ARTH 4825 – Violence and Abjection in Postcolonial Art
Fall 2023
Tuesdays 9:30am-12:20pm
ART 288

*Ibrahim El-Salahi Self-Portrait of Suffering 1961

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30-3:30 in ART 225 or by appointment via Zoom

Course Description
This course will consider Postcolonial Art through the lens of abjection and violence. It will consider the artwork produced in relation to four broad geographical regions – Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and South/Southeast Asia – and will be organized around three overarching thematic sections – identity and the self, race and gender, and zones of conflict. We will remain conscious, however, of how these geographic and thematic categories intersect to inform one another.

Course Objectives
⋅ To understand the theoretical principles and main topics/arguments associated with Postcolonial Theory
⋅ To understand the theoretical principles and main topics/arguments associated with theories of abjection
⋅ To apply Postcolonial Theory to relevant artworks and to recognize representations of abjection and violence as a means to express postcolonial identities and realities

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. You will be assigned to one of four reading groups that correspond to a reading listed in the syllabus. You will, however, have one purchase required for the course – Raoul Peck’s docuseries ‘Exterminate All the Brutes’ which can be purchased for $10 through Amazon Prime Video.

Course Requirements and Grading
Course Participation – 10%
4 (1-page) reading summary papers + Discussion Questions + one response – 20%
3 Group Discussion Posts + 1 Presentation – 40%
1 Final Response – ‘Exterminate all the Brutes’ Response Project (5-7 pages) – 30%
**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!

4 (1-page + 3 discussion questions) reading summary papers (20%)
Throughout the semester you will choose four different readings listed on the syllabus schedule to summarize, offer three discussion questions, and choose one question to respond to (100-200 words). You will turn in one summary for each thematic section and for the geographies + theory section at the beginning of class. You will turn in your summaries in class on the day your chosen reading is scheduled. No retroactive summaries will be accepted!

3 Group Discussion Posts + 1 Presentation (40%) = Discussion Posts (30%) + Group Presentation (10%)
In groups, you will complete three discussion posts wherein each member of the group will choose an artist that exemplifies an aspect corresponding to one of the three overarching thematic sections discussed in the class. You will then write a 500-word justification as to why your chosen artist exemplifies those themes and fits within the broader theoretical parameters of the class. You must reference at least one class reading in this post. Additionally, you will post at least 3 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.), as well as at least one representative image with a proper caption.

Each group will conduct one in-class presentation wherein the group will present one or more artists and their connection to the theoretical parameters of the class and engage the class with a series of discussion questions. 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).

‘Exterminate all the Brutes’ Response Project (5-7 pages) (30%)
At the end of the semester, you will watch and respond to Raoul Peck’s docuseries ‘Exterminate All the Brutes’ utilizing the readings and discussion from the class. Details of this assignment, TBD! Stay tuned!

***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. Tuesday August 22nd – Abject Beginnings – Introduction to the Course

2. Tuesday August 29th – Postcolonial Geographies
   **Sign Up for Groups**
   Reading Group Two: Robert Young, “Montage” and “Colonialisms, decolonization, decoloniality” from Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction
   Reading Group Three: Robert Young, “Nomads, nation-states and borders” and “Globalization from a postcolonial perspective,” from Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction
   Reading Group Four: Kim Butler, “Defining Diaspora, refining a discourse,” from Diaspora

3. Tuesday September 5th – Postcolonialism, Postcoloniality, and the Subaltern
   Reading Group One: Robert Young “Gender, queering, and feminism in a postcolonial context,” and “History and power, from below and above” from Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction
   Reading Group Two: Leela Gandhi, “After Colonialism,” from Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction
   Reading Group Three: Frantz Fanon, “On Violence,” from The Wretched of the Earth
   Reading Group Four: Robert Young, “Subaltern Knowledges,” and “Slavery, race, caste,” from From Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction

4. Tuesday September 12th – Abjection, Violence, and Affect
   Reading Group One: Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, “An Inventory of Shimmers,” from The Affect Theory Reader
   Reading Group Two: Julia Kristeva, “Approaching Abjection,” Powers of Horror
5. Tuesday September 19th – Thematic Explorations – Identity and the Self
Reading Group One: Mary Coffey and Roberto Tejada, “Modernism in Latin America,” Andrea Guinta, “Strategies of Modernity in Latin America,” and “Africa in the Art of Latin America,” from Modern Art in Africa, Asia, and Latin America

