

Selection of Grad Art Coursework 2018-2020

Art and Law

Joan Kee

In the 1960s, artists began to engage conspicuously with legal ideas, rituals, and documents. The law—a primary institution subject to intense moral and political scrutiny—was a widely recognized source of authority to audiences inside the art world and out. Artists frequently engaged with the law in ways that signaled a recuperation of the integrity that they believed had been compromised by the very institutions entrusted with establishing standards of just conduct. These artists sought to convey the social purpose of an artwork without overstating its political impact and without losing sight of how aesthetic decisions compel audiences to see their everyday world differently. Addressing the role that law plays in enabling artworks to function as social and political forces, this course explores the question of an “applied art history,” namely, how art history might intervene or inflect extra-artistic institutions such as the law. Topics to be considered include: artists’ rights, human-animal relationships, globalism as extraterritoriality, what “agreement” means in concept and practice.

Image-making, Orientalism and Visual Culture

Holly Edwards

Images enjoy extraordinary power in the spaces between self and other, easily and endlessly reproduced in the modern era. They play myriad roles—document, surrogate, instigator, supplicant—and travel freely across political, religious and cultural boundaries. They are also subject to interpretation and destruction. There are many quandaries here: How do images work between here and there, now and then, you and me? Answering such questions will entail de-naturalizing our own attitudes to images and exploring those of image-makers elsewhere; to do this, we will operate both synchronically and diachronically, looking at the interstices between people, cultures and traditions with particular reference to the United States, France, the Ottoman Empire and the Perso-Islamic sphere in the period between 1850 and the present. An ambiguous place called the “Orient” will be a foil for our thinking along the way. We will begin with some definitions and methods and then move from place to place to articulate differences within/among visual cultures. This course fulfills the Exploring Diversity Initiative in its emphasis on comparative cultures and its effort to promote understanding of contextualized meanings in diverse settings.

Paper, Process, Practice

Anne R. Leonard

Works on paper, particularly multiples, confound many of the received ideas around artistic invention and originality. This course will address the varied functions of printmaking in Europe over four centuries (1500-1900), giving special attention to the following questions: What is the relationship between prints and other artistic media? How do the material constraints involved in printmaking lead to a particular set of

practices, and how in turn do those marry with technological advances to produce new aesthetic possibilities? To what extent did Old Masters such as Dürer and Rembrandt define the terms for later printmakers, and how did their example enable and/or discourage innovation in printed subject matter and style? What was the role of prints in creating both new forums for public discourse and new collecting publics? Arranged thematically rather than chronologically, this course will cover a wide array of printmakers and types of printed media.

Traveling Seminar: Slavery and the Dutch Golden Age

Caroline O. Fowler

This course takes as its starting point the exhibition at the Rijksmuseum opening in September 2019: *Slavery, an exhibition*. With this installation, the curators of the Rijksmuseum seek to correct dominant narratives of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Dutch history, which have absented the role of slavery in determining the economic, social, and visual history of the Netherlands. With a Travel Grant awarded by the College Art Association, the students in this seminar will travel to the Netherlands to visit this exhibition and other relevant cultural institutions in order to examine the possibilities and limits for 'decolonizing' the museum. This course will study how slavery is imbricated within the mythic construction of a 'Dutch Golden Age' while also examining what happens when the history of enslaved peoples becomes translated into the space of a museum and exhibition. We will consider a revisionist history of Dutch artistic production, accounting for slavery in determining the Dutch economy and visual production while also asking what happens when slavery becomes narrated in the space of one of the nation's history museums. We will read contemporary black feminist theory such as Sylvia Wynter, Saidiya Hartman, Hortense Spillers, and Christina Sharpe as a means to struggle with how the space of the exhibition chooses to activate and write those missing histories, and we will examine if it is even possible to responsibly tell the story of slavery over two centuries when the majority of the subjects have been completely defaced, removed, and excised from the historical record, and their voices are often the ones still absent. In the words of Saidiya Hartman, we will ask: "Is it possible to construct a story from the 'locus of impossible speech' or resurrect lives from the ruins?"

HIV + AIDS in Film and Video

Cecilia Aldarondo

Spanning activist works, experimental film, Hollywood dramas and documentary, this course examines the role of moving images in the global AIDS crisis, its aftermath, and its ongoing aftershocks. The AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s was, in the words of Larry Kramer, a 'plague' of epic proportions, with an entire generation obliterated before it could reach maturity. And yet, the plague years also spawned a remarkable amount of creative and activist image-making aimed at fighting, mourning, and grappling with AIDS. Now, we find ourselves in another pivotal moment: while the past decade has provoked a new wave of AIDS historiography, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused AIDS to reverberate with even greater force. Together, we will ask difficult and probing

questions about this phenomenon called the ‘AIDS epidemic,’ examining the role of art in frontline activism, the ethics of AIDS historiography, mainstream visions of the AIDS body, and the need for a diversity of AIDS narratives. This seminar-style course will combine weekly screenings with readings, short writing assignments, student-led discussion, and a final research project of the student’s design. In order to facilitate robust discussions and maximize student and faculty safety, the majority of this course will occur online. It will contain some in-person experiences when possible.

On Race, Art, and Property

Meg Onli

In her seminal article “Whiteness as Property,” critical race theorist and professor Cheryl Harris contends that the legal system in the United States “has come to embody and legitimize benefits that accrue to citizens who are white.” The legacy of our legal system, which has dehumanized people by rendering them as property and legalized the theft of land by colonizers from Native Americans, is not confined to the past, but has shaped our world and thrives within our present moment. How has this legacy and Harris’ theory been explored in contemporary art? How might it allow us to revisit artworks and practices by canonical artists from alternative perspectives? This course aims to study aspects of this complicated history through a broad range of texts from legal and literary theory to art history to Black and Native American studies to more immediately authored texts published on social media platforms. Students are encouraged to think dexterously as we study works by Gordon Matta-Clark, Michael Heizer, Sondra Perry, Cameron Rowland, and Cauleen Smith—among others.

