



Installation view of "Jayson Musson: His History of Art," 2022. Jayson Musson, in collaboration with The Fabric Workshop and Museum. Photo credit: Carlos Avendaño.

ARTH 2690 401 2024A

Contemporary Art

Monday/Wednesday, 10-11:30am

Professor Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw - gshaw@upenn.edu

Many people experience the art of our time as bewildering, shocking, too ordinary (my kid could do that), too intellectual (elitist), or simply not as art. Yet what makes this art engaging is that it raises the question of what art is or can be, employs a range of new materials and technologies, and addresses previously excluded audiences. It invades non-art spaces, blurs the boundaries between text and image, document and performance, asks questions about institutional frames (the museum, gallery, and art journal), and generates new forms of criticism. Much of the "canon" of what counts as important is still in flux, especially for the last twenty years. And the stage is no longer centered only on the United States and Europe but is becoming increasingly global. The course will introduce students to the major movements and artists since 1980, with emphasis on social and historical context, critical debates, new media, and the changing role of the spectator/participant.

Course Goals

Students will become familiar with the history of the art world since 1980, including dominant theoretical debates, issues of globalization, art and politics, the changing art market, types of exhibitions, shifts in curatorial practice and criticism, and approaches to art in the public sphere. Close looking and analytical writing skills will be strengthened, as will presentation

skills. Students will gain a level of comfort in spaces of artistic display and discourse by attending scholarly lectures and artist's talks, gallery openings, and visiting museum exhibitions.

Requirements and Expectations

During the semester, students will spend 2 hours per week in class and at least one hour per week attending institutions or events related to contemporary art. Required readings are posted as links or PDFs on the syllabus (you should expect them to take about 5 hours per week), additional readings will be added where you see "TBA" on the syllabus.

Each class will begin with a formal presentation by the professor on the artworks and ideas related to the topic of the week, followed by a group discussion of about 15-20 minutes.

Participation in each meeting's discussion is essential to achieving a high level of success in this course, therefore all readings must be completed prior to coming to class. Students should bring detailed notes and / or print out copies of any articles or book chapters assigned (Oxford/Grove links excepted).

Academic Integrity: Please refresh your understanding of the university's policies on academic integrity by reading the information at this [link](#).

Class Assignments

- [20% Attendance, Participation, and Events](#)
- [20% Midterm Examination \(TBA\)](#)
- [20% Museum Exercise \(handout\)](#)
- [20% Exhibition Review \(5-7 pages\)](#)
- [20% Final Examination \(due the date/time of scheduled exam\)](#)

Accommodations, Technology, & Absences Policies

If you have a learning accommodation that has been approved by the [Weingarten Center](#) you must alert the professor immediately.

Laptops and other digital devices are not permitted in this course. You are expected to take daily notes on the professor's presentation, the class discussion, and the course readings on paper.

Consistent attendance is essential to success in this class. If you are absent due to illness, personal emergency, or other outside commitment you should notify the professor before class or as soon as possible. After the January 24 add deadline, you are permitted two absences during the semester. Additional absences will count as 1 point off the 20 possible points in the "attendance, participation, and events" portion of your grade (this also equals 1 percentage point off your final grade). if you have a significant personal event or an ongoing problem that impacts your attendance, please reach out to your advisor/college contact immediately and have them contact the professor.

Course Calendar

WEEK 1

Geographies and Materials

WEEK 2

Feminism + Postmodernism

WEEK 3

Post-Colonialism + Decolonialism

WEEK 4

Public Art / Social Practice

WEEK 5

Midterm Discussion & Review

Midterm Exam

WEEK 6

Performance and Embodied Art

WEEK 7

Ecocriticism / Activism / Politics

WEEK 8

Spring Break

WEEK 9

Museum Exercise Due

Museums and Curating

WEEK 10

Criticism and Institutional Critique

WEEK 11

Art Fairs & Biennials

WEEK 12

The Art Market / Galleries / Auction Houses / Artist's Rights / NFTs

WEEK 13

Temporalities / Computer Art / AI

WEEK 14

Exhibition Review Due

Presentations of Reviews

WEEK 14

Conclusion

FINALS WEEK

Final Exam Due - TBA

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