AEAH 4814: Theories of Contemporary Art
Dr. Monica Salazar

OFFICE NUMBER: ART 270D
OFFICE HOURS: Monday 1:00-2:00pm & by appointment
E-mail: Monica.Salazar@unt.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Selected theoretical and critical issues in recent art.
Prerequisite(s): ART 1200, ART 2350 and ART 2360, and AEAH 4813; or consent of instructor.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:

RECOMMENDED READING:
Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz. Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists’ Writings.
Harrington, Austin. Art and Social Theory
Barnett, Sylvan. A Short Guide to Writing About Art

COURSE CONTENT:
This class explores different currents of thought within contemporary art. Together, we will investigate the different theoretical frameworks and critical issues that revolve around contemporary art. We will also study the sociopolitical, historical, and economic circumstances in which important contemporary theories emerge. In this class, students will draw connections between contemporary art theory and local works of art. With topics spanning from the dematerialization of art to New Media, this class will discuss salient global developments in the arts, architecture, and philosophy of the contemporary art world.

COURSE OBJECTIVES LEARNING OUTCOMES:
By the end of the semester, students will be able to:
1. Identify different contemporary art theories, as well as their contexts, and works of art that reflect them.
2. Interpret and apply concepts and terms that are crucial to theory in contemporary art.
3. Analyze the ways in which theory informs the art of today.
4. Conduct research on works of art and communicate the outcomes of such research to the group.
5. Analyze texts closely.
6. Engage with the art community of the Dallas-Fort Worth area through museum visits.
**COURSE STRUCTURE:** This class meets three times a week during the semester. All readings are to be done prior to class, on the day assigned. Students are expected to actively participate in all class discussions and group exercises. Since this is a “Theory” class, it is crucial that you read the assigned texts diligently. Although in many instances theoretical texts are challenging, students must commit to read them closely in a timely manner. Close reading a text means to exercise critical thinking and analyze the reading in order to understand what the main and secondary ideas are. That is, to do a thoughtful analysis of the text in order to achieve a deep understanding of its meaning. Students must come to class with notes and questions to share with the class.

We will be using Canvas in this course. In order for you to access the course materials, you need to read the syllabus carefully and complete the mandatory syllabus quiz. Students are required to access Canvas regularly. It is the student’s responsibility to be aware of any announcements, assignments, or changes posted on Canvas. Technical difficulties will not be an acceptable excuse for failing to turn in assignments on time, completing the readings, or responding to a message.

Note: some students may find the information and images disturbing due to their explicit violent, sexual and political subject. By completing the mandatory syllabus quiz, you are acknowledging your awareness of these themes and committing to fully participate in class.

**Late and Make-up Assignments:**
Late work will NOT be accepted unless you have a documented, excused absence. Students are responsible for notifying the instructor of their absence and checking for any missed work. Students must have a documented, excused absence in order to make up assignments. If a student knows he/she will miss a test due to a documented excused absence he/she must contact the instructor BEFORE the test. If a student misses a test due to a documented family emergency, he/she must contact the instructor within a week after the exam took place.

**Electronic Devices**
For the duration of this class, please refrain from using ANY ELECTRONIC DEVICES—including earphones, earplugs, etc. In case you are forced to use a laptop or a recording device due to a disability, please bring to me your accommodation letter from the ODA office during the first week of class and I will be happy to make an exception for you. Cell phones, laptops and other electronic devices must be silenced and put away before the start of class. Please do not get up and leave during class except when absolutely necessary, such as an emergency need to use the facilities. There is no need to ask permission to leave. If you need to frequently stand up, please try to sit near the end of the rows, close to the walls so that you do not distract the class. If you are going to an extraordinary personal situation that requires you to keep your telephone active, please use silence mode. In case you really, urgently NEED to take a call, please leave the classroom discretely and respectfully. If a student does not comply to these requests, and his/her actions become disruptive to the class, I will ask him/her to leave. In case a student refuses to leave, a disciplinary report will be filed with the Dean of Students.