6. Tuesday September 26th – Thematic Explorations – Identity and the Self
Reading Group Two: Paul Sternberger, “Me, Myself, and India: Contemporary Indian Photography and the Diasporic Experience,” from Photographies; Nada Raza, “Impersonation, Self-Invention, and Memory: iconicity and mimesis in South Asian Photography,” from India: Contemporary Photographic and New Media Art OR Selections from Shilpa Gupta
Reading Group Three: Leora Farber, “Dark Play: The Ethnographic Archive as Site of Embodiment in Zanele Muholi’s Somnyana Ngonyama Series,” from VAR; Rael Jero Salley, “Zanele Muholi’s Elements of Survival,” from African Arts
Reading Group Four: Chrisoula Lionis, “A Past Not Yet Passed: Postmemory in the Work of Mona Hatoum” from Social Text; Edward Said, “The Art of Displacement: Mona Hatoum’s Logic of Irreconcilables” and Ranajit Guha, “The Migrant’s Time,” from The Migrant’s Time: Rethinking Art History and Diaspora

7. Tuesday October 3rd – Thematic Explorations – Identity and the Self – Presentations
**Group Discussion Posts Due to Canvas by October 3rd at 11:59pm**

8. Tuesday October 10th – Thematic Explorations – Race and Gender
Reading Group Two: Selections from Postcolonial and Queer Theory OR Selections from Unruly Visions: The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora


**Reading Group Three**: Brandon Davis, “The Politics of Racial Abjection” from *Du Bois Review*

**Reading Group Four**: Paul Gilroy, “Introduction: On Living Difference,” from *Postcolonial Melancholia*

9. Tuesday October 17th – Thematic Explorations – Race and Gender


**Reading Group Two**: Jillian Hernandez, “The Ambivalent Grotesque: Reading Black Women’s Erotic Corporeality in Wangechi Mutu’s Work,” from *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*

**Reading Group Three**: Mariana Bolivar Rubin, “Transgressive Rituals” from *Afro-Hispanic Review*; Peter Wade, “Introduction: Defining Race and Sex,” from *Race and Sex in Latin America*

**Reading Group Four**: Rina Arya, “The Fragmented Body as an Index of Abjection,” from *Abject Visions*; Selection from *Unruly Visions*

10. Tuesday October 24th – Thematic Explorations – Race and Gender – Presentations

**Group Discussion Posts Due to Canvas by October 24th at 11:59pm***

11. Tuesday October 31st – Thematic Explorations – Zones of Conflict

**Reading Group One**: Jill Bennett, “The Force of Trauma,” from *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*

**Reading Group Two**: Susan Sontag, 3 + 4 from *Regarding the Pain of Others*

**Reading Group Three**: Selections from *Killing for Show*

**Reading Group Four**: Ariella Azoulay, “Introduction” + “What is Photography?” from *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography*

12. Tuesday November 7th – Thematic Explorations – Zones of Conflict

**Reading Group One**: Krista Lynes, “Decolonizing Corporeality: Teresa Margolles’s Lively Corpses,” from *Social Text*; Julia Banwell, “Agency and Otherness in Teresa Margolles’ Aesthetic of Death” from *Other Modernities*

**Reading Group Two**: Susan Noyes Platt, “Intimate Violence: Artists’ Responses to Illegal Detention and Torture” from *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*; Safdar Ahmed, “‘Father of No One’s Son’: Abu Ghraib and Torture in the Art of Ayad Alkadhi,” from *Third Text*


13. Tuesday November 14th – Thematic Explorations – Zones of Conflict - Presentations

**Group Discussion Posts Due to Canvas by November 14th at 11:59pm***

14. Tuesday November 21st – No Class! Happy Thanksgiving!
15. Tuesday November 28th – Introducing ‘Exterminate all the Brutes’ The HBO series by Director Raoul Peck

Reading Group One: Sven Lindqvist, PART I, Exterminate all the Brutes
Reading Group Two: Sven Lindqvist, PART II, Exterminate all the Brutes
Reading Group Three: Sven Lindqvist, PART III, Exterminate all the Brutes
Reading Group Four: Sven Lindqvist, PART IV, Exterminate all the Brutes

16. Tuesday December 5th – The Histories and Legacies of Colonialism – Response to Raoul Peck’s ‘Exterminate all the Brutes’

Reading Group One: Season One, Part One
Reading Group Two: Season One, Part Two
Reading Group Three: Season One, Part Three
Reading Group Four: Season One, Part Four

Summary of Course Deadlines

Reading Summaries (In Class Submission)

#1 Reading Summary – August 29th or September 5th or September 12th
#2 Reading Summary – September 19th or September 26th
#3 Reading Summary – October 10th or October 17th
#4 Reading Summary – October 31st or November 7th

Group Discussion Posts (Canvas Discussion Board Submission)

#1 Identity and the Self Discussion Post – October 3rd at 11:59pm
#2 Race and Gender Discussion Post – October 24th at 11:59pm
#3 Zones of Conflict Discussion Post – November 14th at 11:59pm

Group Presentation Schedule (In Class)

#1 + 2 Identity and the Self Presentation – October 3rd
#3 + 4 Race and Gender Presentation – October 24th
#5 + 6 Zones of Conflict Presentation – November 14th

‘Exterminate all the Brutes’ Response Project (Canvas Submission) – December 12th at 11:59pm

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.