



Ala Younis, *Nefertiti*, 2008, installation

ARTH 4814 – Theories of Contemporary Art Fall 2026

Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:55-5:15 pm
ART 280

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: Thursdays 12:00-1:00pm in ART 216 or by appointment

Course Description

This course will explore the theories and practices of Contemporary Art (1989-now). Through a series of overarching themes, we will explore the frameworks in which contemporary art functions and circulates, the ways contemporary artists engage with the objecthood of art in an increasingly digital world, and how the body persists as a primary mode of expression.

Course Objectives

- To understand the broad theoretical principles and contexts related to the textbook's thematic chapters
- To apply those principles to artistic practices beginning around 1989
- To discuss issues, themes, and debates brought up in our textbook in relation to specific artworks and art-related events
- To synthesize class discussions and assigned readings in response to directed questions on artworks that we have not viewed in class
- To conduct individual analyses on an artist and their relation to issues brought up in class

Course Readings

We have one required textbook for this course: **Kelly Grovier's *Art Since 1989*** (Thames & Hudson: world of art), 2015. You can find this book on Amazon or through the UNT - Barnes and Noble - bookstore. Any other required material will be provided for you through Canvas. Please prepare the assigned readings **prior** to their listed class day.

Course Requirements and Grading

Class Attendance – 10%

Curiosity Lab Visit and Reflection – 5%

TFC Visit and Reflection – 5%
1 In Class Group Presentation – 10%
1 In Class Final Group Presentation – 5%
8 Group Presentation Responses – 20%
1 Documentary Film Response Paper – 15%
1 Exhibition Response Paper – 15%
1 Timeline Project – 15%

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 3 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 3 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 presentations.

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 assessed at the end of the semester by comparing days missed to overall class days. There will be extra credit opportunities during the semester that you can use as a make up assignment for missed class days.

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 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. During your zoom session, you will 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 presentations.

Course Schedule

1. Tuesday August 18th – Intro to the Course

2. Thursday August 20th – Who's Afraid of Contemporary Art? I am!

Reading: Andrea Fraser, "The Field of Contemporary Art: A Diagram," e-flux

Also browse some definitions of "Contemporary Art" online by googling "definitions of Contemporary Art" (ex. The Tate, MoMA, Walker Art Center, even Wikipedia!)

3. Tuesday August 25th – Analyzing Contemporary Art, Part One

Deadline to Sign Up for Groups

Reading: Selections from *The Art of Looking: How to Read Modern and Contemporary Art*

4. Thursday August 27th – Analyzing Contemporary Art, Part Two

Reading: Selections from *The Art of Looking: How to Read Modern and Contemporary Art*

5. Tuesday September 1st – Visit to the TFC

Reading:

6. Thursday September 3rd - Visit to the TFC

Reading:

7. Tuesday September 8th Face Time: Reinventing the Portrait: Chapter One Introduction and Discussion

TFC Reflection due September 8th at 11:59pm via canvas submission link

Reading: Grovier, *Art Since 1989*, Chapter One: Face Time: Reinventing the Portrait

8. Thursday September 10th - Group Presentation: Group One

Group Presentation Response Due September 11th at 11:59pm via canvas submission link

9. Tuesday September 15th - You are Here: Seeing Space in Contemporary Art: Chapter Two Introduction and Discussion

Documentary Film Response Paper due September 15th at 11:59pm via canvas

Reading: Grovier, *Art Since 1989*, Chapter Two: You are Here: Seeing Space in Contemporary Art

10. Thursday September 17th - Group Presentation: Group Two

Group Presentation Response Due September 18th at 11:59pm via canvas submission link

11. Tuesday September 22nd – The Seen and Unseen: Death, God, and Religion: Chapter Three Introduction and Discussion

Reading: Grovier, *Art Since 1989*, Chapter Three: The Seen and Unseen: Death, God, and Religion

12. Thursday September 24th – Group Presentation: Group Three

Group Presentation Response Due September 25th at 11:59pm via canvas submission link

13. Tuesday September 29th – Visit to the Curiosity Lab

14. Thursday October 1st – Visit to the Curiosity Lab

**15. Tuesday October 6th - Streets and Struggles: Uprisings and Unrest: Chapter Four
Introduction and Discussion**

Curiosity Lab Reflection due October 6th at 11:59pm via canvas submission link

Reading: Grovier, *Art Since 1989*, Chapter Four: Streets and Struggles: Uprisings and Unrest

