ARTH 3395: Topics in Contemporary Art:
Art After 1990
University of Texas at El Paso
Spring 2017

CRN: 28232
Class Meeting Times: Mondays/Wednesdays, 4:30 – 5:50 p.m.
Classroom: Fox Fine Arts A458 (4th floor)
Professor: Dr. Melissa Warak
Email: mcwarak@utep.edu
Office Hours: T/Th 1:30 to 2:30; W, 3:30 to 4:20
Office: Fox Fine Arts 454
Office Phone: (915) 747-7849 (during office hours)

ABOUT YOUR PROFESSOR
Dr. Melissa Warak specializes in the relationship of music and sound to art of the twentieth century. Dr. Warak is a proud Texan and a native of Houston. She earned a B.A. in English literature and art history from Vanderbilt University, an M.A. in art history from the University of Texas at Austin, and a Ph.D. in art history from the University of Texas at Austin. Her current research focuses on the ways that visual artists from the mid-fifties to late sixties employed musical models in their work. Aside from musical and sound art, her research interests include the history of abstraction, spirituality in modern and contemporary art, science and technology in modern and contemporary art, and astronomy in art. Her research has been supported by grants and fellowships from the National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution, the Getty Research Institute, the Royal Music Association of the United Kingdom, the Menil Collection in Houston, and the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, the Kress Foundation, and Yale University Art Gallery, among others. Dr. Warak has previously taught at the University of Texas at Austin, at the University of Houston, and at Sam Houston State University.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course is a history of global art from 1990 to the present, concentrating on specific themes and trends in contemporary art. This course utilizes a primary methodology of cultural and social history, but will also consider technique, style, biography/psychology, and other factors that contribute to understanding the way that a given work of art looks.

Please note that this course covers art that is sometimes shocking, controversial, or otherwise difficult for many viewers. This course is infused with a politics of feminism, neurodivergence, gender and queer studies, and critical race studies as part of art historical study of contemporary art. We will seriously consider art that deals frankly with bodies, sexuality, race, religion, and violence. Further, some of the art we will study was created with the intention of challenging the comfort levels of the viewer. In that sense, we should all strive to create a classroom environment that is open to ideas and respectful to difference of opinion. It is not expected that you should enjoy – in a conventional sense – or agree with the ideological premises of all of the art explored in this course. Please come see your professor in the first week of class about any related concerns.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
During this course, students will develop their understanding contemporary art and acquire skills essential to the study of art history. These include the following:
1. Developing writing skills, oral presentation competencies, and points of view needed by professional art historians.
2. Learning to find and use resources for answering research questions and problems.
3. Analyzing and critically evaluating ideas and arguments.
4. Gaining knowledge of the terminology, trends, and methodologies used to study contemporary art.

TEXTS / RESOURCES
We do not have a single textbook for this course. Selected articles and book chapters will be posted to the course’s related Blackboard page as downloadable PDFs (see schedule). Students are responsible for downloading these from Blackboard. All readings need to be completed before the class period for the day. Some of the readings are theoretical and will take longer to read, but many of them are shorter exhibition reviews.

GRADING POLICY
This course will have three exams. Students will complete one project with a research component. An assignment sheet will be posted to Blackboard. Each student will also be responsible for teaching / presenting on an artist on a given class day; these guidelines will be posted to Blackboard as well. Students will be graded on discussion participation in class; points will be assigned for both the first and second halves of the semester. A good rule of thumb is to try to contribute at least once per class (via ideas, questions, or responses to other students). We will have two artist roundtable sessions in class at the end of the semester and students will submit discussion questions for each. Lastly, we will have twelve reading quizzes (worth 10 points each) throughout the semester. There will be no makeup quizzes, but the lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

This course will be graded on a scale of 500 points.
Reading Quizzes (12): 110 points
Participation I: 15 points
Participation II: 20 points
Artist Presentation: 25 points
Discussion Questions: 10 points
Exam 1: 70 points
Exam 2: 75 points
Exam 3: 75 points
Research Project: 100 points

Note: You will see that the Blackboard page allows for 510 points, but this accounts for the dropped quiz grade.

