ARTH 250L.00: Introduction to Art Criticism

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School of Art

ArtH 250L, Introduction to Art Criticism, 3 credits
Literary and Artistic Studies and Writing course
TTH 3:40-5:00, Spring Semester 2014, Liberal Arts 305

Associate Professor Valerie Hedquist, 305A Fine Arts Building
E-mail: valerie.hedquist@umontana.edu;
Office hours: Tuesday 8:00-9:00 a.m. and Wednesday 9:00-10:00 a.m.

Course description: An overview of the description, interpretation, and evaluation of visual art as practiced in the discipline of art criticism. Both traditional and postmodern critical approaches to art will be considered with an emphasis on contemporary art criticism. Students will read a range of past and present art critics and write several examples of art criticism based on direct observation of contemporary art works.

Learning Objectives:
• Develop improved observation and analysis of art
• Comprehend and use various interpretive perspectives
• Develop aesthetic evaluative criteria and apply them to contemporary art
• Become familiar with contemporary artists and art works through first-hand viewing and careful reading of art criticism
• Improve communication skills through writing brief responses to weekly questions and three 3-5 page papers


Requirements for Course: You are expected to attend lectures. Students will complete all assignments in order to earn credit for the class. Students are expected to keep copies of all assigned work. Students will utilize Moodle at http://umonline.umt.edu/ for course syllabus, lectures, assignments, other course materials, announcements, and grades.

Classroom Etiquette: Please arrive on time to class. Prepare to sit down for the duration of class. Silence your phone and pay attention to what is happening in the classroom. If you are using a laptop computer, focus on classroom activities, especially if other students can see your screen. Remember to engage with others in a respectful manner. Check out the College Classroom Etiquette document at Moodle and this link: http://dianegottsman.com/2012/01/college-classroom-etiquette-university-etiquette-for-2012/

Assignments and Points Distribution:

Library assignment: 100 points total
Three papers; visual analysis, interpretation, and judgment: 100 points each; (300 points total)
Peer-review reports: 10 points each, (30 points total)
Weekly Writing: 10 points weekly, (140 points total)

Grades are calculated as follows, based on all work completed:

570-526, A; 525-513, A-
512-502, B+; 501-468, B; 467-456, B-
455-445, C+; 444-411, C; 410-399, C-
398-388, D+; 387-354, D; 353-342, D-
341 and lower F

Students with disabilities or special needs should contact the instructor.

Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code: All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by
the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php.

Events in the School of Art are listed at http://umartdepartment.wordpress.com Check it out!

Local Art Scene, A Short List:

UC Art Gallery: http://life.umt.edu/uc/Arts-Entertainment/uc-gallery/exhibit-schedule.php
School of Art Gallery of Art, GVA, http://www.umt.edu/art/galleries/gva

Lecture and Discussion Topics and Assignments

Week One, 28 and 30 January
   Lecture: Introduction and What is Art?
   Moodle Introduction
   Definitions and changing ideas of art
   Receive and begin discussion of cases from Puzzles about Art, An Aesthetics Casebook

Introduction to Art Resource Center (Hours: To be determined) and on-campus art venues, including Main Hall, University Center Art Gallery (M-F10-4:00), MMAC, Paxson/Meloy (TWSat 12:00-3:00; THF12-6:00), GVA, Gallery of Visual Art (TWF 11-5:00; TH 11-6:00), MAM, (Tuesday - Saturday 10-5, Sunday noon-5)

Week Two, 4 and 6 February
   What is Art?
   Puzzles about Art, An Aesthetics Casebook discussion ongoing
   Receive art criticism selections regarding Christian Marclay for discussion
   6 February Sarah Rockett, SS356, lecture, 5:10-6:00, GVA, opening 6-7:00
   6 February Lea Christiansen, UC Art Gallery, opening 4-6:00

Week Three, 11 and 13 February
   What is Art Criticism?
   Past and Present Critics, Writing about Art
   Read: Barrett, Preface, Chapter 1

Week Four, 18 and 20 February
   Finding Art Criticism
   Library Resources and Assignment, Prix Pictet Prize 2014
   http://www.prixpictet.com
   Receive art criticism selections regarding Laurie Simmons and Hong Hao for discussion
   Visit from Writing Center Director, Kelly Webster, Information about writing and reading for college success

Library Assignment due date: 4 March

Week Five, 25 and 27 February
   The Task of the Critic: Description, Interpretation, and Evaluation
   What do critics do?
   Receive art criticism selections regarding Carrie Mae Weems for discussion
   25 February Adam Brooks and Matthew Wilson, SS356, lecture 5:30-6:30
Week Six, 4 and 6 March
Describing art, what do I see?
Read: Barrett, Chapters 3 and 6
Formal elements and principles of design
6 March Heather Swartz & Kari Goin, UC Art Gallery, opening 4-6:00,
7 March Patricia Thornton, Artist Reception 5-9:00 and Gallery Talk 7:00

Paper #1, Description Paper - Visual Analysis
Peer review due date: 11 March
First due date: 13 March
Revision due: 20 March

Weeks Seven and Eight, 11, 13, 18 and 20 March
Interpreting art, what does it mean?
Changing approaches to meaning, past and present, traditional, modern, and postmodern
Read: Barrett, Chapters 2 and 4
Contemporary artists and what the art means
Receive art criticism selections regarding Christopher Wool and James Turrell for discussion
13 March MFA Opening Reception GVA 5-7:00

Paper #2, Interpretation Paper – What does it Mean?
Peer review due date: 20 March
First due date: 27 March
Revision due: 15 April

Weeks Nine, 25 and 27 March
M.F.A. Student Presentations in Gallery of Visual Arts
Sarah Tancred and James Louks

Spring Break 29 March – 6 April

Weeks Ten and Eleven, 8, 10, 15, and 17 April
Evaluating art, what is good art?
Criteria for evaluating art, past and present
Read: Barrett, Chapter 5
Receive art criticism selections regarding Matthew Ritchie and El Anatsui for discussion
8 April R.L. Tillman, SS356, lecture, 5:30-6:30
10 April MFA Opening Reception GVA 5-7:00
10 April Victor Daniel, UC Art Gallery, opening 4-6:00
M.F.A. Student Presentations in Gallery of Visual Arts
Claire Melli, Scott Miller, Ellen Walden

Week Twelve, 22 and 24 April
Museums/Galleries and Power
Who determines what you see?
M.F.A. Student Presentations in Gallery of Visual Arts
Claire Melli, Scott Miller, Ellen Walden

Week Thirteen, 29 and 1 May
B.F.A. Interviews and Evaluation
1 May BFA Senior Thesis Exhibitions, GVA and UC Art Gallery, 4-6:00

Week Fourteen, 6 and 8 May
Art Criticism of Contemporary Art Exhibitions
Consideration of leading arbiters of contemporary art
Who’s hot and who’s not?
Ten contemporary artists to share
Group Exchange

Paper #3, Evaluation Paper – Is it any good?
Peer review due date: 6 May
First due date: 8 May
Revision due: 15 May