Graphic Content: Typography and the Book between Art and Design

Robert Wiesenberger

This seminar considers the entangled histories of fine art and graphic design by focusing on creative practices surrounding the letterform and the book form from 1900 to the present. We will study historical avant-garde movements active in publishing and making-public; the development of the graphic design discipline, in print and on screen; and logocentric artistic tendencies from concrete poetry and pop art to conceptualism and artists’ books. We will also consider diverse literary practices, graphic visualization, and political agitation. The seminar will make use of the Clark library’s outstanding collection of artists’ books and the holdings of the Chapin library at Williams. We will welcome several guests, including art historians, artist-designers, designer-artists, editors, publishers, and bookmakers.

Queer Art, Queer Archives

C. Ondine Chavoya

Focusing on a number of recent museum exhibitions dedicated to queer art and artists in the U.S. and abroad, this course critically examines the emergence of queer art histories. How are queer art histories being written and presented? And how is queer art being collected and preserved? We will explore these questions (and others) through

the lens of the archive and the research and collecting practices associated with archives. As a class, we will critically examine the role, limits, and possibilities of archives in art historical research, curatorial practice, and museum exhibitions. Course readings will consider various historical, theoretical, and methodological approaches to the archive and curatorial practice. We will also consider artists' archives and what has been described as an "archival impulse" in contemporary art. This course is being developed in conjunction with Williams College Museum of Art's presentation of the traveling exhibition *Axis Mundo: Queer Networks in Chicano L.A.*, the first historical exhibition on queer Latinx art. Select assignments and student presentations will encourage first-hand experience with artworks in the exhibition.

African Art and the Western Museum

Michelle M. Apotsos

This tutorial provides a focused study of the issues associated with the exhibition of African objects within Western institutions from the formative period of the practice in the early 19th century to the modern era. Covering topics ranging from early collection and display methodologies to exhibition-based practice in the contemporary digital era, this tutorial will provide an opportunity for robust discussion about the interactions that have occurred between the arts of Africa and the Western museum over the lengthy history of their engagement. Students will investigate the nature of the cross-cultural dialogues taking place and the politics of display at work in regional museum spaces that display African art towards fleshing out how exhibitions function through the strategic organization and display of objects. In other words, students will explore how the dialogues created between objects and individuals often speak to the voices and agendas that collide, collaborate, and even compete with each other within the environment of the museum.

Emperors of Heaven and Earth: Mughal Power and Art in India, 1525-1707

Murad K. Mumtaz

The Mughal dynasty ruled over most of northern India from the 16th to the 19th centuries. The Mughal Empire was the grandest and longest to rule the Indian subcontinent--much larger than any European empire in the early modern world--and it continued to have a lasting impact on South Asia. Mughals established a centralized administration with a vast complex of personnel, money and information networks. Styling themselves as 'Emperors of Heaven and Earth', the Mughal kings were also globally viewed as political innovators and unprecedented patrons of art. Their visual practices were as much a part of their imperial ideologies as their administrative and military measures. This co-taught course combines the disciplines of Art History and History to explore the intricate workings of Mughal politics and ideologies. The first of its kind to bring an interdisciplinary approach to teaching South Asia at Williams, the course asks: How did the Mughals sustain their empire for three centuries? How did they use art and politics to rule over diverse and largely non-Muslim populations? How did these Muslim imperial patrons merge Persian and Central

Asian cultural values with preexisting Indian forms of administrative and artistic expression? How does Mughal culture continue to shape the South Asian imagination today? Readings will include a variety of visual and literary texts. We will delve deep into the world of biographies, travel accounts, poetry, architecture and a plethora of artworks. Students will take a hands-on approach to Mughal painting through several visits to the WCMA and a dedicated Object Lab. The primary aim of this co-taught course is to introduce students to a multifaceted picture of one of the greatest empires in pre-colonial world history. Another goal is to familiarize them with a wide range of visual and written primary sources and develop a vocabulary for 'reading' these.

Acquiring Art: Selecting and Purchasing Objects For WCMA

Kevin M. Murphy, Stephen C. Sheppard

How do museums acquire art? Factors considered in selecting objects include: the museum's existing collection, its mission, the availability of suitable objects, evaluation of the art historical importance of potential purchases, and the available budget. How can objects be identified and obtained at the most reasonable cost? How do auctions work and what strategies are best for purchasing works at auction? Is it more economical to purchase art at auction or to work with dealers or (for contemporary works) directly with artists? Do museums consider value in the same way as private collectors? What role does an object's history and condition play in the evaluation process? In this course students will work as teams to identify and propose objects for addition to the collection of the Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA). A significant budget will be made available for the acquisition. We will discuss approaches for identification, acquisition and evaluation of objects. Student teams will be responsible for identifying a set of objects that would make appropriate additions to the WCMA collection, and a strategy for acquiring one or more of those objects. Working with the advice of WCMA curatorial staff, one or more of these objects will be acquired using the agreed strategy, and the object will become part of the WCMA permanent collection. Graduate students will participate in all aspects of the class but may be required to undertake different assignments.

