

SCHOOL OF FINE ART AND MUSIC
Winter Semester 2015
ARTH*3780-01
GENDER AND ART



INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Erin Silver
TIME: Monday & Wednesday, 4:00 – 5:20pm
LOCATION: MacKinnon Building, Rm 114
OFFICE: Johnston Hall, Room 118
PHONE: Ext. 53191
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OFFICE HOURS: Monday, 2:30-3:30 or by appointment

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION:

This course considers how the practice and reception of the visual arts intersect with constructs of gender in contemporary and historical contexts.

Prerequisite(s): 10.00 credits including 2.00 credits in Art History.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course seeks to examine queer art and visual culture's perilous position in culture and society, considering key artworks, political events, and cultural moments at the edges of the millennium that illustrate this reality. The course will analyse the overlap between gender, sexuality, and queerness, asking, what kinds of works, as well as cultures, are produced via these convergences? Who does the work serve, and who—and why—does it threaten? How do courses on queer culture and on gender in art serve a larger historical project on gender and sexuality in art? In confronting these questions, we will examine the intersections of gender, sexuality, and other “Othering” markers of identity, performance practices as they relate to identity performance, and depictions of same-sex and queer love and sexuality, contextualizing these depictions within the history of queer artistic and cultural practices, queer performance, queer film, and queer activism, and considering the resulting issues of identification, community, representation, and preservation. Ultimately, this course will ask: How does the recent history of gender in art and visual culture permit us to see more queerly, and what visual and artistic strategies have been employed to ensure our continued ability to do so?

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of this course, students will have developed an understanding of histories and theories of gender and sexuality and of the politics of gendered representation and the representation of sexual politics in artistic practice and visual culture. Through readings, discussions, and assignments, students will also acquire critical thinking and writing skills. These skills will be developed and demonstrated by discussing the form, content, and context of images and contemporary (and some historical) works of art, and by analyzing the significance of thinking about gender and sexuality in relation to contemporary art and visual culture.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Readings will be available online, as well as chosen in collaboration with students in the course.

SUGGESTED TEXT:

Wojnarowicz, David. *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration*. New York: Vintage Books, 1991. This collection of Wojnarowicz’s essays about art, politics, homophobia, living, and dying in the age of AIDS in America provides a cultural, social, and political context for the era and region we will be focusing on.

METHOD OF EVALUATION:

Abstract and Bibliography: Due Monday, February 9	10%
Group Project: March 25, March 30, April 1	35%
Final Paper: Due Wednesday, April 1	40%
Participation: Ongoing.....	15%

Abstract and Bibliography (10%). The abstract (**2 pages, double-spaced**) should introduce the final paper topic, emphasizing the main theoretical argument and pointing to possible artistic examples (you need not decide on your ultimate examples at this point). Your preliminary bibliography should include at least five titles (articles or books) in addition to relevant course pack material (1-2 entries).

Group Project: Exhibition Project (35%). At the beginning of the semester, students will be assigned groups and will be asked to “curate” their own imaginary exhibition. Students will have to choose whether to focus their exhibition on objects they deem to have a gendered component or way of looking through the lens of gender and sexuality, on a location with particular gendered or sexualized connotations, or on a curatorial strategy reflecting an emphasis on looking/grouping based on considerations of gender, considering, as well, the realistic obstacles to and breakthroughs in mounting these types of exhibitions, as will be examined throughout the semester. There is no minimum/maximum amount of work or specific mediums that need be included; rather, the Exhibition Project is intended to highlight the countless approaches and results of the confluence of gender, sexuality, and queer and art/visual culture. Groups will be expected to designate a spokesperson to present on the curatorial team’s choices (**5-10 min.**). A short curatorial statement (**5-7 pages, double-spaced**) will be submitted alongside the presentation. Multimedia presentations (please, no paper waste!) are encouraged.

Final Paper (40%). In consultation with the instructor, students will submit a paper (**7-8 pages, double-spaced**) related to any of the themes covered in class and in conjunction with an examination of artwork, artists, exhibitions, or practices covered in class or introducing work not previously covered but of interest to the student and related to the course material. The final paper should have a clear thesis, which should be backed up by independent research conducted by the student, as well as through at least 2 sources from the course pack.

Class Participation (15%). Each week, students are expected to come prepared to discuss the readings and, where applicable, to ask questions to the instructor and each other. It is also expected that students will absorb terminology used in class and employ it in a thoughtful and sensitive way in class discussion. Students are also encouraged to bring in supplemental material (following prior consultation with the instructor) the student deems appropriate to the course (this can be an object, an image, a short film/video, a short presentation of an artist’s practice, a website, etc.).