**Student Behavior**
This class will follow the university’s expectations of student conduct, found at [https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012). Students are expected to speak respectfully to the instructor, TAs and their peers. Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students’ opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct.
STUDENT EVALUATION (OR GRADING): The following assignments and percentages will constitute your final grade for the semester:

Participation--------------------------40%
Journal------------------------40%
Final Group Project------------------20%

Total: 100%

A = 90-100; B = 80-89; C = 70-79; D = 60-69; F = 0-59

Meaning of Grades:
A = Exemplary work: reads all required texts, works above and beyond in all areas, engaged in class, and asked pertinent questions; shows a mastery of the material beyond class expectations.
B = Good work: participates and is prepared for each class session, understands the concepts and ideas within the class but perhaps needs clarity on certain points.
C = Average work (this is the starting point for all assignments): knows material based on general knowledge, average work, gave enough effort to pass.
D = Passing, but Below Average Work: shows some understanding of material, but misunderstanding of other aspects of the content, missing assignments and tests, did not follow instructions, did not ask questions until assignment was due, missed multiple classes.
F = Poor work: subpar effort, possibly did not attend or access class for extended periods of time for various reasons, shows little understanding of the course material.

PARTICIPATION (40%):
Student participation in class discussion is not only required, but also essential to your success in this course. Your Participation grade will consist of the following:

In-Class Activities (10%). It is very important that students engage with in-class activities. If a student misses a class, he/she will not be able to make it up. That is, there will be NO make up opportunities for In-Class Activities.

Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation (20%).
The texts we will be reading are quite interesting and challenging. They often leave us with all sorts of questions. Throughout the semester, each student will be responsible for sharing with the group a set of questions sparked by the assigned reading. Questions must be insightful and reflect a thorough reading of the text. Each question should aim to help the class have a deeper understanding of the texts and the topics being discussed, and therefore, they should lead the class into a deep and engaging discussion. Students are also required to share with the group a work or art of the theory/idea presented by the text that illustrates (or opposes) the theory/idea presented by the text. Students must explain their reasoning behind choosing that specific example. You can use your Journal entry for that specific reading as a base for your presentation. The format of the presentation is open, you may use whatever medium/technology better helps explain your ideas. However, since you will be talking about works of art, it will be wise that you show images. The first day of class, the date for each presentation will be assigned. Dates are not exchangeable. If a student misses his/her presentation, there will be NO make up opportunities for this assignment.
**Pop-Quizzes (10%)**
Throughout the semester, there will be unannounced, in-class short quizzes. Their purpose is to make sure you have a grasp of the material. They could be about our readings, museum visits, or the films we will watch.

**JOURNAL (40%):**
For this class, students will keep a journal. Although Canvas does not have a specific “Journal” section, we will do it through the Discussion Board. Each student will have their own “group” where he/she will enter their journal entry, so that all of that student’s entries will be grouped together. Entries are due before each class starting on January 23rd, and should record your thoughts, questions, and connections you make while reading the text assigned for that day. Each entry must reflect a careful reading of the text and show your critical thinking. Each entry should be between 200 and 300 words long, and should be clearly written. There are some instances, such as the days (Fridays) when we will meet at a local museum, when you do not need to submit an entry, although you can do it if you want. If you are not sure whether an entry is due, please see the Course Outline located at the end of this syllabus. Journal entries will be graded Complete/Incomplete on a weekly basis, and keep in mind the amount of entries vary per week. That is, in order for you to get credit for the week, you need to have submitted ALL entries. If you missed an entry, that week will be incomplete and therefore, you will not get credit for it. You are required to complete the journal entries of 13 weeks (weeks 2 – 8 and 10 -15). You will earn 3 points for each week you complete.