Abstraction in Action: Global Modern and Contemporary Art

Mari Rodríguez Binnie

Abstraction, be it gestural or geometrical, was a protagonist in the story of global modernisms and continues to be a powerful visual language in contemporary art. The term "abstraction" may first appear straightforward, but its associations are quite complex: in varying historical contexts, abstraction has signaled formalist rupture, cultural co-optation, revolutionary politics, as well as racial, feminist, and queer critique. This object-oriented course will delve deeply into non-representation in global modern and contemporary art; we will supplement our careful study of artworks with primary documents, as well as with canonical theoretical frameworks and the reassessments that have sought to complicate these. This seminar is organized into two weekly sessions--a lecture and a discussion--to introduce key concepts and issues and to allow for ample group dialogue on these. Ultimately, the course seeks to revise and expand

the cartographies and ontologies of abstraction in the 20th and 21st centuries. As such, it welcomes students with an interest in modern and contemporary art, yet does not require previous coursework in either.

Visual Politics

Mark T. Reinhardt

Even casual observers know that appearances matter politically and that the saturation of politics by visual technologies, media, and images has reached unprecedented levels. Yet the visual dimensions of political life are at best peripheral topics in contemporary political science and political theory. This seminar explores how our understanding of politics and political theory might change if visibility were made central to our inquiries. Treating the visual as a site of power and struggle, order and change, we will examine not only how political institutions and conflicts shape what images people see and how they make sense of them but also how the political field itself is visually constructed. Through these explorations, which will consider a wide variety of visual artifacts and practices (from 17th century paintings to the optical systems of military drones and contemporary forms of surveillance), we will also take up fundamental theoretical questions about the place of the senses in political life. Readings may include excerpts from ancient and modern theorists, but our primary focus will be contemporary and will bring political theory into conversation with other fields, particularly art history and visual studies but also film and media studies, psychoanalysis, cognitive science, and STS. Possible authors include Arendt, Bal, Belting, Benjamin, Browne, Buck-Morss, Butler, Clark, Connolly, Crary, Deleuze, Fanon, Foucault, Freedberg, Garland-Thompson, Hobbes, Kittler, Machiavelli, Mercer, Mitchell, Mulvey, Plato, Rancière, Sartre, Virilio, Warburg, and Zeki.

The Romantic Revolution: Art and Experience in 19th-Century Europe

Marc Gotlieb

This course explores major moments in nineteenth-century European painting and sculpture in relation to sweeping transformations across multiple dimensions of human experience, including aesthetics, philosophy, psychology, politics, and beyond. Key artists include Friedrich, Delacroix, Blake, Turner, Courbet, and many others. In each case we will interrogate their work across multiple art historical and intellectual perspectives, at once with a view to unveiling larger developments, but also to make the case for works of art as powerful bearers of meaning, and shapers of experience, in and of themselves. Assignments keyed to introducing students to a range of art historical methods and modes of argument and interpretation.

Latinx Installation and Site-Specific Art

C. Ondine Chavoya

This course will explore the various forms of installation and site-specific artworks created by Latinx artists for both museums and public space. We will examine the ways in which Latinx artists have used space as a material in the production of artworks and

how this impacts the works' meanings and the viewer's experience. Within the context of U.S. Latinx culture and history, we will connect notions of space with ideas about cultural citizenship, civil rights, and social justice. A variety of art forms will be studied, from traditional to experimental, including murals, sculpture, performance, video, and several multimedia, interactive, or participatory projects. While establishing a historical lineage and theoretical frameworks for analyzing this growing genre, we will pay particular attention to how these works engage urban space and often challenge the institutional assumptions of museums and curatorial practice. Likewise, we will examine the important debates associated with various public art and museum installation controversies.

writing TO art

Lynne Tillman

In this seminar, we will think about writing TO art and for it, rather than merely about it; but first, we will think about how we think. I intend that we read essays and stories that confront the ways in which we think. That might sound abstract, but in fact it is rather concrete: we bring to works of art our predilections or tastes, psychologies, politics, habits of mind, in short, our subjectivity. We are not blank slates, art is not, either. Art is layered with its own history, and histories, criticisms, reactions, rejections, movements. Art is not static. How do we writers move with art, confront our reactions, and ask why we have them. To me, one of the most important aspects in writing is judging one's own reactions, for instance, in the choice of words. To that end, that of confronting our thinking, we will read, among other things: Adorno's "Coming to Terms with the Past;" Joan Scott's "The Evidence of Experience;" Kafka's "Josephine the Mouse Singer and the Mouse People," and "The Hunger Artist;" Freud's "Notes on War and Death," and Craig Owens', "On Speaking to Others" and "Feminism and Post-Modernism." We will also read some of my anti-art art criticism, or what I call stories written in relationship to art. Some of these employ fictions, some not. We will read a few of my "Madame Realism" pieces, as well as essays on Warhol and some other contemporary artists. We will do some writing. We will visit with or be visited by critics and/or artists. We will look at art in galleries, and write about what we have seen.

The Enemies of Impressionism, 1870-1900

Marc Gottlieb

This class explores European and international painting and sculpture of the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, particularly the work of artists once famous in their day but whose reputations collapsed with the rise of Impressionism and Modernism. Once dismissed as trivializing, sensationalizing, politically suspect, kitsch, and simply "bad"-- much of this art has attracted new attention and enthusiasm in recent year. Focus on aesthetic theory, narrative, cinema, and -- most of all -- viewer experience. Artists include Gérôme, Bouguereau, Alma-Tadema, and many others.

Seminar in Architectural Criticism

Michael J. Lewis

How does one judge a building? According to its structural efficiency or its aesthetic qualities? Its social responsibility--or just its pizzazz? Depending on the building, and the critic, any of these questions might be pertinent, or impertinent. This seminar explores architectural criticism, that curious genre between literature and architecture, and looks at its history, nature and function. We will read and discuss classic reviews by historical and contemporary critics as John Ruskin, Mariana van Rensselaer, Lewis Mumford, Ada Louise Huxtable and Herbert Muschamp. Insights gained from these discussions will be applied by students to writing their own reviews, which will likewise be discussed in class. Early assignments will concentrate on mechanics: how to describe a building vividly and accurately, how to balance description and interpretation judiciously, how to compare. Subsequent ones will be more synthetic, encouraging students to write bold, lively and critical essays. The ultimate goal is to develop a distinctive and effective voice, and to gain a better understanding of the nature of criticism in general.

