

**ART 3910 Critical Issues in Contemporary Art–CTW**  
**Spring 2017**  
**CRN 14723, 3 credit hours**

**Instructor:** Paul Boshears, PhD

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**Class Times:** Tuesdays & Thursdays 5:30pm –6:45pm

**Location:** Sparks Hall 322

**Office Hours:** Arts & Humanities 362, by appointment

### **Course Description**

This writing-intensive discussion-based course is designed to introduce BA and BFA Studio Art majors to the critical issues and debates relevant to contemporary art and creative practices. Students will read and engage with “coin of the realm” theoretical and philosophical texts that articulate the debates and struggles at work in social life over the past thirty years. Discussions, lectures, and selected readings will introduce a variety of critical methodologies for writing and thinking about art-making. Students will debate and clarify issues through oral and written analyses, interpretations, and comparisons of the visual materials and readings.

*In this class you will learn about the different audiences that professional artists engage with and how those audiences discuss those artists.*

### **Learning Outcomes**

Through the close study of a selection of contemporary artists and theorists, students completing this course will identify and evaluate the processes and critical debates that inform contemporary art practices. With this knowledge students will be able to situate their own works—and the works of others—in a contemporary art-theoretical context.

Students will demonstrate their critical thinking acumen through the completion of multi-modal writing activities such as in-class writings and discussions, the critical evaluation of a contemporary artist, and the presentation of an artist statement they create during the semester.

Students will be assessed on their ability to effectively communicate their identification, analysis, and evaluations of arguments and truth-claims.

It is expected that in this process of students will discover and address personal biases as well as present convincing reasons and support for the conclusions they draw from the class-related activities.

### **Class Format**

The class will meet twice a week. Students are expected to arrive at each class meeting having read the assigned materials. Prior to each class meeting students will have written a 100-word response to the assigned reading materials and posted in our online meeting space, iCollege, by noon the day after the assignment.

*The majority of your final grade in this class will be based on your writing assignments and your in-class discussion of the assigned materials.*

During each class students will discuss the assigned readings and with the professor decide upon an agenda for the next class meeting.

### **Required Texts and Materials**

*Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985*. Second Edition. Edited by Zoya Kocur and Simon Leung. New York: Wiley-Blackwell. 2013.

Students must arrive at each class meeting with the necessary reading and writing materials to participate.

## Situating this Class

**The mission of the Ernest G. Welch School of Art and Design** is to offer a rigorous, comprehensive, and accessible graduate and undergraduate education in the visual arts to a diverse student population. From Foundation to Graduate studies, courses are designed to give each student challenging, discipline-specific training while presenting the opportunity for each to discover and nurture an individual vision and voice.

I have designed this class to satisfy one of the two Critical Thinking through Writing (CTW) requirements for all Georgia State University (GSU) undergraduate BA and BFA Studio Art majors. GSU describes the CTW courses as primarily composed of “assignments that focus on critical thinking as demonstrated through writing.” They clarify further that these are,

assignments that use writing to help students develop the ‘wide range of cognitive skills and intellectual dispositions needed to effectively identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments and truth claims; to discover and overcome personal prejudices; to formulate and present convincing reasons in support of conclusions; and to make reasonable, intelligent decisions about what to believe and what to do.’ [...] Typically, students will have the opportunity to revise at least one assignment during the semester.<sup>1</sup>

From this description we understand that our time together in this class will be spent documenting the work of critical writing. My role in this class is to provide an environment in which each of you can articulate your thinking through text-based media. In order for this environment to cohere among us, I task myself with observing and inducing discussions between us.

### **Reading and Writing Are Difficult**

I come from a text-based practice both philosophical and artistic. My experience has shown me that writing and reading are difficult tasks.

Often it is really, really difficult for me to find the appropriate terms or phrases to effectively communicate what I intend. I have—very frequently—denigrated myself for the pace at which I read certain texts, especially theory or philosophy texts.

I expect that it will be just as difficult for you as well, it may be even more difficult for you. And that’s okay.

This class is designed to hone your reading and writing habits.

In this class we are going to read challenging texts and we are going to find ourselves thinking differently about ourselves and how our works are situated in the world.

