

CRITICAL PRACTICES: Reading and Writing About Contemporary Art **Spring 2012**

Brent Everett Dickinson, Assistant Professor of Art

Studio: NYCAMS Chelsea **Meeting Times:** W 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Office hours: Wed 2-3 p.m. or by appointment

COURSE OBJECTIVE: To develop a working knowledge of the scope of 20th and 21st century art theory and to initiate a deep engagement with a select number of the most influential voices. Students will begin to develop their voice in writing and speaking about core ideas in contemporary art and will develop a robustly articulated statement of their own artistic and intellectual practice.

Syllabus

Feb 1st

Introduction to course

A Brief History of Criticism

- Dave Hickey video- Art Doesn't Mean Anything
- Discuss 'Art Criticism' Daniel A. Siedell

Assign Task Forces*

Assign Reading and Introductory Lecture- Benjamin, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"

Section 1- Critics as Critics: Thinkers' and Writers' role in the exchange and shaping of art ideas

2/8

Introduction to Section 1- Thinkers' and Writers' role in the exchange and shaping of art ideas

"Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", 1936

- Task Force #1 leads discussion

Assign Reading and Introductory Lecture- Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch"

2/15

"Avant-Garde and Kitsch", 1939

- Task Force #2 leads discussion

Assign Reading and Introductory Lecture- Sontag, "Against Interpretation"

2/22

"Against Interpretation", 1966

- Task Force #3 leads discussion

CRITICAL PRACTICES: Reading and Writing About Contemporary Art **Spring 2012**

Student as Critic presentation/discussion*

Assign Reading and Introductory Lecture- Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists”

2/29

“Why have There Been No Great Women Artists”, 1971

- Task Force #4 leads discussion

Student as Critic presentation/discussion

Assign Reading and Introductory Lecture- Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Part 1”

3/7

“Notes on the Index: Part 1”

- Task Force #6 leads discussion

Student as Critic presentation/discussion

Assign Reading and Introductory Lecture- Hickey, “The Importance of Remembering Andy”

3/14

“The Importance of Remembering Andy”, 1995

- Task Force #5 leads discussion

Student as Critic presentation/discussion

Assign Reading- Johns, “Obituary of Marcel Duchamp”, Rauschenberg- “Note on Painting”, Johns, “Interview with David Sylvester”

Midterm Take-Home Exam*

3/21 Spring Break No Class

Section 2: Artists as Critics: Artists’ role in the exchange and shaping of art ideas

3/28

Introduction to Section 2- Doing *and* Saying

- Video Montage- Baldessari sings LeWitt, Smithson Spiral Jetty, Warhol on Jasper Johns, Walker, Youngman Art Thoughtz: On Beauty, Anderson Language is a Virus, Kelley Art:21, Bumsteinas plays Baldessari sings LeWitt

Discussion of reading- “Obituary of Marcel Duchamp”, “Note on Painting”, “Interview with David Sylvester”

CRITICAL PRACTICES: Reading and Writing About Contemporary Art **Spring 2012**

Lecture- Developing a Value System

- Assign Diagram (Ad Reinhardt, Alfred Barr, Erik Parker, Oyvind Fahlstrom, Tracy Emin, Paula Scher)

Student as Critic presentation/discussion

Assign Reading and Introductory Lecture- Artist as Teacher

Response Paper due* Take-Home Exam due*

4/4

Artist as Teacher

- Readings: Hans Hoffman, "On the Aims of Art", Joseph Beuys, "Not Just a Few are Called, But Everyone", Dexter Sinister, "Towards a Critical Faculty"
- Task Force #1 leads discussion

Student as Critic presentation/discussion

Discussion and Assignment of Artist Statement*

Assign Readings and Introductory Lecture- Artist as Spokesperson

4/11

Artist as Spokesperson

- Readings: Robert Motherwell, "Coonskins and Redcoats", Allan Kaprow, "Untitled Guidelines for Happenings", Germano Celant, "Introduction to Arte Povera", Rem Koolhaas, "Delirious NY"
- Task Force #2 leads discussion

Assign Readings and Introductory Lecture- Artist in the First Person

4/18

Artist speaking in the First Person

- Sound/Images: Sean Landers, "The Man Within"
- Daniel Libeskind, "Building", Ed Ruscha, "Interview", Gerhard Richter, "Comments on Some Works", Judy Chicago, "The Dinner Party"
- Task Force #3 leads discussion

Value System diagrams*- presentation and discussion

Assign Readings and Introductory Lecture- Artist as Pundit

4/25

Artist as Pundit

- Readings: Mike Kelley, "Mekanik Destruktiw Kommandoh: SRL and Popular Spectacle", Robert Smithson, "Entropy and the New Monuments", Rachel Harrison, "Paul Theck", Carroll Dunham, "Black Whole"
- Task Force #4 leads discussion

CRITICAL PRACTICES: Reading and Writing About Contemporary Art **Spring 2012**

Value System diagrams- presentation and discussion

Detailed Outline of Artist Statements

Assign Readings and Introductory Lecture- Art as Text, Text as Art

5/2

Art as Text, Text as Art

- Brief intro to Semiotics
- Sound/ Images: Alvin Lucier, Lawrence Wiener, Justin Lieberman, Steve Reich, Nico Muhly, Zhang Huan, Mel Bochner, Andy Warhol, Bruce Nauman, Andy Warhol
- Readings: O'Hara, "Why I am Not a Painter (1971)", Bochner and Smithson, "The Domain of the Great Bear", "Secrets of the Domes"
- Task Force #5 leads discussion

