THINKING ART

Art 901 Philosophy and Concepts
NICOLE RIDGWAY, PECK SCHOOL OF THE ARTS, UWM
Course Goals:

The main aim of this seminar is to advance student’s understanding of key theoretical frameworks, critical debates, and strategies of artistic praxis in the contemporary art world to enable them to better conceptualize their own practice (scholarly and artistic); to locate it within some of the aesthetic, conceptual and interpretive issues/questions central to contemporary art criticism; and, to encourage reflexive making and writing.

Drawing on a wide, and cross-disciplinary, range of theories, thinkers, movements and practitioners, the seminar is designed to stimulate critical thinking, foster professional practice, and engage participants in a conversation with their peers (broadly defined), as well as with themselves in the studio and/or as scholars. While students, for the most part, will not be exploring their own artistic work in this class, the class is structured to stimulate/facilitate a relationship between critical thinking and creative practice.

Course Outline:

To provide an enabling limit to what could otherwise be an incoherent ramble through the vast terrain of contemporary philosophy/art practices, the seminar will work with the rubric “Thinking Art.” This will allow us to explore thinking critically about art and approaches to art (in both scholarship and criticism), as well as ruminating on the ways in which art can be said to think, and how that, in turn, alters our understanding of thinking itself. For example, Rosalind Krauss has written about “images that do not decorate but rather structure the basic mechanisms of thought.” In the latter, images can be said to change the cartography of the perceptible, the feasible, the actual; and, in the former, images can be said to revel in complicity with the dominant or habitual.

The seminars will start with “objects” and move on to “subjects,” and then begin an exploration of the “space between.” So, for example, we will revisit the rather fraught question of what kind of thing is art, when or where is something art, while also asking how art implies us in the sensible or allows us to feel thought or unsettles epistemological categories (like thinking itself). Starting with thinking the space between subjects (authors, spectators, etc) and objects (contingent, gifted, etc.) differently, the class will then introduce a series of other conceptual couples (as well as the interval or encounter between them) that are important to thinking art: inside/outside, surface/depth, the archive and memory, site and place, the museum as context, etc.

Catalogue Description:

901 Seminar in Art-Philosophy and Concepts. 3 cr. G. Presentations and discussions centering on contemporary concerns in art. Student research and oral reports. Prereq: grad st.

Readings:

Required books to purchase from the bookstore (or available via Amazon amongst others):


I would also recommend purchasing the following book, if you haven’t already, as it has a number of interesting essays that would aid research and future teaching, but it is also available in the library for research purposes:

The following book is available through the UWM library as an e-book from netLibrary:


All additional readings will be available on D2L, unless otherwise noted (if they are, for example, online).

**Workload Statement:**

This class meets once a week for 150 minutes, for a total of 37.5 hours of required lecture time. This is a reading intensive class and you should expect to spend at least 55 hours over the semester reading the required texts. There are three assignments that you should expect to require about 15 hours in total, two that you should expect to require about 10 hours each, and one that will require about 20 hours to complete. All told this class is likely to take about 147.5 hours of your time.

**Attendance:**

All students are expected to come to class on time and having done their Required Readings. If for any reason you are not able to attend class, please be sure to contact me. If you will be missing more than two classes it is vital that you contact the department and myself in a timely manner. Students who are late for class will be marked as absent.

**Assignments:**

1. **Class Participation, Presentation Discussions, Conference Feedback**
   The level of class participation in class discussions, in response to seminar presentations, conference papers and statements; engagement with the preparation for the conference; as well as contributions to online discussions and the creation of a collective “portfolio” of case studies, will all be taken into account for your grade.

2. **Seminar Presentations**
   a) **Short Presentation In-class**
      Each participant will be required to give short in-class presentation of a work or body of works that exemplifies or expands the topic under discussion for that week. These presentations will take place on a weekly basis and should be no longer than 10 minutes.

      The presentation must be concise and well structured, it must be supported by relevant visual materials, and clearly address how you see the work(s) as relevant to the frameworks/themes/ideas/concepts/strategies for that week. Creative practitioners may use their own work if they feel it is appropriate.

   b) **Substantive Online Presentation of a Reading Journal**
      Each participant will present online a 1500-2000 word discussion of one of the Recommended Readings listed for any week throughout the semester or, in consultation with me, a key scholarly reading that addresses a topic in art in your area of specific interest/research (for example, digital art, public art, Abstract Expressionism, testimony or representations of animals). Please email me any reading you would like to use in a timely manner.

      The journal should state what the central thesis of the article is, it should summarize the reading’s key ideas, concepts and arguments, and show how these might be exemplified by a particular case study or in what context it’s framework/approach might be applied, and must address what might be “at stake” in the argument/analysis/method presented.