Therefore, here is the point breakdown for grades:
448 – 500 points: A
397 – 447 points: B
347 – 396 points: C
297 – 346 points: D
TAKING NOTES IN CLASS
Exam material will come from ideas discussed in class; the readings supplement lectures and discussions. Completing the readings will not take the place of attendance and participation in class. It is critical that students take notes in class. Think of the exams as a way to show off what you have learned in class. I recommend bringing a notebook designated just for this course. Using bullet points will help you write down more information. Vocabulary and important terms will be written on the Powerpoint presentation slides and you should pay special attention to these terms and the works of art where they may be applicable. Basic identifying information for each work will also be provided on the Powerpoints (artist name, title, date); these will be uploaded to Blackboard for your use. It is a good idea to date your notes so you know what we covered each day. It is also a good idea to take notes on the class readings in your notebooks.

EXAMS
Exams will consist of a single essay question (you will have a choice among three or four topics). We will not have specific image lists for each exam. Instead, students will decide on appropriate examples from class for their essay exams. Exams will be OPEN NOTE, so make sure to take notes extensively. Students will be allowed to bring the following to the exams: 1) notebook; 2) quizzes; and 3) student presentation handouts. You may not bring copies of the readings or class Powerpoint presentations. The exams are not cumulative. See me during office hours for help improving your note-taking skills. Students will not be allowed to leave the room and may be asked to put phones and Apple Watches (or similar) at the front of the room during the exams.

READING QUIZZES
Students will take the daily ten-minute reading quizzes at the beginning of class. Be sure to arrive to class on time. There are no makeup quizzes. The quizzes may be on one or all of the readings assigned for a given day and will likely be short answer, fill-in-the-blank, and true/false questions. To prepare for these, you should make sure to read the texts carefully and take notes on them in your notebook (this will also help with the exams). You may find it useful to skim the readings once for the larger issues at stake and then take notes during a second more careful reading. Be sure that you can identify the author’s arguments and the primary evidence used to support them. As you read, think critically about what might be useful about the texts for our course topic.

***COURSE POLICIES***

Attendance Policy in short:
Attendance is mandatory
Allowed absences (including illness) without penalty = 3 absences (remember: three for free)
Tardies = ½ absence
Automatic failure = 6 or more absences
Attendance bonus = 10 points

Policy in detail:
Class attendance is a requirement and use of the full class period is expected. An attendance sheet will be passed around at the beginning of each lecture; make sure you (and only you) sign it every
day. Students should never sign the attendance sheet for anyone else or ask anyone to sign for them.

You will be **allowed three absences** for **any reason** without grading consequences. In this course, there are no excused or unexcused absences. You just get three for free. It is up to your discretion how you use these, including for illness, and you do not need to notify me in advance except in the case of a religious holy day (see below). In the case of an illness or emergency that causes you to miss more than three consecutive class days, please contact the Dean of Students (http://sa.utep.edu/dean/about-2/), who will contact all of your professors. Exemptions to the absence policy may be made on a case-by-case basis. More than three absences from class will result in a lowering of your overall grade by **twenty points per absence** (remember that this class is graded on a scale of 500 points). Students who are more than **five minutes late** or who leave early without permission will be given half credit for attendance. **Tardies / half credits** will figure into the absence count. **Six absences will result in an automatic failure of the course; this includes tardies.** That said, students will receive an **attendance bonus** of ten points (1%) for perfect attendance and no tardies (**no exceptions**; attendance must be 100%). The attendance bonus is awarded after the last day of class.

Students are responsible for acquiring notes and announcements made during missed classes, so make a friend and exchange contact information. Dr. Warak will keep a running tally of absences in a column on the Gradebook section of Blackboard.

**EMAIL POLICY**

All course correspondence from me will take place via Blackboard’s email function. Make sure that you are receiving emails through Blackboard and that you have a current email address on file. Please note that, due to FERPA regulations, I will not email with students about grades. If you have a question or concern about a grade, please visit office hours or make an appointment. If you would like to Skype with me during office hours (username: melissa.warak), please let me know in advance. Additionally, if you have a question that requires a long answer, I may ask you to come see me in person to save time. Lastly, please remember that emails are considered a form of professional correspondence and a little courtesy goes a long way.