Assign Readings and Introductory Lecture- The Art of the Manifesto

5/9

The Art of the Manifesto

- The Futurists Manifesto, The Dogme Manifesto, First Things First 1964 and 2000, Transcendental Black Metal Manifesto
- Task Force #5 leads discussion

Response Paper Due

Final Take-Home Exam

Artist Statements Due

***Notes:**

Task Force groups- Major discussions are lead by Task Force groups. All of the students in the class are assigned to a Task Force and will meet together to collaboratively create a plan for how to organize their discussion. Each group will submit a brief discussion outline to the professor the class before their week to lead. Each student in the group receives a grade for their level of preparation and participation.

Student as Critic- Students are assigned to produce one critical review of a current gallery or museum show and present that show with images to the class.

Response Papers- 2 papers responding to 2 self-chosen essays.

Value System Diagram- Each student will produce a uniquely conceived visual diagram of their individual artistic value system.

Artist Statement- The writing component of the course shifts mid semester in step with the content of the reading component. The reading component shifts from writers and thinkers writing about art to artists writing about art. At midterm, the students' writing similarly shifts to concentrate on their own studio work and ideas culminating in an artist statement.

CRITICAL PRACTICES: Reading and Writing About Contemporary Art **Spring 2012**

The Artist Statement must be 8 pages in length. It should include original and specific ideas related to the student's work and include references to theoretical writings and other artists' work to which the student's work has meaningful connections.

Take-Home Exams- There will be a Midterm and Final Take-Home Exam that students will be given to complete with the use of only their notes.

EVALUATION:

8-page Artist Statement- 30%

Task Force prep and participation (each student receives separate grade)- 15%

1-2 page response essays- 10% each

1 page Student as Critic paper- 5%

Value System Diagram- 10%

Take-Home Exams- 10% each

Extra Credit (on Artist Statement)- 5%

Attendance Policy: Attendance is required on all class days. One unexcused absence permitted.

Academic Integrity: Since Bethel College is a Christian academic community; its fundamental purpose is the pursuit of knowledge and the development of growing Christian persons. Essential to the success of this educational mission is a commitment to principles of ethical academic integrity. Every member of the college community is responsible for upholding the highest standards of honesty at all times. Students, as members of this community, are also responsible for adhering to the principles and spirit of academic honesty.

Accessibility: Students who wish to request disability-related accommodations for a course should talk with the instructor as soon as possible at the beginning of the course. Most accommodations are arranged through the office of Disability Services. For more information, please contact [Kathy McGillivray](mailto:Kathy.McGillivray@bethel.edu), Director of Disability Services, at (651)635-8759 or go to the Disability Services website at <http://www.bethel.edu/Disability/>

Appeals Procedure: Any concerns that you have either about the course, your grades, or the instructor should be handled in the following manner. (1) Communicate your concern clearly to the instructor as a first step. (2) If you are not satisfied with the instructor's resolution of your concern, talk to the department chairperson. (3) If you are still not satisfied, then you should make an appointment to communicate your concerns to the Office of Academic Affairs. If this procedure is not followed, the rights and freedom of both the instructor and student are potentially violated.

Computer and Network Ethics at Bethel (Computing Acceptable Use Policy): With the freedom of access provided by our computing network comes the responsibility of good citizenship. As with any community, the electronic community of which you are now a member cannot function without some sense of order.

In general Bethel's lifestyle expectations apply to network citizenship. However, additional specificity for appropriate behavior is necessary. Please read the official guidelines for network usage discussed below. Your use of our network obligates you to know and adhere to these regulations. Ignorance of the policy is not an acceptable defense.

The Bethel College and Seminary computing resources and network are for the use of Bethel faculty, students, and staff, and are to be used only for the academic, administrative, educational, and research purposes of the institution.

CRITICAL PRACTICES: Reading and Writing About Contemporary Art **Spring 2012**

All use of the network must abide by the Computing Acceptable Use Policy Guidelines.

Use of Inclusive Language: In continuity with Bethel's Covenant, which affirms that human life is sacred in all its diversity and fullness, I encourage the use of inclusive language when speaking about or addressing human beings in academic work, public discourse, classroom discussion, and worship. As an expression of our commitment that language should not perpetuate discrimination, oppression, and sexism, we should strive to minimize or eliminate the use of words that might reinforce exclusion of one group and favor another to the detriment of the rest. This means, in particular, that we should try to avoid terms or expressions that reinforce demeaning attitudes about individuals or groups based on their age, disability, ethnicity, gender, race, or national origin. In order to avoid the tacit assumption that male represents the universal person, our language which refers to all human beings need not reflect the assumption that all people are men. Finally, we should try to avoid the terms which presume that all people are the same, or that a socially dominant group represents the larger group. For specific examples of the use of inclusive language, please consult the Bethel College brochure on inclusive language, as well as the following web-site: <http://bethelnet.bethel.edu/cas-faculty/Policies/inclusive-language.html>. An extended discussion is provided at <http://bethelnet.bethel.edu/academic-affairs/handbook/facultyhandbook.pdf>, beginning on page 106.