      The journal must be intellectually coherent, conceptually engaging, and supported with appropriate visual material, while taking into account the format. Remember that your audience is not expected to “know” the article or the works that you are discussing, so a key component of the assignment is to ensure that we have sufficient information and descriptions to follow your discussion.

   c) **Online Presentation Discussion**
      All participants will be expected to read the online presentations, and to make at least one substantive comment on each individual journal, and at least ten shorter comments over all. These might address the connections you see between particular readings or arguments addressed, provide feedback on the thinking and style of the journal, or you may give suggestions for case studies or examples, and other readings or applications, etc. This is, in effect, an online seminar in which each participant frames and then develops the discussion.

3. **Artist Statement/Think Piece/Research Proposal**
   An artist statement or think piece or research proposal (500-1000 words – max!) that addresses an idea you are currently exploring, or research you are undertaking, or work you are in the process of making. Whether a statement, proposal or a think piece, remember that this is a public document (imagine a “professional” audience in your field as
your addressees). Part of this assignment requires that you conceptualize your practice (scholarly or creative) and place yourself into a broader conversation (whether that be theoretical, historical, medium-specific or praxis-based).

This assignment will be distributed to the entire class via D2L. We will all read the statements and provide feedback on the work presented, as well as suggestions for revision.

4. **Strategies and Concepts Glossary**

Over the course of the semester students should keep a a list of key concepts and/or strategies for thinking or practice that are addressed in the readings/case studies/class discussions/seminar presentations (for example, the sublime, dialectical images, or intertextuality), as well as the readings in which they are addressed.

A final glossary will be submitted for marks. This should include no less than ten entries and no more than fourteen. In this expanded glossary, each concept or aesthetic strategy should be comprehensively, but succinctly, summarized (this will involve additional research). In each entry the relevant thinkers/movements/artists etc. must be referenced, and where appropriate, examples or case studies should be given. Key to each entry is to address the "what is at stake" in this strategy or concept. Visual materials may be included. Each entry should be no shorter than 300 words and no longer than 700.

This may be submitted in the form of a wiki or blog, as a journal/artists’ book, or as a paper.

5. **Conference Proposal**

An abstract that addresses the proposed topic (central argument, theoretical framework, case studies, key theorists etc.) for the end of semester conference (see below) that, following professional practice, must be no more than 350 words.

6. **Mini-Conference Paper**

The “exam” for this seminar will consist of two parts: 1) the writing up and public presentation of a conference paper and 2) a short report on the conference.

1) Each student will present a conference paper on a topic of their choosing, although it must relate to the issues, concerns, debates, theoretical paradigms, philosophical concepts, or artists/case studies that are relevant to the course and, ideally, your own interests and work. While the presentations need not arise directly out of the class readings/discussions, they must draw on and reference the readings/case studies, as well as other secondary literature/research.

Topics and expectations will be discussed in more depth in class and in consultation with myself.

The presentation of the papers will follow professional conference time guidelines (a maximum time allowance of 20 minutes per paper -- this will be strictly enforced and, in this instance, more is not more! -- with 10-15 minutes of open discussion depending on the size of the panel) and format (papers will be presented in panels with a Chair to frame and moderate a discussion). The class will organize the panels and nominate Chairs, as well as come up with provocations to frame the public discussion.

Please note: this will be an extended session to accommodate the conference format. Guests may (and should) be invited.

2) A short Conference Report (1000-1500 words to be submitted online) should describe the central ideas presented in each panel, discuss some of the debates or convergences that emerged between papers and/or panels, and it should address your preparation for and participation in the conference, as well as summarize the achievements of your paper as presented and possible ways forward towards improving and revising the paper/your presentation skills.

**Mark Breakdown:**

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation (through Mar 12)</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminar Presentations</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>a) Case Study in Class</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>b) Reading Journal Online</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Discussion for Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation (through May 07)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artist Statement/Think Piece</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conference Abstract</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategies and Concepts Glossary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conference Paper Presentation</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Conference Report</td>
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Grading:

Graduate students are required to earn a grade of B or higher for any graduate level course to count towards their MA or MFA. Student's grades will be based on the completion of assignments; their meeting of the expectations laid out above, and quality of the work submitted.

Grading Scale:

The numerical-letter grade scale I am working with is as follows:
A (95-100); A- (90-94); B+ (85-89); B (80-84); B- (75-79); C+ (70-74); C (65-79); C- (60-64); D+ (55-59); D (50-54); D- (45-49); F (0-44).

Consultations:

I will be available every week for individual consultations (or studio visits). I ask that you email me at least 24 hours in advance to make an appointment, or grab me before/after class to schedule a time for the following week.

Please note: Required readings should be read in preparation for the class in which they are listed.

Recommended readings may be added or removed after class discussions to better address class interests, debates or questions. Artists will be added each class through case studies and seminar presentations.

Class Schedule:

22 January: Introductions, Course Overview, Assignments and Expectations

Required Readings:

Artists: Fischli and Weiss

29 January: Thinking Art

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

05 February: Thinking Art (Frames)

Required Readings:
Owens, Craig (1979) "Detachment from the 'Parergon'," October, Volume 9, pp. 42-49.

