

ART 434.1003
Spring 2020
M/W 4.00-5.15
HFA 257

Topics in Contemporary Art: Reading and Writing for Artists

Artists know art when they see it. They respond to its formal organization, its conceptual structure, its technical execution, humor, visual appeal, contradictions, and complexity. But once they've seen it, how do they gain context, learning more about the ideas of others to form their own opinions? And, how can they commit those opinions to public presentation, particularly in the form of the response essay, artist interview, criticism, exhibition review, or slide lecture? This course explores a variety of contemporary art practices through the quick glance and the deep dive. Based on brief but informative encounters with contemporary art, students read and dissect different forms of art writing, from long-form profile to critical essay to art historical analysis. By surveying contemporary art through skill-building in visual and textual source literacy, students will learn life-long habits in exploring the world beyond first glance.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- Discuss and explain differences in forms of contemporary art writing from the biographical profile to historical scholarship to critical reviews, and formal, cultural, and theoretical frameworks of inquiry;
- Apply a professional scholarly-critical vocabulary of art analysis to new or unknown works;
- Investigate, analyze and critique both individual works of art and artistic practices for their conceptual and theoretical motivations and compare those motivations toward visual, received, and exhibited outcomes;

- Locate, understand, and utilize different forms of art writing sources using UNLV Library assets;
- Compose and analyze specific forms of popular contemporary art writing, and
- Deliver professional-quality group presentations on works of art that connect in meaningful ways.

Required Texts:

- - All texts are available via Canvas.
 - You must download a UNLV VPN for your personal computer to some articles off-campus. Visit <https://www.it.unlv.edu/vpn> (Links to an external site.) to set up.

Course Requirements:

Attendance: It is the student's responsibility to attend all class lectures, and to participate frequently and actively in discussion. Failure to attend class will result in a lower course grade. An accumulation of 4 or more absences throughout the semester will result in a course grade of F.

Readings: Students must complete all required readings in advance of class meetings, and come to class prepared to discuss. Students are encouraged to meet with their Professor in Office Hours to discuss questions on reading, lecture material, or other related matters.

Assignments: Students will submit the following assignments to Canvas on the days specified below:

1. Response Essay, due Feb 3 by 11.59p
2. Critical Essay, due Mar 9 by 11.59p
3. Group Presentation Proposal, due Mar 30 by 11.59p
4. Group Presentations, due Apr 6 and Apr 8 in class
5. Exhibition Review, due Apr 27 by 11.59p

Students will also post a peer review (automatically assigned) for each assignment, due shortly after the original submission. Students will earn 100 for each peer review submitted on time, and averaged into their own assignment grade. Late reviews will be marked down in accordance with the late assignments policy.

All written assignments should adhere to the following formats: MS Word document (or similar), 12-pt font such as Times New Roman, double-spaced, and with margins no less than 1-in. Each assignment should begin with your name, date, the course number, as well as an original title for the piece. A list of works cited will accompany the

assignment. All illustrations will be properly captioned with the artist, title, date, medium, dimensions, and collecting institution (if known).

Proper citation is required in this course. Please refer to *The Chicago Manual of Style* 17th ed. to format all footnotes, endnotes, captions, and bibliographic references. For advice on when, where, and how to cite sources, see <http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/advice-students/using-sources> (Links to an external site.).

Failure to use proper citation on written assignments will result in a lowered assignment grade. Repeated occurrence or blatant disregard could amount to plagiarism, which automatically results in a failing grade for the course. It is the student's responsibility to familiarize themselves with and complete proper citation on each and every assignment.

All group oral assignments/ presentations should be executed on PowerPoint, Keynote, or GoogleSlides. The presentation delivery must be evenly distributed among all participants. A list of works discussed, key points, and bibliographic references should be distributed to audience along with the presentation delivery. The above-mentioned standards for written text in the presentation applies..

Assessment: Your grade will be based on the following

Attendance	20%
Discussion Participation	30%
Written Assignments	30%
Group Presentation	20%

Grading

A = 94-100

A- = 90-93

B+ = 87-89

B = 84-86

B- = 80-83

C+ = 77-79

C = 74-76

C- = 70-73

D+ = 67-69

D = 65-66

F = below 65

Rubric (Written Assignments):

A: Excellent; original and incisive in idea and analysis, well developed and nuanced argument with thoughtful and considered in use of sources, fluid and graceful writing, consistent and correct citation, virtually free of spelling, grammar, and formatting errors. (**A-** fulfills at least 3 of these criteria)

