



ARTH 4801 – History, Memory, and the Archive in Contemporary Art - Fall 2025

Tuesdays 5:00-7:50pm

ART 288

Tacita Dean, *Floh: Violinist*, 2000, digital Epson print

Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity

-Simone Weil (1909-1943)

letter to Joë Bousquet, 13 April 1942; Simone Pétrement *Simone Weil: A Life* (1976) tr. Raymond Rosenthal

Instructor: Dr. Tiffany Floyd

Email: Tiffany.Floyd@unt.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:30-4:30pm in ART 244 or by appointment

Course Description

This course seeks to understand the complexity of 'the archive' as it is utilized by contemporary artists to investigate personal and collective histories, to critique institutions, and to illuminate forgotten or hidden narratives. This course will explore the archive from five thematic perspectives: materiality, research, critique, curating, and temporality. Students will engage with theoretical and aesthetic principles related to 'the archive' and its use as an art medium.

Course Objectives

- Understand the archival turn in contemporary art, i.e. the ways that contemporary artists utilize the archive as an artistic medium
- Understand the theoretical complexities of 'the archive'
- Engage with the general practices of archival art through five thematic perspectives
- Engage with the specific artistic practices of a series of artists who utilize the archive as art medium
- Apply class material to complete written and archival projects, as well as in-class discussions

Course Readings

All course readings will be posted on Canvas, organized by class day. There are no required textbooks for this course. Please prepare the assigned readings **prior** to their listed class day.

Course Requirements and Grading

- Class Attendance: 10%
- (1) Group Presentation: 10%
- (5) Reading Summaries: 30%
- Personal History Archive Project: 15%
- Collective History Archive Project: 15%
- Special Collections Engagement Project: 20%

More detailed descriptions of each assignment will be posted to canvas

Course Policies

Latework

Please endeavor to turn your assignments in on time. This is important for keeping the class on track, especially considering how the assignments are structured. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, ***no latework will be accepted***. If these circumstances cause you to miss a deadline, then ***you will have one week (7 days) from the deadline*** to turn in your work for credit. Please communicate with me about missing assignments as soon as possible, do not wait until these 7 days have passed to let me know that you will be turning in your assignment. This extension *does not* apply to work due at the end of the semester or to your group presentation.

Attendance

Your attendance in class is required. I will take attendance in each class and will offer no excused absences for any reason. However, it is always good to communicate with me if you miss class. Your attendance grade will be 10% of your overall grade. ***If you miss a class, you can complete a make-up assignment = a one-full-page summary of the optional reading listed for that day. You will also be required to do the reading summary for that day.***

Academic Integrity

Most of your assignments will be submitted to canvas and run through TurnItIn, a plagiarism detection tool that also scans for AI-generated material. Your work **MUST** be 100% your own and written without the use of generative-AI software (be careful, even editing software – i.e. Grammarly – can change your work enough to be flagged by TurnItIn). If you are found to have plagiarized or to have used AI to generate your work, you will receive a **ZERO** on the assignment for the first infraction and you will **FAIL** the class for the second infraction.

Zoom Option

This is a face-to-face course and as such most of your participation must be in-class. However, you may take a Zoom option **ONCE** during the semester as needed. You **must** communicate with me at least one hour prior to class if you will be joining via Zoom and you **must** still submit your 'reading summary' assignment prior to the beginning of class. During your zoom session, you will also be required to post notes in the chat box to demonstrate that you are participating in class. You **cannot** use your zoom option to participate in your group presentation.

Course Schedule

1. Tuesday August 19th – Introduction to the Course – What is an Archive?

2. Tuesday August 26th – Archive Fever: The Archival Turn in Contemporary Art

Deadline to sign up for Groups

Required Reading: Sara Callahan, "Chapter 2: Archive Theory," in *Art + Archive*

Optional Reading: Okwui Enwezor, "Archive Fever: Photography Between History and the Monument," in *Archive Fever*

3. Tuesday September 2nd – Visit to UNT Library Special Collections (class split in two groups)

Browse the Special Collections 'Archives and Manuscripts' collections - <https://library.unt.edu/special-collections/archives-manuscripts/>

Required Reading: Sara Callahan, "Chapter 3: The Art World as an Archival Structure," in *Art + Archive*

Optional Reading: Simone Osthoff, "Chapter 2: When Documentation and Memory Refuse to Settle is the Archive Alive," in *Performing the Archive*

4. Tuesday September 9th – Visit to the Texas Fashion Collection (class split in two groups)

Browse the TFC's Digital Collection - <https://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/TXFC/>

Required Reading: Anne Peirson Smith and Ben Peirson Smith, "Fashion archive fervour," *Archives and Records* (2020).

Optional Reading: Marta Franceschini, "Navigating Fashion," *Critical Studies in Fashion and Beauty* (2019).