Recommended Readings:

12 February:  
Post Image of Object with Tags by 12:00 p.m. on D2L

13 February:  
Thinking the Object (Objecthood, Readymades, Materiality)

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:


Scheduling of in-class seminars

19 February:  
Thinking the Object (Gift, Exchange, Encounter, Contingency)

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Artists: Piper, Acconci, Calle, Antin, Mendieta, Orzoco, Hamilton, Hatoum, Smithson, Gonzalez-Torres, Ren

Seminar Presentation: TBC
26 February: Thinking the Subject (Authorship)

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Artists: Serra, Andre, Hesse, Stella, Nauman, Judd, Flavin, LeWitt, Darboven, Graham

Seminar Presentation: TBC

05 March: Art’s Thought


Discuss about online presentation
Discuss statements/proposals assignment

12 March: Thinking the Subject (Spectatorship)

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Artists: Oursler, Douglas, Thater, Bacher, Rist, McQueen, Export, McCarthy

Seminar Presentation: TBC

17-24 March: Spring Recess

18 March: Online Presentation -- Reading Journals Due 9:00 a.m., D2L
Online Discussions of Reading Journals Closed, 9:00 a.m.

Of the Between (Subjects and Objects, Insides and Outsides, Affects and Concepts)

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Artists: Bacon, Viola, Smith, Kelley

Seminar Presentation: TBC

Artist Statement/Think Piece Due, D2L, 9:00 a.m. to be read for 2 April.

Artist Statement/Think Piece Workshop

Glossary Questions and Final Conference Proposal Discussion

Of the Between (Selves, Others, Bodies)

Required Reading:
Jones, Amelia (2003) Selection from Body Art/Performing the Subject in Art of the Twentieth Century: A Reader.

Recommended Readings:

Artists: Piper, Anderson, Schneeman, Feyzdjou, Mendieta, Kelly

Finish any outstanding readings

Seminar Presentation: TBC

Of the Between (Site, Space, Place, Archive, Time, Remains)

Required Readings:
Recommended Readings:

Artists: Dean, Wilson(s), Suh, Hirons, Parker, Christo, Jeanne-Claude, Kapoor, Bunn, Kawamata, Huyghe, Hirschon, Frampton, Neto, Lin, Whiteread, Horn, Casebere, Boltanski, Anatsui, Hamilton

Seminar Presentation: TBC

21 April: Strategies and Concepts Glossaries Due, 12:00 p.m., D2L

23 April: Of the Between (1. Thinking Theory of/in Art, Categories and Caveats)

Required Readings:
Shane, Robert (2001) “From Formalism to Informe and Back Again: Rosalind Krauss’s Use of Bataille” in *Art Criticism*, Volume 17, Number 2, pp. 70-88.

Recommended Readings:

Of the Between (2. Collaboration, Participation, Dialogue)

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Artists: Wokenklauser, Lacy, Littoral Arts, Sherman, Superflex, Oda Projesi, Deller, Collins, Export, Raqs Collective, Moretti, Anderson

Seminar Presentation: TBC

29 April: Conference Proposal Due, 9:00 a.m. on D2L

30 April: Thinking the Contemporary in Contemporary Art

Conference Proposal Discussion
Required Viewing:
Peter Osborne Lecture: What Makes Contemporary Art Contemporary?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KI7eNsZjreo

Recommended Readings:

Seminar Presentation: TBC

07 May: Work Day/Individual Consultations for Conference Paper
16 May: Mini-Conference (10:00-13:00)
This is the official exam time, but extended by an hour. Please let me know ASAP if this clashes with another official exam.
18 May: Conference Report Due, 12:00 p.m., D2L

Please Note the Following Important Information:

UWM Policies and Procedures
The Policies and Procedures for academic misconduct, special accommodations for students with disabilities, accommodations due to religious observances, and for those called to active military duty; as well as for the policies on incompletes, discriminatory conduct, complaint procedures, and grade appeals can be found here: https://uwm.edu/secu/wp-content/uploads/sites/122/2016/12/Syllabus-Links.pdf

UWM strongly encourages its students to report any instance of sex discrimination, and employees who witness or receive any report of sex discrimination should report it to UWM’s Title IX Coordinator (titleix@uwm.edu, uwm.edu/report it, 414-229-7012).

The University of Wisconsin Milwaukee supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the Accessibility Resource Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

Health Insurance
It is strongly recommended that all students have health insurance that includes emergency room and hospitalization coverage. Currently the UW system does not offer health insurance for domestic students. International Students can find coverage here: https://uwm.edu/cie/wp-content/uploads/sites/107/2018/08/UW-Milwaukee-Plan-Brochure2018-9.pdf
Mental Health Resources are available here: https://uwm.edu/mentalhealth/ and here: https://uwm.edu/norris/

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