B: Commendable; incisive in analysis, clear argument with thoughtful use of supporting information from sources, fluid writing, few spelling, grammar, formatting errors. (**B+** fulfills all with additional originality, **B-** fulfills at least 2 of these criteria)

C: Satisfactory; meets requirements of the assignment, indication of argument/position using some sources to support arguments; consistent but partially incomplete citation, some spelling, grammar, formatting errors. (**C+** fulfills all with greater accuracy, **C-** fulfills most with partial accuracy)

D and below: Unsatisfactory; does not meet requirements of assignment, vague or no indication of argument/position, inconsistent and incorrect use of sources to support ideas; poor organization and/or writing mechanics, multiple spelling, grammar, and formatting errors. (**D+** provides greater accuracy, **F** exhibits extreme lack of consideration for criteria)

All assignments will be submitted to the professor via Canvas by 11.59p on the day specified. Late papers will be marked down by ½- letter grade for each day late (i.e. a one-day-late “B” grade would become a “B-,” a two-day-late “B” grade would become a “C+.”)

Rubric (oral/presentation):

A: Excellent; original and incisive in delivery and analysis, well developed and nuanced argument with thoughtful and considered interpretation of sources, fluid and graceful communication. Presentation shows excellence in visual design, consistent and correct citation, virtually free of spelling, grammar, and formatting errors. A properly formatted list of texts consulted, as well as bullet-point takeaways and discussion questions, accompanies the presentation. Presentation and list of texts posted to Canvas and made available to all participants prior to class. Group members lead engaging discussion with

full participation of class, encouraging challenging points of view and enabling a generous approach to teaching. (**A-** fulfills at least 3 of these criteria)

B: Commendable; incisive in delivery and analysis, clear argument with thoughtful use of supporting information from sources, fluid communication. Presentation shows clarity and professionalism in visual design, few spelling, grammar, formatting errors. A properly formatted list of texts consulted, as well as bullet-point takeaways and discussion questions, accompanies the presentation. Presentation and list of texts posted to Canvas and made available to all participants prior to class. Group members lead engaging discussion with participation of class, encouraging independent thought and verbal analysis, enabling appropriate clarification when required. (**B+** fulfills all with additional originality, **B-** fulfills at least 2 of these criteria)

C: Satisfactory; meets requirements of the assignment, indication of argument/position using some sources to support arguments. Presentation shows coherent organization in visual design consistent but partially incomplete citation, some spelling, grammar, formatting errors. A list of texts consulted accompanies the presentation. Group members lead partial discussion of concepts and terms. (**C+** fulfills all with greater accuracy, **C-** fulfills most with partial accuracy)

D and below: Unsatisfactory; does not meet requirements of assignment, vague or no indication of argument/position, inconsistent and incorrect use of sources to support ideas; poor organization and/or visual design, multiple spelling, grammar, and formatting errors. No class discussion. Faulty or incomplete clarification of terms and ideas. (**D+** provides greater accuracy, **F** exhibits extreme lack of consideration for criteria)

Academic Misconduct Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the Campus community; we all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility, and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy, and are encouraged to always take the ethical path whenever faced with choices. Students enrolling at UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's educational mission. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another person, from the Internet or any other source without proper citation of the sources. See the Student Conduct Code, <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct>.

Auditing Classes Auditing a course allows a student to continue attending the lectures and/or laboratories and discussion sessions associated with the course, but the student will not earn a grade for any component of the course. Students who audit a course receive the same educational experience as students taking the course for a grade, but will be excused from exams, assessments, and other evaluative measures that serve the primary purpose of assigning a grade.

Classroom Conduct Students have a responsibility to conduct themselves in class and in the libraries in ways that do not interfere with the rights of other students to learn or of

instructors to teach. Use of electronic devices such as pagers, cellular phones, or recording devices, or potentially disruptive devices or activities, are only permitted with the prior explicit consent of the instructor. The instructor may rescind permission at any time during the class. If a student does not comply with established requirements or obstructs the functioning of the class, the instructor may initiate an administrative drop of the student from the course.

This class requires the mutual respect of its participants, as well as the respect of the Professor for her students. The Professor and students agree to operate within a classroom environment that is free from all forms of harassment and discrimination whether that discrimination or harassment is because of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, age, veteran status, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation or any other characteristic protected by law.

Please refrain from using your laptop for any activity other than note taking during lecture. Cell phones and other personal electronic devices must be switched off during lecture. Students do not have permission to audio or videorecord lectures, workshops, or class discussions.

Copyright The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with, and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The University will neither protect nor defend you, nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional copyright policy information is available at <http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright> (Links to an external site.).

