ARTH 4814 – Theories of Contemporary Art
Fall 2023
Mondays & Wednesdays, 3:30-4:50pm
ART 288

Ala Younis, *Nefertiti*, 2008, installation

**Instructor:** Dr. Tiffany Floyd  
**Email:** Tiffany.Floyd@unt.edu  
**Office Hours:** Mondays 2:30-3:30pm in ART 225 or by appointment via Zoom

**Course Description**
This course will explore the theories and practices of Contemporary Art (roughly 2000-now) through five overarching themes: The Art World, The Artwork, The Archive, The Body, and The Posthuman.

**Course Objectives**
- To understand the broad theoretical principles related to our five overarching themes, as well as the contextual circumstances that spurred their development
- To apply those principles to artistic practices beginning around 2000
- To discuss issues, themes, and debates related to our five overarching themes 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**
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**

- Course Participation – 10%
- 5 (1-page) reading summary papers + Discussion Questions – 20%
- 5 Group Discussion Posts + 1 Presentation – 30%
- 1 Research Paper (5-7 pages)/Project Assignment (2 pages) + Abstract + Presentation – 40%

**Course Participation (10%)**
This course is not structured as a strict lecture. Discussion, presentation, collective analysis, and other forms of participation will be fundamental to our learning throughout the Fall session. Thus, you are required to attend and participate. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class, and you are encouraged to speak up!
5 (1-page + 3 discussion questions) reading summary papers (20%)  
Throughout the semester you will choose five different readings listed on the syllabus schedule to summarize and offer three discussion questions. You can choose one of the required or one of the optional readings but must have one paper per overarching theme. These will be turned in (in-class) on the day your chosen reading is scheduled. No retroactive summaries will be accepted!

5 Group Discussion Posts + 1 Presentation (30%) = Discussion Posts (20%) + Group Presentation (10%)  
In groups, you will complete five discussion posts wherein each member of the group will choose an artist that exemplifies an aspect corresponding to one of the five overarching themes of the class. You will then write a 200-word justification as to why your chosen artist fits that aspect or theme. You must reference at least one class reading in this post. Additionally, you will post at least three different online resources that relate to your chosen artist (these can be links to the artist's website, links to online articles or videos, etc.).

Each group will conduct one in-class presentation wherein the group will teach on one or more artists and their connection to one of the overarching class themes – chosen from the discussion posts. You will have the entire class to do this! Each group member must participate in the presentation. If you are not in class when your group presents you will not receive credit (10% of the grade).

1 Short Research Paper (5-7 pages)/Project Assignment (project + 2 pages) (40%) = Paper (30%) + Abstract (5%) + Presentation (5%)  
You will be required to conduct one short research paper or studio project and present your work to the class at the end of the semester. For the Short Research Paper, you will choose an artist and write a 5–7-page paper describing their connection to and application of one of the overarching themes of the class. If you wish to complete the Studio Project, you will produce a work of art that adheres to one of the overarching themes of the class and come up with a 2-page artist statement to explain how that theme is employed in your work. Both projects will require the use of and engagement with outside sources and you will, thus, need in-text citations and a works cited page. Accompanying this Short Research Paper/Project will be an Abstract (250-words) and a Presentation (5 min).

***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 in light of how the assignments are structured. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, no latework will be accepted.
Attendance
Your attendance in class is required as part of your Class Participation grade (10%). 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. At the end of the semester, I will assess your participation grade based on your attendance record, your engagement in class, your level of communication with me, and your willingness to work with your group.

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 twice during the semester as needed. You must communicate with me at least one hour prior to class if you will be joining via Zoom. You cannot use this option to participate in your group presentation.

Course Schedule

1. **Monday August 21st – Who’s Afraid of Contemporary Art? I am! Intro to the Course**

2. **Wednesday August 23rd – Defining Contemporary Art in the New World Order**
   **Sign Up for Groups**
   **Reading:** Julian Stallabrass, “A Zone of Freedom?,” from *Contemporary Art: A Very Short Introduction* (Optional Reading: Terry Smith, “‘Our’ Contemporaneity,” from *Contemporary Art: 1989 to the Present*)


4. **Wednesday August 30th – The Art World – Markets and Money**

5. **Monday Sept 4th – No Class! Enjoy your Labor Day Weekend!**


7. **Monday Sept 11th – The Art World – Art as Activism, Escaping the Market**

8. **Wednesday Sept 13th – Group 1 Presentation, The Art World**
   **Group Discussion Posts Due to Canvas by September 13th at 11:59pm***