I will be assessing both the clarity of the arguments you put forward and the evidence you provide to support those arguments in your writing.

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<sup>1</sup> They are quoting Bassham, Irwin, Nardone, and Wallace’s *Critical Thinking: A Student’s Introduction*, page 1. See <http://cii.gsu.edu/ctw-course-description/>

## Grading and Assessments

Your final grade for this course will be based on the following:

### **Class discussion: (25%)**

You are expected to read all assigned and discussed texts and participate actively in class discussions.

These discussions are designed to help the student and the professor find meaningful ways of communicating their understandings of the materials.

### **Response writing assignments: (25%)**

You are expected to arrive at each class meeting having written and posted to our online meeting space a 100-word response to the assigned reading. You must also prepare and post one question in response to the reading.

**You must post your response in our iCollege space by 6:30PM the day after our meeting**, e.g. you're assigned a reading on Tuesday, you must submit your response to that reading by 6:30PM on Wednesday.

This assignment is designed to gauge your comprehension of the course materials.

### **Library Research Project (25%)**

You are tasked with identifying a contemporary artist and conducting research into their body of work. Based on the research you conduct, you will write a brief review essay (2,500 words) of the artist's *oeuvre*. The purpose of this interview exercise is to ascertain the audience's that interact with the artist's works and the ways in which those audiences articulate their reception of the works.

This assignment is designed to help the student learn the scholarly and industry-specific writing conventions expected of professional artists.

### **Artist Statement Assignment: (25%)**

This is a two-part assignment. Early in the semester you will provide your own artist's statement. You will then be asked, as a final project for this class, to revise your initial artist statement in light of what we have read and discussed in this class.

This assignment is designed to familiarize the student with the professional conventions expected of exhibiting artists. This assignment demonstrates to the student the ways in which they've developed in response to the materials covered in this course.

This assignment assists the professor in understanding the students' aspirations and appreciation of the materials covered in this course.

### **Midterm Grade Notification**

Each student enrolled in the course will receive notification of their midterm grade halfway through the term via email. Your final grade is contingent on your daily discussion and participation, as such your final grade may change dramatically by the end of the semester.

### **Assessing Learning Outcomes**

I will ask you to complete three short assessments of learning during this semester:

- 1) On the first day you will be given a **Prior Knowledge Quiz**,
- 2) at the middle of the term I will give you a **Learning Outcomes Assessment**,
- 3) and on the final day of our classes I will ask you to complete a second **Learning Outcomes Assessment**.

I will use these tools to help gauge your learning as well as to identify ways I can better support how you learn. You will receive a participation grade for these activities.

## Rubric for Assessing Writing

I will use this rubric to assess the daily writings you will create in response to the readings assigned in this course.

	1 point	2 points	3 points	4 points
<b>Criterion #1</b> Identification of critical issue	Critical issue not identified	Critical issue identified but with no evidence of understanding context	Critical issue identified with evidence of understanding social, cultural, political context	Critical issue clearly identified with evidence of deep understanding of social, cultural, political context
<b>Criterion #2</b> Thorough and insightful analysis	Analysis is incomplete with no indication of critical thinking	Analysis is simplistic or vague with little indication of critical thinking	Analysis is complete with clear use of critical thinking	Analysis is thorough and insightful with sophisticated critical thinking
<b>Criterion #3</b> Clear and logical organization	Organization is not clear and logical and does not help to support claim	Organization is at times clear and logical and only partially helps to support claims	Organization is clear and logical and helps to support claims	Organization is very clear and logical and helps to strongly support claims
<b>Criterion #4</b> Proper grammar, spelling and punctuation.	Many grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors with no evidence of proofreading	Several distracting grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors with little evidence of proofreading	One or two grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors that are not overall distracting	No grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors

### Letter Grades According to Rubric

A	16
A-	15
B+	14
B	13
B-	12

C+	11
C	10
C-	9
D	6 – 8
F	< 6

### Letter Grades According to Percentages at End of Semester

A+	97 – 100 %
A	93 – 96 %
A-	90 – 92 %
B+	87 – 89 %
B	83 – 86 %
B-	80 – 82 %

C+	77 – 79 %
C	73 – 76 %
C-	70 – 72 %
D	60 – 69 %
F	< 60 %

## **Policies Governing this Class**

### **Academic Honesty & Integrity**

Students and faculty are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards.

