
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12. Feminism (July 17)

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?

13. Difference (July 24)

How should art history deal with cultural difference?

14. Indigeneity (August 7)

Are there indigenous histories of art? How should indigenous understandings of art be incorporated into art history?

15. Psychoanalysis (August 14)

How useful is psychoanalysis in the interpretation of works of art? Can there be a psychoanalytic history of art?

16. Semiology (August 21)

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?

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| Mid-trimester break 27 August – 9 September |
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17. Postmodernism (September 11)

Is art history about truth or interpretation? In what ways do art works reproduce the worldview of their time? Is knowledge of the artist's 'intention' necessary to the understanding of a work of art?

18. Deconstruction (September 18)

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?

19. Autobiography (September 25)

What are the benefits and dangers of using an autobiographical voice in art history?

20. Visual Culture (October 2)

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

21. Inversion (October 9)

Can a local art history tell a global story (and vice versa)? What contributions can regional scholars make to the practice of art history?

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| End of course |
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ASSESSMENT

Assessment for this course is based on two essays (30% & 50%) and your participation in class (20%). 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.

Mandatory course requirements

You will have met the mandatory course requirements for ARTH 401 with satisfactory seminar attendance (at least 75% of sessions), by participating in discussions and by completing all required assignments.

Assessment will be based on essays and participation in class. Two papers will be assessed, one of them a short exercise in criticism (worth 30% of your final grade) and the second a more substantial piece of art historical writing (worth 50%). 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.

Regular attendance of class (at least 75% of sessions) is also a requirement for a passing grade. Texts (available on Blackboard) will be set for each session and must be read by all participants. Participation in discussions is an important aspect of the class (and will be worth 20% of your final grade).

Marking: The course coordinator 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 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 300 hours over the trimesters, inclusive of lectures, seminars and examination preparation, be given to a 30-point course in order to maintain satisfactory progress, i.e. 10 hours/week over two trimesters.

Criteria for assessment:

- understanding and definition of question
- formulation and development of argument
- use of visual and written resources
- originality and independence of thought
- quality and accuracy of referencing
- style and mechanics (legibility, presentation, grammar, spelling)

GENERAL INFORMATION

WHERE TO FIND MORE DETAILED INFORMATION

Find key dates, explanations of grades and other useful information at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study. Find out how academic progress is monitored and how enrolment can be restricted at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress. Most statutes and policies are available at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy, except qualification statutes, which are available via the Calendar webpage at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/calendar.aspx (See Section C).

Other useful information for students may be found at the website of the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic), at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcacademic.

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>

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.

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.

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| ENJOY THE COURSE! |
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WIN \$500

THE CHARTWELL TRUST STUDENT ART WRITING PRIZE 2012

The Adam Art Gallery is calling for entries for the Chartwell Trust Student Art Writing Prize—an annual writing initiative focusing on visual art and culture.

ELIGIBILITY

The prize is open to Victoria University of Wellington students from any of the following programmes:

Art History, Classics, Religious Studies, Museum and Heritage Studies, English, Film, Theatre, Media Studies and Music.

PRIZE

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

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
- 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)
- Check www.adamartgallery.org.nz/learning-opportunities/chartwell-trust-student-writing-prize for previous winning entries.

DEADLINE

Entries are **now open** and can be submitted anytime until the closing date. The closing date for submissions is **Friday 28 September 2012**.

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