Disability Resource Center (DRC) The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A , Room 143, <https://www.unlv.edu/drc>, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. Students who believe that they may need academic accommodations due to injury, disability, or due to pregnancy should contact the DRC as early as possible in the academic term. A Disabilities Specialist will discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours, so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

Final Examinations The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur on the date and at the time specified in the Final Exam schedule. The general schedule is typically available at the start of the semester, and the classroom locations are available approximately one month before the end of the semester. See the Final Exam Schedule, <https://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars> (Links to an external site.).

Incomplete Grades The grade of “I” (Incomplete) may be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session, but cannot complete the last part of the course for reason(s) beyond the student’s control and acceptable to the instructor, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. For undergraduate courses, the incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester. Graduate students receiving “I” grades in 500-, 600-, or 700-level courses have up to one calendar year to complete the work, at the discretion of the instructor. If course requirements are not completed within the period indicated, a grade of “F” will be recorded, and the student’s GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete grade do not register for the course, but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the “I” grade.

Library Resources Librarians are available to consult with students on research needs, including developing research topics, finding information, and evaluating sources. To make an appointment with a subject expert for this class, please visit the Libraries’ Research Consultation website: <http://guides.library.unlv.edu/appointments/librarian>. You can also ask the library staff questions via chat and text message at: <http://ask.library.unlv.edu/>.

Missed Classwork Any student missing class, quizzes, examinations, or any other class or laboratory work because of observance of religious holidays will be given an opportunity during that semester to make up the missed work. The make-up opportunity will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor within the first 14 calendar days of the course for Fall and Spring courses (except for modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for Summer and modular courses, of their intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit the Policy for Missed Work, under Registration Policies, on the Academic Policies webpage, <https://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531> ([Links to an external site.](#)). In accordance with the policy approved by the Faculty Senate regarding missed class time and assignments, students who represent UNLV in any official extracurricular activity will also have the opportunity to make up assignments, provided that the student provides official written notification to the instructor no less than one week prior to the missed class(es). The spirit and intent of the policy for missed classwork is to offer fair and equitable assessment opportunities to all students, including those representing the University in extracurricular activities. Instructors should consider, for example, that in courses which offer a “Drop one” option for the lowest assignment, quiz, or exam, assigning the student a grade of zero for an excused absence for extracurricular activity is both contrary to the intent of the Faculty Senate’s policy, and an infringement on the student’s right to complete all work for the course. This policy will not apply in the event that completing the assignment or administering the examination at an alternate time would impose an undue hardship on the instructor or the University that could reasonably have been avoided. There should be a good faith effort by both the instructor and the student to agree to a reasonable resolution. When disagreements regarding this policy arise, decisions can be appealed to the Department Chair/Unit Director,

College/School Dean, and/or the Faculty Senate Academic Standards Committee. For purposes of definition, extracurricular activities may include, but are not limited to: fine arts activities, competitive intercollegiate athletics, science and engineering competitions, liberal arts competitions, academic recruitment activities, and any other event or activity sanctioned by a College/School Dean, and/or by the Executive Vice President and Provost.

Rebelmail Rebelmail is UNLV’s official email system for students, and by University policy, instructors and staff should only send emails to students’ Rebelmail accounts. Rebelmail is one of the primary ways students receive official University communications, information about deadlines, major Campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the University. Emailing within WebCampus is also acceptable.

The instructor will respond to emails in a timely fashion. The student should expect a reply to an email within 48 business hours (M-F, 9a-5p).

Tutoring and Coaching The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring, academic success coaching, and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and services, please visit the ASC website, <https://www.unlv.edu/asc>, or call 702-895-3177. The ASC building is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of SSC A, Room 254. Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library, and on the second floor of the College of Engineering building (TBE A 207).

UNLV Writing Center One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, <https://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>, located in the Central Desert Complex, Building 3, Room 301 (CDC 3–301). Walk-in consultations are sometimes available, but students with appointments receive priority assistance. Students may make appointments in person or by calling the Center, 702-895-3908. Students are requested to bring to their appointments their Rebel ID Card, a copy of the instructions for their assignment, and two copies of any writing they have completed on their assignment.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS

WEEK 1

Jan 20: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day—CLASS DOES NOT MEET

Jan 22: Origin Stories: Becoming an Artist

WEEK 2

Jan 27: Sources & Discussion: Long-form Biographical Profiles

Readings:

- [Hilton Als, "The Shadow Act: Kara Walker's Vision." *New Yorker* October 8, 2007.](#)
- Select one additional reading from the Week 2 folder on Canvas.

