

ARTH 317

TOPICS IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY ART



Cindy Sherman, *Untitled, # 153*, 1985. Colour photograph, 171 x 126 cm

ART HISTORY

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

2007

KEY DATES

LECTURE PROGRAMME

- 1 July 12 Klimt and the Question of Figuration in Twentieth-Century Art
- 2 July 19 Picasso's Queer Desire
- 3 July 26 Painting the Body Surreal
- 4 Aug 2 Figuring Modernity in America
- 5 Aug 9 Mexico and the Margins of Modernity
- 6 Aug 16 Figuring Existentialism in Post-War Paris

Mid-trimester break (20 August–2 September)

- 7 Sept 6 Figuring Realism in Britain
- 8 Sept 13 Embodiment in the Art of Bourgeois and Kiki Smith
- 9 Sept 20 Resisting Misogyny: Photography and the Female Body
- 10 Sept 27 Censoring the Queer Body: Mapplethorpe
- 11 Oct 4 Photography, Reproduction, and the Pale of History
- 12 Oct 11 Figuring the Abject Body

ASSESSMENT

Presentation & Paper	30%	tba
Research Essay	40%	August 23 or October 4
Exam	30%	tba

ARTH 317
TOPICS IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY ART
Trimester 2, 2007

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

Office Hours: Wednesday 1.00–3.00 pm

Lectures: Murphy LT 101 Thursday 1.10–3.00 pm

Tutorials: Tue. 1.10 pm

Tue. 2.10 pm

Tue. 3.10 pm.

All tutorials are held in OK 319

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. Course information will also be posted on the course Blackboard site (<http://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz>).

For general information about Art History see: www.vuw.ac.nz/Art-History

COURSE OUTLINE

ARTH 317 focuses on the persistence of figuration in twentieth-century art. Given the primacy of ideas about abstraction, modernism and postmodernism in the writing of twentieth-century art history, this course asks why figuration remains a recurring theme in the practice of many artists throughout the century. The focus on figuration also questions the relationship between art, power and the body, notions of 'self' and 'other', and representations of sexuality and gender. We will study a number of case studies to examine forces that shaped artistic culture during the twentieth century.

This course assumes a basic knowledge of the history of art during the twentieth century. If you do not feel confident about your knowledge, you will have to make an extra effort to cover more general background reading.

The lecture programme does not cover the entire course content. Lectures and tutorials are important, since they will guide you through the course and provide insight into current opinion about topics covered. However, they must be viewed as *complementary* to your own reading in the field and viewing of images (and, whenever possible, actual works of art). It is very important that you make time to read alongside the formal part of the programme.

The course aims of ARTH 317 are:

- to ensure you are familiar with the chronology and key artists in this period of art history;
- to introduce you to some major themes and currents in the writing about art of the 20th century;
- to develop your ability to analyse and interpret art within the relevant social, political and theoretical contexts;
- to develop your skills in visual analysis and, where applicable, to the materials and techniques used in the art of the period;
- to develop your ability to gather and organise relevant information and evidence from published material (that is, secondary sources) and to further your ability to construct an argument using this material;
- to develop further your ability to present material which is coherent and well-written and which demonstrates an understanding and application of the conventions of academic writing (appropriate citation, referencing and documentation);
- to develop your skills in reading art history and to make you aware of the range of available library resources;
- to develop your ability to contribute to group discussions.

Attendance at lectures is strongly recommended. Lectures provide you with exposure to key visual images and the opportunity to hear an analysis of various ideas relating to the topic in question. You cannot 'catch up' on lectures by reading the texts, although you will be directed to various pertinent references at each lecture.

Tutorials are held weekly and it is mandatory to attend 7 out the 10 sessions – a positive contribution in tutorials will make a difference to your final mark, particularly if it is on the borderline between grades. Tutorials deal with topics that complement the lecture programme and they provide an opportunity to discuss aspects of the course in a small group and develop your ability to contribute to discussions.

The ARTH 317 *Handbook of Readings* contains a variety of articles, concentrating in particular on those required to prepare for tutorial discussions. It is compulsory for all enrolled students to buy this handbook, which is available from the Student Notes Office for \$23.02.

There is no textbook for ARTH 317.

LECTURE AND TUTORIAL TOPICS

This section contains information on the lecture topics and tutorial questions for each week. It also contains a brief reading list for each week, listing relevant material for the topic.

All lectures are scheduled for Thursday afternoon between 1.10-3.00 pm in MYLT 101. The tutorial associated with each lecture takes place on the following Tuesday. There are ten tutorials during weeks 2-11 (i.e., there is no tutorials in weeks 1 or 12).

Tutorial Presentations

Each student must give a 10 minute tutorial presentation during the semester. You are also required to submit a 1500 word paper and bibliography, due at the time of the presentation. Topics will be assigned during the first tutorial held during week 2. The tutorial presentation and paper is worth 30% of your final assessment.