**LAPTOPS, TABLETS, AND PHONES**

Students may not use computers and other electronic devices during class. It is important that students focus their attention on the lectures and projected images without distractions and that they take careful and detailed notes. Cell phones and tablets should be silent and kept out of sight. Their bright lights are very distracting in a dark classroom. You will be reprimanded and marked absent if you are caught using your phone in the classroom. Repeat offenses will result in disciplinary action. If a cell phone or an Apple Watch is in any way visible during an examination, that student will automatically fail the exam. Students may be asked to leave their phones/watches at the front of the classroom during exams.

**CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE**

Please be respectful of other students in the classroom. The classroom door will be open for five minutes after class begins; after that, tardies will be given. Inappropriate behavior includes coming late or leaving early, using phones or electronic devices for any reason, passing notes, excessive whispering with friends, and packing bags before class is over. Use the restroom BEFORE class, as
entering or leaving the room is very distracting. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom may result in a directive to leave class or being reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with UTEP policy. You may bring food and drinks, but the drinks must have a sealable lid. **A note on bags:** please make sure your bag is small enough to fit fully under your chair. If not, you will be asked to put it to the side of the classroom. Art supplies, gym bags, and other items will need to be stored on the shelves at the side of the classroom.

**MAKE-UP POLICY**
The paper assignment sheet explains a late work policy. There are no makeup exams or quizzes, except in extreme circumstances documented with the Dean of Students. Plan your semester accordingly.

**PAPER FORMATTING AND WRITING HELP**
All papers should be uploaded to SafeAssign (via Blackboard) by the due date; I may also require a paper copy. For all questions pertaining to grammar, syntax, footnoting and style, see the latest edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style*. For an excellent tutorial on how to document sources properly, see the following webpage: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org

Students who are concerned about the quality of their writing should contact the Writing Center and make an appointment well before the deadline: [http://academics.utep.edu/writingcenter/](http://academics.utep.edu/writingcenter/)

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND PLAGIARISM**
Academic dishonesty or cheating will result in failure in this course. All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a professional manner and to maintain honesty and integrity. All students are responsible for knowing the requirements of academic honesty set forth by UTEP. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to the following: cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, forgery of signatures, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. See the UTEP policy on academic integrity and scholastic dishonesty: [http://sa.utep.edu/osccr/academic-integrity/](http://sa.utep.edu/osccr/academic-integrity/)

**POLICY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**
Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with limitations due to disabilities provided that they are registered with the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) and procure the proper documentation: [http://sa.utep.edu/cass](http://sa.utep.edu/cass) (telephone: (915) 747-5148). Students with documented disabilities must meet with the instructor within the first two weeks of class to discuss any special needs. If particular accommodations are required for the exams, the instructor must be informed and presented with the appropriate CASS documentation at least ten days before each scheduled test or no accommodations will be permitted.

**POLICY FOR STUDENT ABSENCES ON RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS**
Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: “a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20....” See your professor at least a week in advance if you
intend to miss class or an examination in observance of a religious holy day and accommodations will be made.

***TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)***

UNIT 1: Identity and Modes of Resistance

W, January 18
No class / Dr. Warak out sick

M, January 23
Topic: Course Introductions / Syllabus Review / The 1980s and appropriation

W, January 25
Topic: A Photographic Turn: Robert Mapplethorpe, Cindy Sherman, Carrie Mae Weems, Nan Goldin, Lauren Greenfield

M, January 30
Reading Quiz #1
Topic: Identity Politics, the Decade Show, and Culture Wars
Student Presentation: Gran Fury

W, February 1
Reading Quiz #2
Topic: Controversy and Censorship: Sensation, Hide/Seek, Pussy Riot, Ai Wei Wei, Shepard Fairey
Richburg, Keith. “Chinese Artist Ai Wei Wei Arrested in Ongoing Government Crackdown,”

Student Presentation: Blu (focus on MoCA mural controversy)

M, February 6
Reading Quiz #3
Topic: Post-Colonialism and Art: Yinka Shonibare, Alfredo Jaar, Subodh Gupta
Student Presentation: Guy Tillim

W, February 8
Reading Quiz #4
Topic: Playing with History: Kehinde Wiley, Dario Robleto, Brett Bailey, Kara Walker
Student Presentation: Dread Scott

M, February 13
Reading Quiz #5
Topic: Fantasy and Fictions: Matthew Barney, Nick Cave, Gregory Crewdson, Takashi Murakami
Student Presentation: Inka Essenhigh

W, February 15
**Journal of Art, Context, and Enquiry** 24 (Summer 2010): 80-88.