**FINAL GROUP PROJECT (20%):**
The class will be divided into 9 groups (seven groups of four students and two groups of five students). Each group will elaborate a virtual or imaginary museum exhibition that surveys one of the most significant Theories of Contemporary Art. The first day of class you will form your group and each group will choose among a variety of themes I will present. Each group will choose the name of the exhibition, as well as an array of (15-20) works of art in which they will identify aspects/theories/concepts discussed in class, in order to explain how such works of art reflect certain theories of contemporary art. As part of the project, each group will submit a sketch showing the order and physical arrangement of the exhibit, subtitles or subdivisions within the exhibition (if any), as well as the texts that will accompany the artworks. All group members are required to participate in the research, writing, and presentation of this project. The final Group Project consists of three parts:

**Proposal/Outline (5%)**
Halfway through the semester, each group is required to submit a proposal and an outline of their Final Group Project. This document should consist of a tentative title; a curatorial statement where they explain their intent and goals for the exhibit; an outline of the sections within the show; and a annotated list of potential works of art.

**Final Paper (10%)**
Each group is required to turn in one final written paper that must incorporate the elements of the proposal as well as research on the topics referenced through the Museum exhibit. This final paper must be a cohesive text, rather than a compilation of the separate writings of each individual group member. Only one paper per group must be uploaded through the Turnitin link in Canvas. The final paper should be 5 to 7 pages long and it must be typed, using Times New Roman font, size 12, and should be double-spaced with 1 to 1.25 inch margins. Students should use the Chicago Manual of Style format, including appropriate citations in the form of footnotes or endnotes and a bibliography when applicable. An electronic copy of this assignment must be uploaded through the Turnitin link in Canvas on the assigned date. **Late papers will not be accepted.**
Presentation (5%)
The last three sessions of class (with the exception of our last museum visit) will be devoted to Final Project Presentations. These presentations should be between 10 and 12 minutes long and must be supported by images. The goal of this presentation is that we all learn about each other and we reflect upon the different theories we learned in class. All group members must participate in this presentation. Please note that in order for a group to get credit for the Final Group Project, all three parts must have been completed in a timely manner. Therefore, if a group turns in one or two parts but fails to submit either the Proposal/Outline, the Written Paper, or fails to Present their project to the group, they will get a “zero”.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Frequently, attendance will be taken at the start of each class. Those students who arrive late must make sure they have been counted for the attendance of that particular class. Three unexcused absences will be allowed. Thereafter, each unexcused absence will result in the lowering your grade by five points.

ADA Accommodation Statement: In accordance with university policies and state and federal regulations, the university is committed to full academic access for all qualified students, including those with disabilities. To this end, all academic units are willing to make reasonable and appropriate adjustments to the classroom environment and the teaching, testing, or learning methodologies in order to facilitate equality of educational access for persons with disabilities. See UNT Policy 04.015.

Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at http://disability.unt.edu. You may also contact them by phone at (940) 565-4323.

Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress:
A student must maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) to continue to receive financial aid. Students must maintain a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA in addition to successfully completing a required number of credit hours based on total registered hours per term. Students cannot exceed maximum timeframes established based on the published length of the graduate program. If a student does not maintain the required standards, the student may lose their financial aid eligibility.

If at any point you consider dropping this or any other course, please be advised that the decision to do so may affect your current and future financial aid eligibility. Please visit http://financialaid.unt.edu/satisfactory-academic-progress-requirements for more information about financial aid Satisfactory Academic Progress. It may be wise for you to schedule a meeting with an academic advisor in your college or visit the Student Financial Aid and Scholarships office to discuss dropping a course before doing so.

COURSE RISK FACTOR:
According to University Policy, this course is classified as a category one course. Students enrolled in this course will not be exposed to any significant hazards and are not likely to suffer any bodily injury. Students will
be informed of any potential health hazards or potential bodily injury connected with the use of any materials and/or processes and will be instructed how to proceed without danger to themselves or others.

Students who are pregnant or will become pregnant during the course of the semester are advised to check with their doctor immediately to determine if any additional risks are reason to postpone this course until a later semester. Upon request, your professor will provide a list of chemicals and safety issues for your doctor to review. Material Safety Data Sheets are available on all chemicals. It will be up to you and your doctor to determine what course of action to take.

**Building Emergency Procedures:**
In case of emergency (alarm will sound), please follow the building evacuation plans posted on each floor of your building and proceed to the nearest parking lot. In case of tornado (campus sirens will sound) or other weather related threat, please go to the nearest hallway or room on your floor without exterior windows and remain there until an all clear signal is sounded. Follow the instructions of your teachers and act accordingly.

**Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities:**
Each University of North Texas student is entitled to certain rights associated with higher education institutions. See [www.unt.edu/csrr](http://www.unt.edu/csrr) for further information. Cases of academic dishonesty will be referred to University authorities. See [UNT Policy 06.003](http://www.unt.edu/csrr).

**Acceptable Student Behavior:**
Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students’ opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university’s expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at [http://deanofstudents.unt.edu](http://deanofstudents.unt.edu).

*Disclaimer: The professor reserves the right to change the syllabus if and when necessary with or without notice.*
## Course Outline:

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<tr>
<th>WEEK 1</th>
<th>INTRODUCTION</th>
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| January 14 | Introduction and Syllabus  
Groups formed & Topics Chosen |
| January 16 | Read: Kocur and Leung, “Introduction” & “Introduction to Part I” |

### THE FIELD OF CONTEMPORARY ART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK 2</th>
<th>January 18</th>
<th>Read: Kocur and Leung, 5: “Periodising Contemporary Art”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 21</td>
<td>MLK Day - NO CLASS</td>
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| January 23 | Read: Kocur and Leung, 6: “Contemporary Art and the Politics of Aesthetics”  
Journal Entry Due (before class)  
Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation 1 & 27 |
| January 25 | Read: Kocur and Leung, 3: “One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity”  
Journal Entry Due (before class)  
Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation 2 & 28 |
| January 28 | Read: Kocur and Leung, 4: “Biennials without Borders?”  
Journal Entry Due (before class)  
Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation 3 & 29 |

### WEEK 3 | RETHINKING FORM & MEDIUM

| January 30 | Read: Nicolas Borriaud, “From Relational Aesthetics” (Canvas)  
Journal Entry Due (before class)  
Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation 4 & 30 |
| February 1 | Read: Kocur and Leung, 13: “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics”  
Journal Entry Due (before class)  
Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation 5 & 31 |
| February 4 | Read: Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, “The Dematerialization of Art” (Canvas)  
Journal Entry Due (before class)  
Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation 6 & 32 |
| February 6 | Read: Mari Carmen Ramírez, “Re-Materialization” (Canvas)  
Journal Entry Due (before class)  
Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation 7 & 33 |

### WEEK 4

| February 8 | Tentative Museum Visit: [Nasher Sculpture Center](http://www.nashersculpturecenter.org) @ 2:15pm  
2001 Flora Street Dallas, Texas 75201, Ph. 214.242.5100 |