Tutorials are a mandatory part of ARTH 317. Preparation for these and group discussion of the topics they cover will ensure you gain more from the course, and an energetic contribution in tutorials will make a positive difference to your final mark, particularly if it is on the borderline between grades.

Reading List

The reading lists for each week are divided into three sections.

The **Essential Reading** represents the absolute minimum preparation expected for each tutorial. You should allow sufficient time to read and understand the reading, so do not leave your reading to the last minute. These readings are found in the *ARTH 317 Handbook of Readings*.

The **Recommend Reading** directs you to other reading directly relevant to the week's lecture or tutorial. This represents background reading for understanding the themes of ARTH 317 and to respond adequately to the final exam. I have requested that the library place these books on three-day loan (or closed reserve).

The **Further Reading** includes publications relevant to the lecture and tutorial topic. These publications are essential for tutorial presentations and research essays, and I will expect you to consult them in your research. I have requested that the library place these books on three-day loan (or closed reserve).

❖ This symbol indicates that the reading is included in the *ARTH 317 Handbook of Readings*.

1	Klimt and the Question of Figuration in Twentieth-Century Art	July 12
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Lecture Topic

This lecture introduces the theme of the course through a discussion of the persistence of figuration in twentieth-century art. Although ideas about abstraction, modernism, the avant-garde and postmodernism dominate historical accounts of twentieth-century art, many artists have continued to focus on the human figure as a central concern of their art. This lecture poses the question of how we can account for this continuing interest. The lecture concludes with the case study of Klimt's failed commission for the decoration of Vienna University.

2	Picasso's Queer Desire	July 19
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Lecture Topic

In many ways Picasso remains the archetypal artist of the early twentieth-century, presenting a heroic image of triumphant masculinity to the viewer. This lecture seeks to unsettle this portrait by considering the ambiguity of gender positions implicit in Picasso's work, focusing on his 1906 *Portrait of Gertrude Stein*. The lecture also looks at the breadth of Picasso's career during the twentieth-century.

3	Painting the Body Surreal	July 26
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Lecture Topic

This lecture looks at the role of figuration in the surrealism movement. It considers how the artists associated with the surrealist movement transformed earlier avant-garde strategies as a way to explore the poetic capacity of the visual arts.

4	Figuring Modernity in America	Aug 2
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Lecture Topic

Although the Museum of Modern Art is usually considered the paradigm of a triumphal modernism in twentieth-century art, its inaugural exhibition in 1929 was of the figurative paintings of Edward Hopper. Indeed, figuration played an important role in American responses to modernity during the interwar years. This lecture discusses some of these responses, focusing on the work of Hopper and Georgia O'Keeffe.

5	Mexico and the Margins of Modernity	Aug 9
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Lecture Topic

This lecture considers the work of artists working in Mexico during the 1930s in counterpoint to developments in Europe and the United States. In contrast to Europe,

which was increasingly polarized between the alternatives of Fascism and Communism, and the US as the last bastion of rampant capitalism, Mexico represents an interesting situation as a successful socialist state. This lecture considers how artists responded to this context, looking at the work of Kahlo, Modotti and Bravo, among others.

6	Figuring Existentialism in Post-War Paris	Aug 16
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Lecture Topic

This lecture looks at the way French artists used the figure as a way to respond to the horrors of the Second World War.

7	Realism in Britain	Sept 6
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Lecture Topic

British art has been dominated by the work of idiosyncratic artists who have developed distinct figurative styles. This lecture looks at the work of Francis Bacon and Lucien Freud as artists who use figuration to explore the condition of inhabiting a body.

8	Embodiment in the Art of Bourgeois and Kiki Smith	Sept 13
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Lecture Topic

This lecture looks at the way Louise Bourgeois, Kiki Smith and other women artists have used the body as a motif in their work to consider the link between embodiment and primordial experience.

9	Resisting Misogyny: Photography and the Female Body	Sept 20
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Lecture Topic

This lecture considers the way artists during the 1980s and 1990s entered into dialogue with earlier art as a way to explore issues of gender and sexuality.

10	Censoring the Queer Body: Mapplethorpe	Sept 27
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Lecture Topic

This lecture considers the representation of queer sexuality in recent art, particularly the work of Robert Mapplethorpe. It also looks at the controversy over censorship of around the work of Mapplethorpe, Serrano and Ofili.

11	Photography, Reproduction, and the Pale of History	Oct 4
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Lecture Topic

This lecture considers how photography has been used in recent art as a way to comment on history and memory. Although the proliferation of images in contemporary society is often seen to generate historical amnesia, can photography also function as a site for remembrance and commemoration?