Modernism in Brazil

Mari Rodríguez Binnie

"Modernism" in art: when we think about it, we may not readily think of Brazil. But Brazil was in fact a vibrant battleground of ideas around what it was to be innovative, modern, and avant-garde. Between 1920 and 1945, artists, poets, and critics in the metropolises of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro actively debated on the creation, and potential, of a uniquely Brazilian modernist aesthetic that would stand on par with the European avant-gardes. But what did "Brazilianness" mean to these intellectuals? What role did gender and race relations--indigeneity in particular--play in the construction of this aesthetic? How did the necessities and demands of the national context shape these modernist practices? This seminar will take a deep dive in this fascinatingly contradictory moment in Brazil, a chapter that would become a fundamental reference to Brazilian artists in the 1960s and even to this day. In addition to detailed analyses of artworks, we will read manifestos, novels, and criticism from this period, and the most up to date secondary interpretive texts.

The Politics of Aesthetics: Collaboration and Participation in Contemporary Art

Mari Rodríguez Binnie

The social turn is a hallmark of contemporary art, as artists since the 1960s turned from the art object toward dynamic exchanges with the public, from sole author to collaborative engagement. This seminar provides a theoretical framework to historicize as well as to critically analyze the promise and pitfalls of collaborative works, of favoring active participants over passive spectators, and of the meteoric rise of what is now commonly known as "social practice" art. A wide range of case studies from around the world will also allow us to delve into the intersections and productive tensions between aesthetics and politics, or between art and life.

Heaven's Gate: The Romanesque Sculpted Portal and the Creation of Sacred Space Through Art

Peter D. Low

During the course of the eleventh century, the designers of European churches fashioned a new architectural language that we now label "Romanesque." One of the most innovative and dramatic aspects of this new language was its assimilation of monumental sculpture, absent in Europe since the fifth century. The focus of attention in this regard was the portal, which marked the threshold between the profane realm of the outside world and the sacred space of the church. Often characterized as the "marquee of the Middle Ages," the Romanesque sculpted portal, with its startling juxtaposition of the spiritual and the physical, of ecstatic visions of the heavenly realm and writhing, biting monsters, constitutes one of the true high-points of creativity in medieval art. Through the lens of modern scholarship, this seminar will investigate the antecedents and origins of the Romanesque sculpted portal and examine in detail its most renowned manifestations. Emphasis will be placed on understanding these often complex sculptural schemes within their original functional and material contexts, especially in terms of how they helped to create the sacred space of the church behind. Students will then have the opportunity to develop their own research projects, informed by what we have learned in the seminar, but focused on an example of sacred threshold art of their own choosing.

Aesthetics and Human Variety: European Representations of Oceania

Kailani Polzak

Using European representations of the inhabitants of Oceania as the primary materials of our investigation, this seminar will explore the connections to be made among theories of beauty, practices of art making, and the construction of race as a scientific concept in the second half of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century. In Europe, this was a period that gave rise to aesthetics as a branch of philosophy, to several theories of the origins of human difference, to debates over the abolition of slavery, and to no fewer than fifteen expeditions to the Pacific Ocean. This course will investigate the crucial role that pictures played in all of these developments. Though students will not be required to write their research papers on pictures of Oceania, they should consider the central questions of the course: What purposes do the various conceptions of race serve? What are the aesthetic assumptions made by theorists of race? How do models of making art influence European ideas about foreigners? How do the pictures of foreign peoples impact the construction of race?

Renaissance Time

Stefanie Solum

Time defines the Renaissance, whether framed as the "rebirth" of the past or the foundation of the present. Either way, past historians molded this period with time as their medium, fixing the Renaissance at the dynamic center of history. Flowing from

historiographic foundations, this course will follow diverse art historical streams of Renaissance time to the present. How do Renaissance images play along by pointing to times outside of their frames? What are the implications for the historical worlds-the contexts-we build around objects in order to understand them? How do we navigate the role our own perspectives, interests, and desires play in the form we give to the past? How has time shaped the historic hegemonies of geographic place, and how might we re-deploy temporal strategies to dislodge them? This is a Renaissance course that explores topics fundamental to the broader history of art, and one that ranges widely in focus from the theoretical to the concrete. We will base our discussions both on class readings and on object-based assignments in local museums designed to explore the living relationships we forge with the art of cultures long since gone. Accordingly, students will spend (lots of) time with Renaissance works at the Clark Art Institute, and work with/at WCMA to shape new narratives that bridge past and present while honoring them both.

Timelines

Holly Edwards

Art is really time-consuming--to make, to view, to use, to understand. We enshrine it, excavate it, curate it, deploy it and sometimes we deliberately destroy it. We are always telling stories about the stuff. We seem to think that we control these many fabled things, though they meddle endlessly in the spaces between self and other, human and divine. Great art can be inspiring, enabling people to transcend time, or it can be traumatizing, making time stop altogether. Or both! To explore such powers, we will begin in the 19th century, when commonplace notions of past and present wobbled seriously with the invention of photography and the avid pursuit of archaeology. Thereafter, we will operate across time and space, with particular reference to the Middle East, where art has figured in many religions and also many conflicts. There will be no single story-line, but rather a series of case studies and hands-on projects; we will consider materials ranging from iconic paintings and sacred spaces to calendar art and photojournalism. Along the way, creativity and iconoclasm will be recurring themes. Choose this class if you are curious about the agency and power that art wields in our lives.