10. **Wednesday Sept 20th – The Artwork – Dematerialization continued, The Internet**
    Reading: Eva Respini, “No Ghost Just a Shell,” from *Art in the Age of the Internet* (Optional Reading: Omar Kholeif, "Hello World, Goodbye World, and Hello Again!", from *Art in the Age of the Internet;* David Joselit, “Conceptual Art 2.0,” from *Contemporary Art: 1989 to Present*)


13. **Monday October 2nd – Group 2 Presentation, The Artwork**
    **Group Discussion Posts Due to Canvas by October 2nd at 11:59pm***
Reading: Jean Robertson and Craig McDaniel, “Memory,” from Themes of Contemporary Art; Kathy Carbone, “Archival Art: Memory Practices, Interventions, and Productions,” from Art and Archives (Optional Reading: Domingo Martinez Rosario, “Film and Media as a Site for Memory in Contemporary Art,” from Acta, Film and Media Studies)

15. Monday October 9th – The Archive – Archive as Subject, Photograph as Found Object

Reading: Joan Gibbons, “Revisions: The Reassembling of ‘History,’” AND “The Ordering of Knowledge: Museums and Archives,” from Contemporary Art and Memory: Images of Recollection and Remembrance

17. Monday October 16th – The Archive – Exploring Histories II
**Abstract for Short Research Paper/Project due in Class on October 16th**
Reading: David Joselit, “Citizens of Information,” From Heritage and Debt

18. Wednesday October 18th – Group 3 Presentation, The Archive
**Group Discussion Posts Due to Canvas by October 18th at 11:59pm***

19. Monday October 23rd – The Body – Identity and (Self) Portraiture

20. Wednesday October 25th – The Body – Queer Abstractions of the Body
Reading: Selections from Lex Morgan Lancaster, “Introduction,” Dragging Away: Queer Abstraction in Contemporary Art


22. Wednesday November 1st – The Body – Living Matter, Bodily Substances
Reading: Lydia Horne, “Bleeding Out: On the Use of Blood in Contemporary Art”

**Group Discussion Posts Due to Canvas by November 6th at 11:59pm**

24. Wednesday November 8th – The Posthuman – Envisioning the Posthuman
Readings: Giovanni Aloi and Susan McHugh, “Envisioning Posthumanism" from Posthumanism in Art and Science (Optional Reading: Kevin LaGrandeur, “Art and the Posthuman”)

25. Monday November 13th – The Posthuman – Humanity’s Others

26. Wednesday November 15th – The Posthuman – Ecocritical Art

27. Monday November 20th – No Class! Happy Thanksgiving!

28. Wednesday November 22nd – No Class! Happy Thanksgiving!

29. Monday November 27th – The Posthuman – Artificial Intelligence, Non-Human Creativity

30. Wednesday November 29th – Group 5 Presentation, The Posthuman
**Group Discussion Posts Due to Canvas by November 29th at 11:59pm**


32. Wednesday December 6th – Presentation Days – Studio Project Presentation Day
Summary of Course Deadlines

Reading Summaries (In Class Submission)

#1 Art World Summary – By September 11th
#2 Artwork Summary – By September 27th
#3 Archive Summary – By October 16th
#4 The Body Summary – By November 1st
#5 Posthuman Summary – By November 27th

Group Discussion Posts (Canvas Discussion Board Submission)

#1 Art World Post – September 13th at 11:59pm
#2 Artwork Post – October 2nd at 11:59pm
#3 Archive Post – October 18th at 11:59pm
#4 The Body Post – November 6th at 11:59pm
#5 Posthuman Post – November 29th at 11:59pm

Group Presentation Schedule (In Class)

Group #1 Art World Post – September 13th
Group #2 Artwork Post – October 2nd
Group #3 Archive Post – October 18th
Group #4 The Body Post – November 6th
Group #5 Posthuman Post – November 29th

Research Paper/Studio Project (Canvas Submission + In Class Submissions)

Abstract – October 16th in class
Presentations – December 4th for Research Papers and December 6th for Studio Projects
Paper/Project – December 11th at 11:59pm through a canvas submission

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.

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 Blackboard 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.