12**Figuring the Abject Body****Oct 11**

Lecture Topic

This lecture considers the role of abjection in twentieth century art. Although the theory of abjection emerged in the 1980s, it provides a useful category to apply to earlier art. The lecture will also look at the way contemporary artists have deployed the abject body as an element in their work.

ASSESSMENT

ARTH 317 is assessed by means of a **class presentation and written paper** (1500 words), a **research essay** (2500 words), and a 2 hour **final exam**.

The relative weight of the course assessment is 70% in-term, and 30% final exam.

The percentage weight of the different assignments is as follows:

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|-------------------------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| a) Presentation & Paper | 30% | tbc |
| b) Research Essay | 40% | August 23 or October 4 |
| c) Final Exam (2 hrs) | 30% | tbc (19 October – 10 November 2007) |

The date for the tutorial presentations will be set during the first tutorial meeting. The date for the research essay depends on when you give your tutorial presentation: for those with tutorial presentations before the mid-trimester break, your essay is due on **October 4**. For those with tutorial presentations after the mid-trimester break, your essay is due on **August 23**.

These assignments are designed to fulfil the teaching objectives outlined earlier in the course outline:

- The **tutorial presentation** requires you to present a response to a set question to your tutorial group. The presentation should consist of a 10–15 minute oral presentation using appropriate visual aids (i.e., slides). You are also required to submit a 1500 word paper based on your presentation, and a bibliography of works consulted, using appropriate scholarly conventions.
- The **research essay** requires you to read relevant art historical and critical literature, testing your ability to organise this and to construct an argument. It provides an opportunity for you to investigate an aspect of the history of art in the light of the social, political and theoretical context afforded by the art history and critical commentary relating to the period. The essay topics are framed in such a way that you will develop your analytical and observational ability as well as your research, writing and presentation skills. All written work must cite sources in footnotes, and include a bibliography of all works consulted during the research process, using appropriate scholarly conventions.
- The **exam** will consist of short essay questions, and will provide an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the topics addressed in lectures, tutorials and course readings.

If you require an extension you must contact the course coordinator and complete an *ARTH 317 request for extension form*, which must be signed by the course coordinator and then submitted with the assignment. Assignments received without this form will be penalized by 2% per day.

Students are required to attend tutorials. It is mandatory to attend 7 out the 10 sessions. Preparation for these ensures that you gain more from the course. An energetic

and positive contribution to tutorial discussions will make a difference if your final mark is on the borderline between grades.

All written work must acknowledge sources in footnotes and include a bibliography using appropriate scholarly conventions. There is a 5% penalty for written work that does not follow appropriate bibliographic conventions.

Ensure that you are presenting a point of view in your essay and that the points you make support that view. Plan your essay thoroughly, organising your thoughts clearly and logically so that the argument you develop is understood by the reader. You may discuss progress on your essay with your tutor at any stage, but the tutor cannot comment on a draft prior to the final date.

You must pay attention to setting out, correct grammar, spelling and punctuation. By 300-level you should be familiar with and apply the conventions of academic art history writing. Please refer to the departmental handbook, *Researching and Writing Art History Essays* for guidance (available on Blackboard).

All written work must be typed. Type on one side of the page only, leaving a generous margin on the left-hand side for the marker's comments. If writing is not your strength, ask someone to check your work – many an essay with good ideas is marred by poor presentation. More information on essay writing is available on the course Blackboard site.

Please ensure you keep a hard copy of what you submit. If using a computer, please include a word count at the end.

Essays will be marked by the course coordinator. A second opinion may be requested in the final assessment of any piece of written work.

Workload: The University recommends that you spend approximately 18 hours per week, inclusive of lectures and tutorials, on a 300-level course in order to maintain satisfactory progress. Please ensure that you are able to set aside at least this amount of time throughout the course – it is not worth taking on a greater workload than you can manage.

Mandatory course requirements for ARTH 317 will be satisfied with 70% tutorial attendance (i.e., at least 7 tutorials), completion of one research essay, one class presentation and written paper, and one exam. All internal assessment must be met by Friday, 12 October 2007.

It is essential that all pieces of work are received from each student completing ARTH 317. All requirements are strictly enforced.

THE CHARTWELL TRUST STUDENT ART WRITING PRIZE

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

The winning entry will receive a cash prize of \$500.

The prize is open to students studying at Victoria at 300- or post-graduate level. Students enrolled in any course of study are eligible. 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. The submissions should be no more than 1,500 words and can be sent in at any time up until the closing date of **17 September 2007**.

Entries should be sent to:

The Chartwell Trust Student Art Writing Prize,
c/- Adam Art Gallery, Victoria University of Wellington,
PO Box 600, Wellington.

**For more information please contact Frances Loeffler
(ph: 463 5229 frances.loeffler@vuw.ac.nz)**