We can do our best work when we foster the best performances from one another.

I will be relying on and I must conform to the policies established by the community here at Georgia State University. Any and all cheating, including plagiarism, will not be tolerated and will result in an automatic grade of "F" for the course.

If you believe that I have breeched these ethical standards, please follow the guidelines communicated in the Student Handbook ([codeofconduct.gsu.edu](http://codeofconduct.gsu.edu)) and refer to the Faculty Handbook (<http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwfhb/fhb.html>).

### **Accessibility and Accommodation Planning**

It is necessary for me that this class be accessible to you.

Not all of us learn in the same ways. I want to work with each of you to ensure that we are learning together.

**If you need accommodations, you have a right to have these met**, so it's best to notify instructors as soon as possible.

Per the Office of Disability Services ([disability.gsu.edu](http://disability.gsu.edu)):

Students who wish to request accommodations for a disability may do so by registering with Disability Services. Students may only be accommodated upon issuance by Disability Services of a signed Accommodation Plan and are responsible for providing a copy of that plan to instructors of all classes in which an accommodation is sought.

### **Disruptive Student Behavior Policy**

Disruptive student behavior is student behavior in a classroom or other learning environment (to include both on and off-campus locations), which disrupts the educational process.

Disruptive class behavior for this purpose is defined by the instructor.

Such behavior includes, but is not limited to, verbal or physical threats, repeated obscenities, unreasonable interference with class discussion, making/receiving personal phone calls, text messages or pages during class, excessive tardiness, leaving and entering class frequently in the absence of notice to instructor of illness or other extenuating circumstances, and persisting in disruptive personal conversations with other class members. For purposes of this policy, it may also be considered disruptive behavior for a student to exhibit threatening, intimidating, or other inappropriate behavior toward the instructor or classmates outside of class.

For additional information on this policy see the Office of the Dean of Students: ([deanofstudents.gsu.edu/faculty-staff-resources/disruptive-student-conduct](http://deanofstudents.gsu.edu/faculty-staff-resources/disruptive-student-conduct))

Because this is a discussion-based course in which the majority of your grade is determined by how you contribute to the discussions in this class, **most—if not all—cell phone use or laptop use during class time will be construed as disruptive student behavior.**

## **Plagiarism**

In this class I will ask you to give textual support for your arguments about the materials we read. This means you are going to be asked to paraphrase or quote what the authors we read state. Consequently, there is a greater opportunity to knowingly or unknowingly plagiarize.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. GSU defines plagiarism as, "presenting another person's work as one's own." The official guidelines to which you are expected to adhere are located here: (<http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwfhb/sec409.html>).

You will find a handy one-sheet explaining and discussing plagiarism here: (<http://education.gsu.edu/files/2016/05/Plagiarism.pdf>).

Indiana University's School of Education has an excellent website for learning about plagiarism, here: (<https://www.indiana.edu/~tedfrick/plagiarism/>).

I will issue extra credit toward your final grade if you pass and receive a verified certificate from IU's Plagiarism Certification Test, here: (<https://www.indiana.edu/~plag/test.html>). This assignment can replace the value of points lost through an unexcused absence.

## **Deadlines**

All students are required to meet course deadlines. Late work will not be accepted unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as those mentioned in the attendance policy below.

There are no make-up arrangements, however there may be extra credit that can be arranged.

## **Attendance**

- Class attendance is required.
- Three (3) unexcused absences will result in the lowering of the final grade by one letter grade.
- Failure to come to class with adequate materials for producing work will result in a recorded absence for that day.
- Failure to arrive on time will be recorded as half an absence, so for example, arriving late to class twice during the term will be recorded as one absence. Similarly, leaving class early will be recorded as half an absence.

Roll will be taken at the beginning of each class. Information missed due to tardiness or absence will be the responsibility of the student. Absences may be excused due to illness, religious holidays or other extreme circumstances as defined by the University, but it is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor and to give a written notification.