Student Presentation: Isa Genzken

**M, February 20**

***EXAM 1*** Bring notebook, quizzes, presentation handouts

**UNIT 2: Practice and Material**

**W, February 22**


**Address:** 1 Arts Festival Plaza, El Paso, TX 79901 (located downtown at N. Santa Fe and W. Main)

**M, February 27**

**Reading Quiz #6**

**Topic:** Materiality and Installation: Tracy Emin, Sophie Calle, Janine Antoni, Marc Quinn


Student Presentation: Polly Apfelbaum

**W, March 1**

***EPMA worksheet due***

**Topic:** Mark-Making and Two(?) Dimensions: William Kentridge, Banksy, Robyn O’Neil, Kiki Smith


Student Presentation: Arturo Herrera / Zarina

**M, March 6**

**Reading Quiz #7**

**Topic:** Flesh and Figuration: John Currin, Jenny Saville, Marilyn Minter, Marlene Dumas, Luc Tuymans


Student Presentation: Julie Heffernan
W, March 8
Topic: Work in Clay: Jessica Harrison, Steven Young Lee, Beth Cavener, Cristina Córdova
Student Presentation: Paul Scott / Grayson Perry

M, March 13 and W, March 15
SPRING BREAK

M, March 20
Reading Quiz #8
Topic: Craft and Concept: The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, Tara Donovan, Xenobia Bailey
Student Presentation: Crocheted Olek / Fred Sandback

W, March 22
Topic: Contemporary Metals and Jewelry: Alexander Blank, Joyce Scott, Linda Threadgill, Lauren Kalman/ Exam Review
Student Presentation: Rachelle Thiewes / Jennifer Trask

M, March 27
***EXAM 2***

W, March 29
Topic: Movie Day (film TBA)

UNIT 3: Current

M, April 3
Reading Quiz #9
Topic: Social Engagement/ Art Activism: Theaster Gates, Tania Bruguera, Emma Sulkowicz, and Project Row Houses


Student Presentation: Allora and Calzadilla

**W, April 5**

**Reading Quiz #10**


Student Presentation: Kris Sanford / Heyd Fontenot

**M, April 10**

***Submit Roundtable Session Discussion Questions (one for each)***

Topic: Involving Others / Ethics and Art 1: Orlan, Marina Abramović, Stelarc, Santiago Sierra, Aliza Schvarts


Student Presentation: Laura Lima’s *The Inverse* / Vanessa Beecroft

**W, April 12**

**Reading Quiz #11**

Topic: Involving Others / Ethics and Art 2: Damien Hirst, Jannis Kounellis, Revital Cohen/Tuur van Balen


Student Presentation: Eduardo Kac / Maurizio Cattelan

M, April 17
Topic: Artist Roundtable: Artistic Practice
Artists TBA.

W, April 19
Topic: Artist Roundtable: Exhibiting Art
Artists TBA.

Sunday, April 23
***Projects due via SafeAssign by 11:59 p.m.***

M, April 24
Topic: In-Class Presentations of Projects

W, April 26
Reading Quiz #12
Topic: Light and Sound: Leo Villareal, Janet Cardiff, Christian Marclay, Cai Guo-Qiang
Student Presentation: Maria Chavez

M, May 1
Topic: Media (Social and Otherwise): Pipilotti Rist, Trevor Paglen, Jennifer Steinkamp, Javier Pérez
Student Presentation: Harun Farocki / Andy Goldsworthy

W, May 3
Topic: Where to? / Exam 3 Review

***EXAM #3*** will take place during the course’s designated final exam period, but will not be cumulative: Monday, May 8th, 4:00 p.m.