5. Tuesday September 16th – Materiality

Reading Summary #1 due at 5pm (2nd component due at 6pm)

Required Reading: Sara Callahan, "Chapter 4: Materiality," in *Art + Archive*

Optional Reading: Tina Campt, "Chapter 1: Family Touches," and "Thingyness' or, the Matter of the Image," in *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe*

6. Tuesday September 23rd – Group Presentation – Materiality

Personal History Archive Project due at 11:59pm

7. Tuesday September 30th – Research

Reading Summary #2 due at 5pm (2nd component due at 6pm)

Required Reading: Sara Callahan, "Chapter 5: Research," in *Art + Archive*

Optional Reading: Alexander Bigman, "Chapter 1: Sarah Charlesworth at the End of Modern History," in *Pictures of the Past: Media, Memory, and the Specter of Fascism in Postmodern Art*

8. Tuesday October 7th – Group Presentation – Research

9. Tuesday October 14th – Critique

Reading Summary #3 due at 5pm (2nd component due at 6pm)

Required Reading: Sara Callahan, "Chapter 6: Critique," in *Art + Archive*

Optional Reading: Salah Hassan, "Fred Wilson's Black Venezia: Fictitious Histories and the Notion of 'Truth,'" *NKA: Journal of Contemporary African Art* 19 (2004), 12-19; Interview with Fred Wilson, "Objects and Identities," *ASAP* 2:1 (2017), 3-28.

10. Tuesday October 21st – Group Presentation – Critique

11. Tuesday October 28th – Curating

Reading Summary #4 due at 5pm (2nd component due at 6pm)

Required Reading: Sara Callahan, "Chapter 7: Curating," in *Art + Archive*

Optional Reading: Flora Vilches, "The Art of Archaeology: Mark Dion and his dig projects," *Journal of Social Archaeology* (2007); Nora Taylor, "Hunter-Gatherer or the other ethnographer? The artist in the age of historical reproduction" *Journal of Material Culture* (2022).

12. Tuesday November 4th – Group Presentation – Curating

Collective History Archive Project Due at 11:59pm

13. Tuesday November 11th – Temporality

Reading Summary #1 due at 5pm (2nd component due at 6pm)

Required Reading: Sara Callahan, "Chapter 8: Temporality," in *Art + Archive*

Optional Reading: (TBD) Selections from Christine Ross, *The past is the present; it's the future too: the temporal turn in contemporary art*

14. Tuesday November 18th - Group Presentation – Temporality

15. Tuesday November 25th – No Class – Happy Thanksgiving!

16. Tuesday December 2nd – Guest Lecture – Artist and Archivist Ala Younis

Required Reading: Ala Younis, "Nefertiti in a Museum: On Memory and its Artefacts," *M+ Magazine*, <https://www.mplus.org.hk/en/magazine/nefertiti-in-a-museum-on-memory-and-its-artefacts/>; Ala Younis, "Al Bahithun – Sounds that call to the (oil) fields," *Life Worlds of Middle Eastern Oil Histories and Ethnographies of Black Gold*; Ala Younis, "Monuments, (by) Architects, (for) Governments," *d I'v a n | A Journal of Accounts* (2016)

17. Tuesday December 9th – No Class – Finals Week

*** Special Collections Engagement Project Due at 11:59pm***

****The instructor reserves the right to alter this schedule with clear and timely notification.*

Course Disclaimer

Content in the arts can sometimes include works, situations, actions, and language that can be personally challenging or offensive to some students on the grounds, for example, of sexual explicitness, violence, or blasphemy. The College of Visual Arts and Design is devoted to the principle of freedom of expression, artistic and otherwise, and it is not the college's practice to censor these works or ideas on any of these grounds. Students who might feel unduly distressed or made uncomfortable by such expressions should withdraw at the start of the term and seek another course.

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences

According to UNT Policy o6.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

The "unauthorized" use of any person or technology that assists in a student's assignment, project, or paper is considered cheating under the UNT Student Academic Integrity Policy (UNT Policy 6.003). Unless a professor or instructor gives explicit "authorization," AI cannot be used to complete assignments, projects, or papers. Doing so will result in a "cheating" violation. AI should not be used to assist in writing papers, searching for sources, or creating citations. Citations provided by AI are fabricated by mimicking existing bodies of work. In most cases, AI will pull direct quotes from existing sources to answer queries and make-up information about the source. AI can be used ethically to help you develop an outline for a paper, generate ideas, and learn a citation style.

ADA Accommodation Statement

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. 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 a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students 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 ODA website at disability.unt.edu

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

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 deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct.

The Use of Artificial Intelligence

In this course, I want you to engage deeply with the materials and develop your own critical thinking and writing skills. For this reason, the use of Generative AI (GenAI) tools like [Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini, even Grammarly to a certain extent] is not permitted. While these tools can be helpful in some contexts, they do not align with our goal of fostering the development of your independent thinking. Using GenAI to complete any part of an assignment, exam, or coursework will be considered a violation of academic integrity, as it prevents the development of your own skills, and will be addressed according to the Student Academic Integrity policy.