Jan 29: Skills & Discussion: Note-taking & Response Essay

Assignment:

- Write a 500-word response essay to the work/video of an artist shown in "Origin Stories," with reference to a reading from Week 2 folder on Canvas. Due Feb 3 by 11.59p via Canvas.

WEEK 3

Feb 3: Skills & Discussion: Locating & Evaluating Sources

Guest: Richard Zwiercan, Art/Architecture/Design Librarian, UNLV Libraries

Feb 5: [Teaching with Community](#)

WEEK 4

Feb 10: Sources & Discussion: Public Engagement

Readings:

- Claire Bishop "Introduction" in *Participation*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006.
- Select one additional reading from the Week 4 folder on Canvas.

Feb 12: Skills & Discussion: Artist Resumes

Guest: Kassie Moore, Career Coach, UNLV Career Services

WEEK 5

Feb 17: Presidents' Day (class does not meet)

Feb 19: [Sacred Grounds](#)

WEEK 6

Feb 24: Sources & Discussion: Studio Visits, Artist Interviews

Readings:

- Marjorie Weilish, "The Studio Revisited" in *The Studio Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
- Rochelle Feinstein, "Rochelle Feinstein" in *The Studio Reader*.
- Select one additional reading from the Week 6 folder on Canvas.

Feb 26: [The Anarchic Potential of Color](#)

WEEK 7

Mar 2: Sources & Discussion: Art Criticism

Readings:

- Raphael Rubenstein, “Where Is the Audience for Art Criticism Now” *Art in America* October 1, 2019.
- Select one additional reading from the Week 7 folder on Canvas

Mar 4: Discussion: Formalism, Criticism, Cultural Critique, Artist’s POV

Readings:

- Peter Schjeldahl, [“Grand Funk” *The New Yorker* April 14, 2003.](#)
- Jerry Saltz, [“Relentless Tempest” *The Village Voice* October 18, 2005](#)
- Dave Hickey, “On Zabriskie Point” in *Elizabeth Murray*. New York: Pace Wildenstein, 2006.
- Elizabeth Murray, [“Looking at Pictures: A Painter’s Education.” *Art21* November 2011.](#)

Assignment:

- Write a formalist, critical, or cultural critique of work by an artist. Due Mar 9, 11.59p via Canvas.

Mar 5: [Visiting Historian Lecture: Andy Campbell](#) & [Ellen Lupton](#) on Design History.
Marjorie Barrick Museum of Art, 7-9p. (extra credit).

WEEK 8

Mar 9: [Essence of a History](#)

Mar 11: Sources & Discussion: Theoretical Frameworks and Scholarly Essays

Readings:

- Richard Delgado and Jean Stefaniec, “Introduction” in *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 3d ed. New York: New York University Press, 2017.
- Select one additional reading from the Week 8 folder on Canvas

WEEK 9:

Spring Break: Class Does Not Meet

WEEK 10

Mar 23: [Under the Influence](#)

Apr 25: Skills & Discussion: Relating Works of Art and Artists on Artists

Readings:

- Sol LeWitt, Letter to Eva Hesse (1964)

Assignment:

- Work with your team to come up with a proposal of works of art to compare in your presentation. List and rationale due Mar 30, 11:59p via Canvas.

WEEK 11

Mar 30: Skills & Discussion: Oral Presentations

Apr 1: Skills & Discussion: Slide Lectures

WEEK 12

Apr 6: Student Presentation 1: Relating Works of Art

Apr 8: Student Presentation 2: Relating Works of Art

WEEK 13

Apr 13: [Blockbusters](#) & [Biennials](#)

Apr 15: Sources & Discussion: Exhibition Reviews

Readings:

- Margaret Lindauer, “Critical Museum Visitor” in *New Museum Theory: An Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006.
- Select one additional reading from the Week 13 folder on Canvas.

Assignment:

- Write an exhibition review of a show seen in LA or in Las Vegas. Due April 27 by 11:59p via Canvas.

WEEK 14

Apr 20: [Latin America 1](#)

Apr 22: [Latin America 2](#)

Readings:

- Gerardo Mosquera, “Against Latin American Art” in *Contemporary Art in Latin America*. London: Black Dog, 2010. ([English](#)) ([Spanish](#))

WEEK 15:

Apr 27: Sources & Discussion: Web Videos/Social Media

Readings:

- [“Jerry Saltz” Longform September 25, 2018.](#)

Apr 29: [Taking a Stand](#)

STUDY WEEK

May 4: Round-up Discussion & Course Evaluations

May 6: Round-up Discussion & Course Critique