Art and Conservation: An Inquiry into History, Methods, and Materials

Thomas J. Branchick

This course is designed to acquaint students with observation and examination techniques for works of art, artifacts, and decorative arts objects; give them an understanding of the history of artist materials and methods; and familiarize them with the ethics and procedures of conservation. This is not a conservation training course but is structured to provide a broader awareness for those who are planning careers involving work with cultural objects. Sessions will be held at the Williamstown Art Conservation Center, Williams College, the Clark Art Institute, and the Governor Nelson. A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza Art Collection in Albany. Examination

questions may be formulated from exhibitions at these locations. Six exams will be given.

Why Look at Animals? Some Contemporary Positions

Robert Wiesenberger

This seminar, named for a 1977 essay by the art critic John Berger, considers a recent tendency in contemporary art to see nonhuman animals less as objects for human delectation—to be owned, eaten, or symbolized with—than as subjects, endowed with specific forms of intelligence, agency, and/or cross-species kinship. We will take as case studies the work of artists such as Francis Alÿs, Xu Bing, Sue Coe, Coco Fusco, Pierre Huyghe, Jochen Lempert, Chris Marker, and Lin May Saeed, among others. Readings will come in part from the rapidly growing, multidisciplinary field of animal studies. In the process, we will consider concepts such as animacy; animal ethics; animalization; the anthropocene; biopolitics; and posthumanism. This seminar anticipates two exhibitions concerning animals at the Clark in Summer 2020.

Creating Whiteness: Racial Taxonomies in 'American' Art, 1650-1900

Horace Ballard

"What is race?" "How is a race created?" "What are the racial histories and subsequent political implications of 'American' art?" These are the central questions of our exploration. Drawing on two centuries of making in the Americas—from 17th century casta paintings of New Spain to the pictorialist photographs of Fred Holland Day—this object-based seminar for graduate students (and undergraduates with instructor's approval) draws upon area collections (including WCMA and The Clark Art Institute) to make the argument that racial ideologies have always been sutured to definitions of an American canon. Our approach is the case study: devoting one or two class meetings to the exploration of eight specific moments/artists in order to engage with the intersectional ideologies of personal and collective identity, e.g., self and the Divine; portraiture and the nation, armed conflict, and the constructed mutabilities of gender and sexuality. Additional artists and topics include: the Stuart family's images of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson; advances in photographic technology vis-a-vis the amputated bodies of Civil War veterans; gender fluidity in John Singer Sargent; and the equation of homoeroticism and black bodies in pictorialism. Designed to provide breadth and specific moments of depth, we will be covering processes of making across multiple mediums and time periods. An elementary reading knowledge of French, Latin, Portuguese, and/or Spanish will not go amiss.

Islam and the Image in Indian Painting, c.1450-c.1750

Murad K. Mumtaz

This seminar will explore Indian painting made for Muslim patrons from the medieval period to the early modern era. The course considers how paintings produced for an elite Indo-Muslim audience can be situated within the frameworks of "Islamic art," a loaded historiographical term that has been questioned in recent times. The seminar will

also address some of the major problems that continue to haunt Indian art scholarship. For most of its history, the academic study of Indian painting has seldom considered contemporaneous literary voices that shed light on the motivations behind artworks. Furthermore, the historiography, deeply entrenched in its colonial and orientalist roots, has largely isolated images from their supporting texts—a curious oversight in light of the fact that miniature painting is primarily an art of the book. These biases have affected the way museums have collected, displayed and interpreted miniature paintings. Western museums continue to place paintings made for books and albums in their "South Asian" collections while textual manuscripts and calligraphic specimens made for the same Muslim audiences—even at times bound in the same albums—are categorized as "Islamic art." What does this isolation of text from image imply about prevailing views of Islamic art? In order to understand the various intended functions of miniature painting and its possible role as an "Islamic" art, the seminar will explore ways to conceptually reintegrate images and texts belonging to key manuscripts and albums that were dispersed during the colonial and post-colonial periods. To better understand the cultural, historical and religious context surrounding artworks students will read primary literature ranging from autobiography to devotional poetry, often written by the very patrons and subjects of the paintings to be discussed.

Demigods: Nature, Social Theory, and Visual Imagination in Art and Literature, Ancient to Modern

Guy Hedreen

Embodied in satyrs, centaurs, nymphs, and other demigods is a vision of an alternative evolutionary and cultural history. In it, humans and animals live together. The distinction between nature and culture is not meaningful. Male and female are equal. The industrial revolution never happens. This course traces the history of demigods from its origins in ancient Greek art and poetry until today. We pay special attention to three points: the relationship between mythology of demigods and ancient political theory about primitive life; evolving conceptions of the environment, and the capacity of the visual arts to create mythology that has a limited literary counterpart. The first half of the course examines the origins and character of the demigods, in works of ancient art, e.g. the François vase and the Parthenon, as well as ancient texts, including Hesiod's Theogony and Ovid's Metamorphoses. We examine relevant cultural practices, intellectual history, and conceptions of nature, in texts such as Euripides and Lucretius. The second half of the course investigates the post-classical survival of demigods. We consider the "rediscovery" of demigods in the work of Renaissance artists such as Botticelli, Michelangelo, Dürer, and Titian. We consider in detail the important role played by demigods in the formation of Modernism in art and literature. Key texts include Schiller, "Naive and sentimental poetry," Nietzsche, Birth of Tragedy, Mallarmé, "L'Après midi d'une faun," Aby Warburg, and Stoppard's Arcadia. Problems include the relationship between nymphs and prostitutes in Manet, and the meaning of fauns and the Minotaur in Picasso. We conclude with demigods in popular culture such as the Narnia chronicles or Hunger Games.

