This course surveys contemporary art from the 1980s to the present: its artists, trends, genres, and major ideas. The main question under consideration is how art functions and is created in a social and cultural context. More specifically, we examine how this social and cultural context influences artists.

This course explores theoretical and art historical resources for the critical and constructive interrogation of contemporary art and the art-making process. Throughout the semester, you will ask why artists are making what they make, and where their ideas about art come from.

Course Requirements

Grades will be based on the following:

Paper #1: 25%
Paper #2: 35%
Paper #3: 40%

Readings are as PDFs below (where necessary, password is 5767), or at provided links.

Attendance is mandatory. Three unexcused absences will result in a deduction of your final grade by one third (i.e., you are allowed two unexcused absences). For example, if your final grade is a ‘C’, three unexcused absences will reduce it to a ‘C-’. Each subsequent absence will reduce it further by another third: C- to D+ and so on. Three latenesses or leaving early will count as one unexcused absence. To avoid unexcused absences, please consult with me before you miss class.

Second writing requirement
Second-writing courses adopt in-depth processes toward the improvement of writing skills. Rough drafts will be required of papers in advance, followed by optional, individual meetings with the instructor. Following rigorous critique of the initial draft, the paper will be re-written and a final version submitted. NOTE: a re-write of the final version may be required!

Schedule of Topics/Readings:
Feb
17  Introduction to the course

24  Where do the ideas of our society and culture come from?
Video: Hannah Gadsby, Nanette (Netflix, 2018)


Paper 1 assigned

Lecture slides

March 3  Does 'modern' mean contemporary?

Peter Nowogradki, "'The title of artist needs to be earned...' an interview with David Hickey," theguardian.com, June 14, 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/jun/14/dave-hickey-art-critic-interview-title-artist-earned


Recommended: Paterson (2016), directed by Jim Jarmusch
Are our society and culture still modernist?


Modernist project

Paper 1 draft DUE

How is postmodernism a response to modernism?


What is "quality" in contemporary art?


Eleanor Heartney, "Identity Politics at the Whitney," Art in America, May 1993, pp.43-47.

Film: Me and You and Everyone We Know (2005) by Miranda July website
April 7  **Does pluralism translate into a loss of standards?**


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**Isn't all art relational and socially engaged?**


What relationships exist between technology and social media and contemporary art?
John Harris, Guy Debord predicted our distracted society
Tim Rayner, Foucault and social media: a life in a virtual panopticon (part 1); I tweet therefore I become (part 2); the call of the crowd (part 3)

Postcolonialism: who speaks for whom?
Laurel Wamsley," 'National Geographic' Reckons with Its Past: 'For Decades, Our Coverage was Racist',' NPR.org, March 12, 2018
https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/03/12/592982327/national-geographic-reckons-with-its-past-for-decades-our-coverage-was-racist
Growing Coalition Calls Brooklyn Museum Out of Touch and Demands Decolonization Commission
Decolonize This Place (organization)

May 3

Paper 2 FINAL DUE
Paper 3 assigned

Posthumanism, part 1: What does it mean to be "human"?


**Posthumanism, part 2: What does it mean to be "animal"?**


27 **Paper 3 FINAL DUE**