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity Details</th>
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| WEEK 5 | February 11| Read: Kocur and Leung, 10: “Video Projection: The Space Between Screens”  
Journal Entry Due (before class)  
*Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation 8 & 34* |
[https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/debord/society.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/debord/society.htm)  
Journal Entry Due (before class)  
*Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation 9 & 35* |
|        | February 15| In-class film: *Critiques of art and media as commodity and spectacle* |
| WEEK 6 | February 18| Read: Kocur and Leung, 8: “Notes on Surface: Toward a Genealogy of Flatness”  
Journal Entry Due (before class)  
*Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation 10 & 36* |
|        | February 20| Read: Danto, “The End of Art: A Philosophical Defense” (Canvas)  
Journal Entry Due (before class)  
*Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation 11 & 37* |
|        | February 22| Museum Visit: Dallas Contemporary @ 2:15pm  
161 Glass Street, Dallas Texas 75207, Ph. 214 821 2522,  
[http://www.dallascontemporary.org](http://www.dallascontemporary.org) |
|        | February 25| Read: Kocur and Leung, 9: “Informe without Conclusion”  
Journal Entry Due (before class)  
*Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation 12 & 38* |
|        | February 27| Read: Kocur and Leung, 11: “How to Provide an Artistic Service: An Introduction”  
Journal Entry Due (before class)  
*Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation 13* |
| WEEK 7 |            | **IDENTITIES**                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|        | March 1    | Read: Kocur and Leung, 14: “The War on Culture”  
Journal Entry Due (before class)  
*Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation 14* |
|        | March 4    | Read: Kocur and Leung, 15: “AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism”  
Journal Entry Due (before class)  
**FINAL GROUP PROJECT PROPOSAL/OUTLINE DUE**  
*Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation 15* |
|        | March 6    | Read: Kocur and Leung, 18: “Looking for Trouble”  
Journal Entry Due (before class)  
*Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation 16* |
|        | March 8    | Tentative Museum Visit: Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, @ 2:15  
3200 Darnell Street, Fort Worth, Texas 76107/ Ph. 817.738.9215  
[https://www.themodern.org](https://www.themodern.org) |
| WEEK 9 | March 11   | SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS  
March 13  
March 15 |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>WEEK 10</th>
<th>March 18</th>
<th>In-class film: <em>Paris is Burning</em></th>
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<td>March 20</td>
<td>In-class film: <em>Paris is Burning</em> Read: Kocur and Leung, 17: “Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation” Journal Entry Due (before class) <em>Questions &amp; Relevant Artworks Presentation 17</em></td>
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<td>March 22</td>
<td>Read: Nochlin, “Why have there been no great women artists?” (Canvas) Journal Entry Due (before class) <em>Questions &amp; Relevant Artworks Presentation 18</em></td>
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<td><strong>COLLECTING CONTEMPORARY ART</strong></td>
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<td>March 27</td>
<td>In-class film: <em>Herb &amp; Dorothy</em></td>
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<td>March 29</td>
<td>In-class film: <em>Herb &amp; Dorothy</em></td>
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<td><strong>POSTCOLONIAL CRITIQUES</strong></td>
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<td>April 1</td>
<td>Read: Kocur and Leung, 23: “The Marco Polo Syndrome: Some Problems around Art and Eurocentrism” Journal Entry Due (before class) <em>Questions &amp; Relevant Artworks Presentation 20</em></td>
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<td>April 3</td>
<td>Read: Kocur and Leung, 28: “Ruins, Fragmentation, and the Chinese Modern/Postmodern” Journal Entry Due (before class) <em>Questions &amp; Relevant Artworks Presentation 21</em></td>
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<td>April 5</td>
<td>Read: Richard, “Postmodernism and Periphery” (Canvas) Journal Entry Due (before class) <em>Questions &amp; Relevant Artworks Presentation 22</em></td>
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<td><strong>THE EXPANSION OF CONTEMPORARY ART</strong></td>
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<td>April 8</td>
<td>Read: Kocur and Leung, 29: “Re-Politicizing Art, Theory, Representation, and New Media Technology” Journal Entry Due (before class) <em>Questions &amp; Relevant Artworks Presentation 23</em></td>
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<td>April 10</td>
<td>Read: Marshall McLuhan, “The Medium is the Message” (Canvas) Journal Entry Due (before class)</td>
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<td>April 12</td>
<td>Tentative museum visit: The Warehouse, @ 2:15 14105 Inwood Road (between Alpha and Spring Valley), Dallas, 75244 <a href="http://thewarehousedallas.org">http://thewarehousedallas.org</a></td>
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| WEEK 14 | April 15 | Read: Kocur and Leung, 32: “The Database”  
Journal Entry Due (before class)  
**Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation 24** |
|---------|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| April 17 | Read: Kocur and Leung, 33: “For the Love of Abstraction”  
Journal Entry Due (before class)  
**Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation 25** |
| April 19 | **Independent Research Day – NO CLASS** |
Journal Entry Due (before class)  
**Questions & Relevant Artworks Presentation 26** |
| April 24 | **Final Group Presentations** |
| April 26 | Tentative Museum Visit: **Dallas Museum of Art @ 2:15 pm.  
1717 North Harwood, Dallas, Texas 7520, Ph. 214-922-1200.**  
[https://www.dma.org](https://www.dma.org) |
| WEEK 16 | April 29 | **Final Group Presentations** |
| May 1 | **Final Group Presentations**  
**FINAL PAPER DUE** |
| May 3 | **Reading day (no classes)** |