16. Thursday October 8th– Group Presentation: Group Four

Group Presentation Response Due October 9th at 11:59pm via canvas submission link

**17. Tuesday October 13th – Fleshed Out: The Body and Contemporary Art: Chapter Five
Introduction and Discussion**

Reading: Grovier, *Art Since 1989*, Chapter Five: Fleshed Out: The Body and Contemporary Art

18. Thursday October 15th- Group Presentation: Group Five

Group Presentation Response Due October 16th at 11:59pm via canvas submission link

19. Tuesday October 20th– No Class: Exhibition Day

Exhibition Response Due October 20th at 11:59 via canvas submission link

**20. Thursday October 22nd – The Long Now: Time and History in Contemporary Art: Chapter Six
Introduction and Discussion**

Reading: Grovier, *Art Since 1989*, Chapter Six: The Long Now: Time and History in Contemporary Art

21. Tuesday October 27th– Group Presentation: Group Six

Group Presentation Response Due October 28th at 11:59pm via canvas submission link

**22. Thursday October 29th– Event Horizons: Science and Contemporary Art: Chapter Seven
Introduction and Discussion**

Reading: Grovier, *Art Since 1989*, Chapter Seven: Event Horizons: Science and Contemporary Art

23. Tuesday November 3rd – Group Presentation: Group Seven

Group Presentation Response Due November 4th at 11:59pm via canvas submission link

**24. Thursday November 5th– Colours True and False: The New Abstract Art: Chapter Eight
Introduction and Discussion**

Reading: Grovier, *Art Since 1989*, Chapter Eight: Colours True and False: The New Abstract Art

25. Tuesday November 10th- Group Presentation: Group Eight

Group Presentation Response Due November 11th at 11:59pm via canvas submission link

26. Thursday November 12th – The Language Generation: Using Words in Art: Chapter Nine Introduction and Discussion

Reading: Grovier, *Art Since 1989*, Chapter Nine: The Language Generation: Using Words in Art

27. Tuesday November 17th – Group Presentation: Group Nine

Group Presentation Response Due November 18th at 11:59pm via canvas submission link

28. Thursday November 19th - New Directions in Contemporary Art: Groups One, Two, and Three

29. Tuesday November 24th – No Class – Happy Thanksgiving

30. Thursday November 26th – No Class – Happy Thanksgiving

31. Tuesday December 1st – New Directions in Contemporary Art: Groups Four, Five, and Six

32. Thursday December 3rd – New Directions in Contemporary Art: Groups Seven, Eight, and Nine

33. Tuesday December 8th – Finals Week - No In-Person Class

Timeline Project Due December 8th at 11:59pm via canvas submission link

34. Thursday December 10th – Finals Week - No In-Person Class

****The instructor reserves the right to alter this syllabus over the course of the semester****

Summary of Course Deadlines:

Group Presentations:

- Group One: September 10th
- Group Two: September 17th
- Group Three: September 24th
- Group Four: October 8th
- Group Five: October 15th
- Group Six: October 27th
- Group Seven: November 3rd
- Group Eight: November 10th
- Group Nine: November 17th

End of Semester "Final" Group Presentations:

- Group One: November 19th
- Group Two: November 19th
- Group Three: November 19th

- Group Four: December 1st
- Group Five: December 1st
- Group Six: December 1st
- Group Seven: December 3rd
- Group Eight: December 3rd
- Group Nine: December 3rd

Group Presentation Responses (you will do eight):

- Chapter One: Face Time: Reinventing the Portrait = September 11th at 11:59pm
- Chapter Two: You are Here = September 18th at 11:59pm
- Chapter Three: The Seen and Unseen = September 25th at 11:59pm
- Chapter Four: Streets and Struggles = October 9th at 11:59pm
- Chapter Five: Fleshed Out: The Body and Contemporary Art = October 16th at 11:59pm
- Chapter Six: The Long Now = October 28th at 11:59pm
- Chapter Seven: Event Horizons = November 4th at 11:59pm
- Chapter Eight: Colours True and False = November 11th at 11:59pm
- Chapter Nine: The Language Generation = November 18th at 11:59pm

Assignments:

- Curiosity Lab Reflection: October 6th at 11:59pm
- TFC Reflection = September 8th at 11:59
- Documentary Film Response Paper = September 15th at 11:59
- Exhibition Response Paper Due = October 20th at 11:59
- Timeline Project = December 8th 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 06.003, 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.