## **Security**

Georgia State University and the Welch School of Art and Design have installed punch code locks to make our buildings safer for students and faculty. You should treat any lab or studio under card lock as a secure space. As such, GSU and the Welch School of Art and Design ask that you abide by the following guidelines to help ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone:

1. Always have your GSU ID card with you when on campus.
2. Never allow anyone to use your card. If a student or member of the staff or faculty is authorized to be in the area, their cards will give them access. If anyone asks for your card, report the incident to campus police immediately.
3. Always report suspicious people or activity to the faculty or graduate student in charge of the studio or lab. If, for any reason, there is no faculty or graduate student supervision, report suspicious people or activity to campus police (404-413-2100)

4. Never try to enter a studio or lab by 'piggybacking' on someone else. For example, if someone is entering the lab or studio before you, do not try to get through the door while it is open. Wait for the door to close and then punch in the code again to gain entry. Similarly, do not allow someone else to come through with you. It can be tempting to hold the door open for someone whose hands are full with equipment, etc. This practice, however, is not secure and can put everyone at risk. Wanting to help is good, but be smart about it.

Please refer to the Office of Safety & Security ([safety.gsu.edu](http://safety.gsu.edu)) for further information.

### **Retention of Work**

The School of Art & Design has the right to retain any student project, whether it be for display, accreditation, documentation, or any other educational or legal purpose.

### **Student Evaluation**

Your constructive assessment of this course plays an indispensable role in shaping education at Georgia State. Upon completing the course, please take time to fill out the online course evaluation.

### **Subject to Change**

This course syllabus provides a general plan for the course. With the exception of grading and attendance policies, deviations may be necessary and written notification of any changes will be provided.

## Class Calendar

Date	In Class	Assignment
Tuesday, 10 January	Review syllabus, class introductions, and <b>Prior Knowledge Quiz</b>	<p>Read Tompkins, "Some Notes on How To Ask a Good Question about Theory...." <i>L.A. Review of Books' Avidly</i>, (2016): 1–3.</p> <p>Read and write 100-word response to:            Caillois, Roger. "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia." Translated by John Shepley. <i>October</i> 31 (1984): 16–32. (Available through iCollege)</p>
Thursday, 12 January  Last Day of Drop/Add is Friday, 13 January	Discuss Caillois reading.	<p>Read and write 100-word response to:            Heidegger, Martin. "The Thing." In <i>Poetry, Language, Thought</i>, translated by Albert Hofstadter, 163–180. New York: Harper &amp; Row, 1971. (Available through iCollege)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">~and~</p> <p>Howe, Lawrence W. "Heidegger's Discussion of 'The Thing': A Theme for Deep Ecology." <i>Between the Species</i> 9 no. 2 (1993): 93–97. (Available through iCollege)</p>
Tuesday, 17 January	Discuss Heidegger and Howe readings.	<p>Read and write 100-word response to:            Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Intellectual Field: A World Apart." 13–20.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">~and~</p> <p>de Duve, Thierry. "When Form Has Become Attitude – And Beyond." 21–33.</p>
Thursday, 19 January	Discuss Bourdieu and de Duve readings.	<p><b>Artist Statement 1</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">~and~</p> <p>Read and write 100-word response to:            Kwon, Miwon. "One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity." 34–55.</p>
Tuesday, 24 January	Discuss Kwon reading.	<p>Read and write 100-word response to:            Wu, Chin-Tao. "Biennials without Borders." 56–63.</p>