In Vinculus Invictus: Portraits in Prison

Olivier Meslay

Among all the portraits produced during the modern period, some have been painted or, more recently, photographed in prison. Portraits in prison exist at a crossroad of politics, law, and identity; they offer a great opportunity to think about art and society. Artists themselves have made self-portraits during their own imprisonments, or sometimes a portrait of one of their fellow prisoners. More often it was the prisoners or their relatives who commissioned an artistic record of their detention. The idea of commemorating such a moment, or to evoke it as a claim to fame, seems surprising at best, outrageous and provocative at worst. But there has been, since the 16th century, an enduring tradition of portraiture in prison with its masterpieces and its pantheon, a tradition that fits into the wider pictorial attention to the prison itself. With the French Revolution, the nature of prison changed. It became a tragic symbol of political "debates." Within a few years, a terrifying series of portraits appeared that would nurture Western political thought and visual culture until now. Since the 18th century, these portraits have become more concerned with ideas that stretch beyond the individual and into the realm of social justice, mass incarceration, and the prison-industrialization complex.

Aesthetics After Evolutionary Biology: Darwin, Nietzsche, Freud

Emmelyn Butterfield-Rosen

This interdisciplinary seminar examines the rise of evolutionary biology, a new explanatory paradigm that solidified in Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century, and its ramifications in art and aesthetic theory in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We will consider how natural histories of creation, and corresponding reclassifications of the human as a species category, went hand in hand with a reconceptualization of the aesthetic faculties, and the processes of art's production and reception. A core component of this seminar will be the close study of key texts by Charles Darwin, and two thinkers who were among the most radical in extending his key insights into the domain of aesthetic theory—the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, and the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. These primary texts will provide points of departure for studying the work of a number of innovative practitioners working across a range of media, among them the composer Richard Wagner, the Neo-Impressionist painter Georges Seurat, the architect Adolf Loos, the choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky, and the art historian Aby Warburg. Methodologically a major aim of this seminar is to think together critically about the nature of art's relations to other domains of cultural production such as science or philosophy, and to interrogate what it means, both practically and epistemologically, to pursue "interdisciplinarity" as a strategy for art history.

Texere: The Material Philosophy of Print and Textile, ca. 1500-1900

Caroline O. Fowler

It is a commonplace in the literature on textiles that the words for both text and textile derive from the Latin *texere*: to weave. As this etymological root indicates, the action of

making cloth provides the metaphoric structure by which we conceive of language from the threading of thought to the weaving of prose and poetry. In the recent theoretical writings of Tim Ingold, among others, the processes of weaving-textility-offer a model against which to conceive of the dominant hylomorphic conception of matter and form as a process of imprint. Instead, textiles illustrate a world that is created through forces in motion, never imprinting, but moving against and within one another. This seminar will use these questions as the starting point to examine the interaction between printed matter (embodying a hylomorphic process) and textile (a material challenge to hylomorphism). The Clark Art Library contains a preeminent collection of textile material, and this seminar will dive into the Mary Ann Beinecke collection to examine histories of gender and labor, figuration and ornament, mobility and place, and finally, form and matter. The case studies will range from sixteenth-century needlepoint model books to twentieth-century kimono design.

The Studio, The Bedroom, & the Tomb: Artists and Artistic Biographies in the 19th Century & Beyond

Marc Gottlieb

How was the vocation of the artist thematized in the European cultural imagination in the Romantic age and its aftermath? Even more, how did artists themselves articulate, experience, and reproduce that sense of vocation?--What were its mythologies and poetics, at once as they were circulated in visual culture, but also as they were lived, experienced, and reproduced by artists themselves? We will explore such question across three historically, psychologically, and tropologically configured "sites": the artist's studio, the artist's desire, and the artist's death. Readings by Freud, Balzac, Kris and Kurtz, along with scholarship largely centered on the visual arts of the 18th and 19th centuries. With instructor permission, students may undertake research projects in any field of the history of art.

Landscape, Theory, Ideology

Horace Ballard

To use the term "landscape" is to imply and assume a subject position. Unlike the categories of "nature," "wilderness," "vista," or "ecology," a landscape is something invented and experienced (or observed, or represented, or cultivated) solely by human agents. The term "landscape" is variously deployed in the service of a range of political and philosophical positions. This seminar explores "landscape" as a fruitful agitation in critical theory and aesthetic discourse over the past thirty years. The course will interact with the artists and photographic works on view in the exhibition, Landmarks, a 150-year survey of landscape photography in WCMA's collection. We will examine i) how landscape as medium and as genre moves from literature to painting to photography; ii) how to read and employ contemporary theory in the service of artwork from bygone eras; and iii) we will ask who exercises the agency and privilege to name, to invent, to denote a space or a view as worthy of sight.

Art, Biology, Beauty

Emmelyn Butterfield-Rosen

This interdisciplinary seminar is offered in conjunction with the upcoming RAP Colloquium scheduled for March 2020, "Beauty, Sexuality, Selection: Darwinian Revolutions in Aesthetics." (Seminar participants will be expected to attend.) Our theme will be Charles Darwin's controversial theory of "sexual selection" as both a historical idea of aesthetic response and beauty, and as a theoretical concept that is back in play in current evolutionary thinking. Readings will be drawn from ancient philosophy, current science, art history, the history of science, and other fields, to engage the following questions: how did the existence of difference in the organic world--gender difference broadly but also more specifically racial difference in the human species--motivate Darwin's theory of an "aesthetic evolution" driven by animal and human perception of visual beauty? How did philosophical aesthetics contribute to Darwin's biological theory of beauty, and how did Darwin's biological theory of beauty unsettle the discipline of philosophical aesthetics? In which ways did the arts and visual cultures of Europe and elsewhere shape Darwin's aesthetic assumptions? How did, and how does, the concept of sexual selection destabilize the concept of "art" as a human cultural activity? How might "sexual selection" complicate historical and current delineations drawn between nature and culture, between the innate and the arbitrary?

