**SCHOOL OF FINE ART AND MUSIC**

**WINTER SEMESTER 2025**

**ARTH 3210**

**CRITICAL ISSUES IN ART HISTORY**

***Topic: The Authority of Art***

**Instructor:** Amanda Boetzkes

**Time:** Mondays 10:00am-12:50pm

**Location:** MCKN 114

**Office Hour**: By appointment

**Email:** [aboetzke@uoguelph.ca](mailto:aboetzke@uoguelph.ca)

**CALENDAR DESCRIPTION:**

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| This course will provide an in-depth examination of the critical issues driving contemporary art. Though the specific topic will vary, the goal of this course is to establish a facility with the fundamental terms by which to analyze the cultural, economic, technological and visual conditions that shape the artworks of our time. | |
| Prerequisite(s): | 7.50 credits or 1.50 credits in Art History, including [ARTH\*2480](https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c12/c12arth.shtml#ARTH2480). |

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Roland Barthes’ 1967 essay “The Death of the Author” raised a formative set of dilemmas concerning the site of artistic creation. These dilemmas are still at stake in contemporary art today; never more so. At a time when not only authorship but authority itself is under political, philosophical and aesthetic duress, we are challenged to ask: When authorship is in crisis, what authority does art have? What does art do when authorities are challenged? Whose authority counts and why? Who needs authority anyway?

This course will consider these two terms—authorship and authority—and how their shifting meanings determine the parameters of artistic practice. We will consider the ways that artists destabilize the principles of artistic genius, autonomy, originality, creativity, economy and their related institutions of authority that haunt art of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The course will therefore provide alternative understandings of the artist through a consideration of the contingencies of the art object; mechanical reproduction, simulacra and digital subjecthood; queer and BIPOC standpoints; relationality; performance and performativity; biopolitics and necropolitics; and importantly, through new terms of coexistence.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

\*Students will become familiarized with a wide range of contemporary art and visual culture

\*Students will develop critical skills of visual analysis

\*Students will be trained in effective research methods and theoretical argumentation

**REQUIRED TEXT:**

There is no textbook for this course. Readings will be assigned on a weekly basis and posted on Courselink.

**METHOD OF EVALUATION:**

Students will complete three term exams on Courselink. The exams will be comprised of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions. They will be open-book and designed to engage the lecture material and the readings. As such, attendance and participation are integral to the success of the term exams. Students will have a week to complete each exam.

**Term Exam I – 30%**

Posted on February 3rd; due February 10th 2025

**Term Exam II – 35%**

Posted on March 3rd; due March 10th 2025

**Term Exam III – 35%**

Posted on March 31st, due April 7th 2025