Date	In Class	Assignment
Thursday, 26 January <b>Artist Statement 1 Due submit to iCollege before 2:00PM Today</b>	Discuss Wu reading	Read and write 100-word response to: Alberro, Alexander. "Periodising Contemporary Art." 64–71.
Tuesday, 31 January	Discuss Alberro reading.	Read and write 100-word response to: Rancière, Jacques. "Contemporary Art and the Politics of Aesthetics." 72–86.
Thursday, 2 February	Discuss Rancière reading.	Read and write 100-word response to: Buchloh, Benjamin H.D. "A Note on Gerhard Richter's <i>October 18, 1977</i> ." 94–101.
Tuesday, 7 February	Library Day!	<b>Library Project</b> (identity your artist, gather bibliographic materials). ~and~ Read and write 100-word response to: Joselit, David. "Notes on Surface: Toward a Genealogy of Flatness." 102–117.
Thursday, 9 February	Discuss Buchloh and Joselit readings.	Read and write 100-word response to: Krauss, Rosalinde. " <i>Informe without Conclusion</i> ." 118–130.
Tuesday, 14 February	Discuss Krauss reading.	Read and write 100-word response to: Fraser, Andrea. "How to Provide an Artistic Service: An Introduction." 146–152.
Thursday, 16 February	Discuss Fraser reading.	Read and write 100-word response to: Kester, Grant. "Conversation Pieces: The Role of Dialogue in Socially-Engaged Art." 153–162.
Tuesday, 21 February <b>Library Project Due submit to iCollege before 2:00PM Today</b>	Discuss Kester reading.	Read and write 100-word response to: Bishop, Claire. "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics." 166–194.

Date	In Class	Assignment
Thursday, 23 February	Discuss Bishop reading.	Read and write 100-word response to: Vance, Carole S. "The War on Culture." 203–210.
Tuesday, 28 February Last Day to Withdraw without Academic Penalty	Discuss Vance reading. <b>Learning Outcomes Assessment</b>	Read and write 100-word response to: Butler, Judith. "Gender Is Burning: Questions of Appropriation." 235–251.
Thursday, 2 March	Discuss Butler reading.	Read and write 100-word response to: Crimp, Douglas. "AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism." 211–219.
Tuesday, 7 March	Discuss Crimp reading.	Read and write 100-word response to: Wright, Jr. Charles A. "The Mythology of Difference: Vulgar Identity Politics at the Whitney Biennial." 263–279.
Thursday, 9 March	Discuss Wright, Jr. reading.	Read and write 100-word response to: Ronell, Avital. "Haunted TV." 280–288.
<b>Spring Break March 13–19</b>		
Tuesday, 21 March	Discuss Ronell reading.	Read and write 100-word response to: Mouffe, Chantal. "Cultural Workers as Organic Intellectuals." 299–308.
Thursday, 23 March	Discuss Mouffe reading.	Read and write 100-word response to: Minh-Ha, Trinh T. "All-Owning Spectatorship." 354–370.
Tuesday, 28 March	Discuss Minh-Ha reading.	Read and write 100-word response to: Mosquera, Gerardo. "The Marco Polo Syndrome: Some Problems around Art and Eurocentrism." 314–321.
Thursday, 30 March	Discuss Mosquera reading.	Read and write 100-word response to: Oguibe, Olu. "Heart of Darkness." 322–328.

Date	In Class	Assignment
Tuesday, 4 April	Discuss Oguibe reading.	Read and write 100-word response to: Hung, Wu. "Ruins, Fragmentation, and the Chinese Modern/Postmodern." 371–380.
Thursday, 6 April	Discuss Hung reading.	Read and write 100-word response to: Preciado, Beatriz. "The Architecture of Porn: Museum, Urban Detritus, and Cinematic Stag-rooms." 289–298.
Tuesday, 11 April	Discuss Preciado reading.	<b>Artist Statement 2</b> ~and~ Read and write 100-word response to: Downey, Anthony. "Zones of Indistinction: Giorgio Agamben's 'Bare Life' and the Politics of Aesthetics." 416–434.
Thursday, 13 April	Discuss Downey reading.	Read and write 100-word response to: Manovich, Lev. "The Database." 435–454.
Tuesday, 18 April	Discuss Manovich reading.	Read and write 100-word response to: Choy, Lee Weng. "Authenticity, Reflexivity, and Spectacle: Or, the Rise of New Asia Is Not the End of the World." 338–354.
Thursday, 20 April	Discuss Choy reading.	<b>Learning Outcomes Assessment</b>
Tuesday, 25 April	<b>Artist Statement 2 Due submit to iCollege before 2:00PM Today</b>	Congratulations! You've written at least 5,000 words this semester.

This syllabus reflects a plan for the semester. Deviations may become necessary as the semester progresses.