The History, Theory, and Problem of Connoisseurship

Esther Bell

The museum and market have long relied upon the "talent" of a chosen few "connoisseurs," whose abilities (i.e. "the expert eye")-shrouded in mythology and vaguery-have profoundly influenced the interpretation of objects. This seminar will interrogate the problematic construct of connoisseurship in the market (Duveen), in the museum (Pope-Hennessy), and in the academy (Berenson). Through readings about the history and theory of the practice from the sixteenth century to the modern day, we will reassess the meaning, and validity, of connoisseurship in visual culture. And, through conversations about authorship, working methods, and artistic intent, we will question what we learn from close looking. This seminar will include case studies using objects in the Clark's permanent collection, focusing on in-depth discussions of materials, techniques, attribution, quality, and the burgeoning field of conservation science. Students will be asked to conduct their own rigorous object-based research.

Japanese Popular Visual Culture

Christopher A. Bolton

The phrase "Japanese popular culture" often calls to mind comics and animation, but Japan's earliest visual pop culture dates back to the 17th century and the development of arts like kabuki theater and woodblock prints that could be produced for a mass audience. This course traces Japanese popular culture through a range of visual media: kabuki and puppet theater, premodern and postmodern visual art (ukiyo-e, Superflat), classic film (Ozu, Mizoguchi, Kurosawa), manga/comics (Tezuka, Otomo, Okazaki), and

animation (Oshii, Miyazaki, Kon). We will focus on developing visual reading skills to come up with original interpretations of these works, and on comparing different media to make them shed light on one another.

Crash! The Car Accident as Myth and Metaphor in American Art and Visual Culture

Kevin Murphy

A year after MoMA elevated machinery to high art in 1934, Grant Wood painted *Death on The Ridge Road* (Williams College Museum of Art), a depiction of the deadly side of the streamlined modern machines that Alfred Barr might have presented at MoMA. A generation later, Andy Warhol's *Death and Disasters* series multiplied gruesome images of crushed cars and bodies to numbing effect. During the ensuing years, both Jackson Pollock and David Smith (among others) became traffic fatalities. Roughly bookended by the Great Depression and the 1960s, but also considering works of art and visual materials before and after those parameters, this seminar will explore the stakes of car crash imagery for American artists and culture. Readings may include topics in trauma studies, automotive technology, physics, posthumanism, law, and object oriented ontology as well as grounding participants in American art and history of the middle third of the twentieth century. Participants in the course will also have the opportunity to help shape the content, themes, and narrative of an exhibition on car accidents in American art being organized by WCMA.

The Medieval Object

Herbert Kessler

After years of focusing on theory, scholars of medieval art have returned to an examination of physical objects. Distinctly strange and even monstrous, such small material things as reliquaries, liturgical vessels, game pieces, and textiles transgress the traditional categories of art, some made from precious materials and others of such base substances as bones and dirt. Even books were treated as tangible things, not only to be read as texts, but also to be looked at, paraded, and displayed with the Eucharist. Collected in church treasuries during the Middle Ages, exchanged, and reconfigured, medieval objects served simultaneously as earthly assets and spiritual investments. The seminar will focus on the making, function, and collecting of medieval objects. Each student will participate in weekly discussions stimulated by the instructor's presentations and selected readings. Students will also conduct research on an object available for study, will present an analysis of it for discussion by the class, and submit a 15- to 20-page term paper taking into account any comments and criticisms.

Handicraft and Contemporary Art

Julia Bryan-Wilson

This seminar examines the resurgence of craft within contemporary art and theory. In a time when much art is outsourced -- or fabricated by large stables of assistants-- what

does it mean when artists return to traditional, and traditionally laborious, methods of handiwork such as knitting, jewelry making, or woodworking? Though our emphasis will be on recent art (including the feminist reclamation of quilts, an artist who makes pornographic embroidery, a transvestite potter, queer fiber collectives, do-it-yourself environmental interventions, and anti-war craftivism), we will also examine important historical precedents. We will read formative theoretical texts regarding questions of process, materiality, skill, bodily effort, domestic labor, and alternative economies of production. Throughout, we will think through how craft is in dialogue with questions of nation-building, gendered work, and mass manufacturing. The seminar is centered around student-led discussion of our critical readings and culminates with final research projects.

Ethics of Abstraction

Julia Bryan-Wilson

The course will interrogate abstraction as a strategy in 20th and 21st-century art around the globe, and its manifold implications for political projects of being, seeing, and knowing together. We will look at how various artists turn to non-representation as a means for thinking differently about issues as divergent as flatness, vision, progress, decay, identity, violence, solidarity, negation, and protest. How might we read acts of judgment performed by abstract artists, i.e. separating what is alien from that which is intrinsic, as ethically activated? How do we account for the ways abstraction has figured centrally not only in modernist art histories, but also in economic and political theories (as in the abstraction of use into exchange value)? How, too, have representation and figuration (as ostensible opposites of abstraction) been positioned as ethical tactics? We will take an object-oriented approach that foregrounds the complexity of movement between “thing” and abstract “effect,” examining divergent valences from postwar abstract painting up to contemporary abstraction as it supports coded meanings, eccentricities, and alternative (feminist, queer, marginal, racialized) formations.

