ARTH 3395: Topics in Contemporary Art
Art After 1990
University of Texas at El Paso
Spring 2020

CRN: 25890
Class Meeting Times: Tuesdays/Thursdays, 10:30-11:50 a.m.
Classroom: Fox Fine Arts A458 (4th floor)
Professor: Dr. Melissa Warak (she/her/hers; please call me Dr. or Professor)
Email: mcwarak@utep.edu
Office Hours: T/Th, 1:30-2:30 p.m. and by appointment; signup sheet is on office door
Office: Fox Fine Arts A454 (next to drawing classroom)
Office Phone: (915) 747-7849 (during office hours)

COURSE DOCUMENTS
All documents for the course, including Powerpoints and course texts, will be uploaded to the course Blackboard page.

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, and her M.A. and 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 and she is writing a book about contemporary sound art. Other 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 Musical Association of the United Kingdom, The Menil Collection in Houston, the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, the Kress Foundation, the Yale University Art Galleries, and the Tate Modern, among others.

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. This course is infused with a politics of feminism, disability studies, gender and queer studies, and critical race studies as part of art historical study of contemporary art.

As a content advisory, please note that this course covers art that is sometimes shocking, offensive, controversial, or otherwise difficult for many viewers. 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. Some of the images we will discuss in class deal frankly with racism, sexism, global politics, violence, war, religion, the AIDS epidemic, and sexual trauma, among other difficult themes. They are not shown in class for shock value. These works are intended to challenge the comfort level of the viewer and discussion about them is important. Speaking to how such images make you feel is vital, as this deepens our understanding of their
power. If you have concerns about certain content, email Dr. Warak so she can let you know when this might be shown in class.

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, visual analysis, and oral presentation skills 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, including the study of various mediums.
5. Gaining cultural literacy.

TEXTS / RESOURCES
We do not have a textbook for this course. Selected articles and book chapters will be posted to the course’s related Blackboard page as downloadable PDFs and as web links where possible (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 two exams: a midterm and a final. The final exam is not cumulative and should take an hour and twenty minutes on exam day. We will have a take-home quiz on describing and interpreting a work of art as practice for the exam structure. Students will complete one project with a research component and will have to take an online plagiarism quiz as part of the project grade. 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. Discussion 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). 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 35 points
Take-home Quiz 10 points
Exam 1 100 points
Exam 2 100 points
Research Project 110 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 final course grades:

448 – 500 points: A
397 – 447 points: B
347 – 396 points: C
297 – 346 points: D
000 – 296 points: F

READING QUIZZES
Students will take the ten-minute reading quizzes at the beginning of class. Be sure to arrive to class on time. There are no makeup quizzes. Unlike the exams, the quizzes are NOT open note. 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.

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.

***COURSE POLICIES***

ATTENDANCE POLICY (MANDATORY ATTENDANCE)
Policy in short:
Allowed absences (including illness) without penalty = 3 absences
Tardies = ½ absence
Automatic drop = 6 absences or 2 absences before the course census date
Attendance bonus = 10 points
Policy in detail:
Class attendance is a requirement and use of the full class period is expected unless otherwise stated. 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 are allowed three absences for any reason without grading consequences. It is up to your discretion how you use these, including for illness, and you do not need to notify Dr. Warak in advance except in the case of a religious holy day (see below). 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). In the case of an illness or emergency that causes you to miss more than three consecutive class days, you will want to drop the course. 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 drop from the course; this includes tardies.

Students with two or more absences by the census date (Feb. 5) will be dropped. 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 Dr. Warak will take place via Blackboard’s email function. Make sure that you read and receive emails from Blackboard and that you have a current email address on file. Please note that, due to FERPA regulations, Dr. Warak 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. Additionally, if you have a question that requires a long answer, Dr. Warak may ask you to come see her 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 if you are caught using your phone in the classroom; repeat offenses will result in being asked to leave class with an absence penalty. Students may be asked to leave phones and smart watches at the front of the classroom during exams. Students may record the lectures with permission.

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 in the classroom to keep the floor tidy.

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.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND PLAGIARISM
Academic dishonesty or cheating will result in failure in this course. All students are expected to engage in their academic pursuits in a professional manner and to maintain honesty and integrity. 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. See the UTEP policy on academic integrity and scholastic dishonesty:
http://sa.utep.edu/osccr/academic-integrity/

POLICY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
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 (telephone: (915) 747-5148). Students with documented disabilities should make sure that the professor receives the appropriate paperwork from CASS within the first week of class. Please note that CASS is available to help students with any disabilities, documented illness (including anxiety, depression, and PTSD), and in the case of short-term disability (broken bones, etc.).

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 in observance of a religious holy day.