Regression as Modern Fantasy: Archaism, Primitivism, Prehistory

Emmelyn Butterfield-Rosen

This course analyzes the implications of European modernity’s engagement with cultural artifacts it wanted to classify beneath the prefix “pre.” We take as our object an aesthetic strategy employed with increasing frequency by modern artists in Europe after 1800: the self-conscious mobilization of visual forms thought to telegraph priority to later advancements, whether historically or developmentally. Our inquiry, beginning with the German Nazarenes and extending into the early twentieth century around the moment of WW1, foregrounds such strategies as key to grasping new notions of temporality and geography that emerged in European modernity. We will inquire into the historical and intellectual contexts that sustained chronological and cultural primitivisms, including the history of colonialism, discoveries of Paleolithic cave art, and the emergence of the modern disciplines of archeology, anthropology, ethnography, child psychology, and

psychoanalysis. Alongside close visual scrutiny of some of modernism's most canonical and problematic objects, including key works by Picasso and Gauguin, we will examine the literature that proliferated in this period devoted to the art of peoples deemed "primitive," including the Greeks in the pre-classical period, non-Western peoples, and children.

The Watchful Object

Michelle Apotsos

What is implied by an object that "watches"? Is it sentient? Animate? Through what apparatus does it gain the power to perceive and in turn generate some type of action? Watchful objects - sometimes known problematically as 'fetishes', 'idols', and 'totems' - have existed in numerous material cultures in Africa over time and have often been saddled with titles and labels that largely reflect colonial-era notions of primitivism linked with non-Western objects, spaces, and peoples. Even today, many of these objects are still inappropriately connected to systems of the occult rather than being recognized as crucial cogs in the socio-political, cultural, and spiritual mechanics of lived experience on the continent both past and in some cases present. The purpose of this seminar, thus, is to unpack the multiple identities that these objects have experienced as a way of understanding 1.) the circumstances and situations that catalyzed their production; and 2.) how their various material and metaphorical components function as power-producing elements that enable these forms to become 'watchful' presences in society that operate in accordance with their 'observations' of the human condition. This course will also address how the psychological agency of many of these material traditions has prompted their inclusion and absorption within contemporary artistic practices as well, often in the form of productions and performances that provoke unsettling and often transformative experiences in viewers.

Early Modern Transmissions

Lauren Cannady

Through analyses of networked objects and people in what has come to be seen as an increasingly globalized early modern world, we have become more cognizant of the ways in which compositions and subject matter of paintings circulated through the medium of reproductive print; manuals meant to be followed to the letter were adapted for foreign audiences; and ideas were disseminated in book form, either through the open market or in banned publications. But is it enough to track the movement of people, ideas, and objects? And what did it mean to transmit information-whether it be visual, material, or theoretical-across media, languages, continents, or religions in the early modern period? Our goal will not be to map the physical movements of (art) objects or individuals, but rather to query what is gained, lost, or altered beyond recognition when things are transmitted over time and space.

The scope of this seminar will span roughly the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries-from the systematization of academic and artistic training and the Scientific Revolution, to the Enlightenment and, consequently, accelerated imperial expansion. Our discussions will center on readings and case studies drawn from the visual arts (such as the

reproduction of Albrecht Dürer's woodblock prints on Italian maiolica); mechanical arts (the European mechanization of ancient Chinese timekeeping technology); natural philosophy (the continental reception of Isaac Newton's Opticks); and intellectual history more generally (for instance, the project of translating and adapting William Chambers' Cyclopaedia for a French audience) and the terrain covered will include European encounters with the Americas, the

Museums: History and Practice

Michael Conforti

Art museums not only express the political, economic and cultural values of their period of formation, but the evolution of those values that result in the institutions of our time. The seminar will examine museums past, present and future looking at governance and administration practices, architecture and installation, accessioning/deaccessioning policies, and cultural property issues. It will also consider current trends in exhibition, public education and other programming in both "encyclopedic" and contemporary arts institutions. Class discussions will have a special focus on how museums strive to balance their scholarly and artistic roles with their civic and social responsibilities while maintaining financial stability in the increasingly market-driven, metric-conscious, not-for-profit environment of our time.

Chemical Intimacies

Mel Chen

This is a research seminar that understands human-chemical entanglement in relationship to environment, sexuality, geography, ecology, and capacity. It doubles as a research class in which students choose a project of chemical intimacy to investigate as their own through the course of the semester. In the first half, we will together read and discuss forms of human-chemical entanglement, whether a matter of industrial pollution, pharmaceutical use, habitual intoxication, gendered self-care or enhancement, or built environment; the goal is to achieve a broad sensibility for the concept as well as a familiarity with thinking biochemically and biopolitically about living bodies. In the second half, each participant will choose and research a historically and geopolitically specific scenario of chemical entanglement, while 1) considering the political, legal, cultural, and labor contexts of the case; 2) exploring relationships between "actual" and "represented" (protest slogans or visual productions in the case of environmental justice activism, for example); 3) examining other research questions germane to their site of interest and their chosen discipline of study. We will take one field trip to a local site."

Women, Men, and Other Animals

Mel Chen

In this seminar, we will together learn to be "animal critics." We will explore ways in which human groups and interests, particularly in the United States, have both attached and divorced themselves from other animals, considering such axes as gender, race, ability, and sexuality as key definitional foils for human engagements with animality. What are the "uses" of "animals" for "us," and precisely who is this "us"? How and when

are some willing to see themselves as animal – indeed, under what political conditions do they embrace it? What is the history of unique, often asymmetric, interdependencies between human animals and nonhuman animals? How do actual lives of humans and non-human animals merge and clash with the rhetorics and visualities of human animality? We will examine both “everyday” animality and the forms of animality that stand out only today in retrospect, in their exceptionality, or upon reflecting on structures of privilege. We will build a critical animal studies vocabulary from a range of readings in science, philosophy, art, feminism, indigenous studies, critical race, geography, fiction, film, rhetoric, history, activist movements, disability studies, postcolonial studies, and examine both visual and narrative cultural production.