

**LIBS 497.1HE / GDRS 400.01E : Exploring Visual Culture:
The Exhibition in Contemporary Art
Professor Emily L. Newman
East Texas A&M University**

Tuesday/Thursday, 12:30-1:45, Spring 2026

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For Office Hours, email to schedule an appointment (F2F or Zoom)

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OUTCOMES

Contemporary art is constantly evolving, but one thing remains consistent: exhibitions are pivotal in introducing new trends to the world. In this class we will explore exhibitions and the processes that have shaped the perception of contemporary art in a global world. Additionally, we will examine thematic subjects, allowing for a more studied discussion of certain moments in art history. Seeking to be as broad as possible, this course will incorporate artists from all different parts of the world. We will discuss these artists thematically, as their work can correspond to different moments in contemporary art. Additionally, all types of medium will be discussed, such as sculpture, painting, photography, poetry, film, new media, etc. As a graduate level course, the structure of the class is dependent upon student preparation and participation.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- discuss and explain significant trends in contemporary art (course participation and discussion posts)
- ability to evaluate exhibitions based on design, plan, prepared text, included artwork, and thematic contributions (course participation and discussion posts)
- continue to learn to analyze the relationships among content, context, and style in Western and Nonwestern Art (course participation and discussion posts)
- develop the skills to determine what is appropriate for museum wall labels and exhibitions essays, while enhancing critical thinking skills and writing ability, demonstrated in the exhibition project
- develop and enhance research skills for our exhibition project
- take advantage of opportunities to explore art in the metro area
- analyze and appraise numerous films and documentaries about contemporary art and museums

RESPONSIBILITIES AND ASSESSMENT:

Students' ability to meet the course objectives and learning outcomes will be evaluated through written assignments, class participation and discussion, and research projects.

TEXTBOOK

All readings and films will be provided. On occasion, you will be required to watch a film that might require a small fee for a rental purchase.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:*

Engagement: Each person is expected to participate fully in class, by following the guidelines listed below.

- **Preparation:** reviewing readings and material before class
- **Focus:** avoiding distractions during in-person and online activities
- **Presence:** engaged and responsive during all activities
- **Asking Questions:** in class, out of class, online, offline
- **Listening:** hearing what others say, and also what they are not saying
- **Specificity:** referring to specific ideas from reading and discussions
- **Synthesizing:** making connections between reading and discussions

Discussion: Each student will write numerous times to the discussion page for the class. There will be clear class prompts, with word counts for you to follow.

Seeing Art:

There will be one ongoing project throughout the semester, that requires students to work independently and seek out opportunities in the area to see different exhibitions and artwork.

Short Papers and Research Project:

Throughout the course, you will have a number of short papers and small assignments that ask you to expand on your thoughts and develop your writing skills. There will also be assignments that engage the material through research. More information about these projects will be handed out separately.

Assignments will NOT be accepted over one week late. For each class day late, the grade will be reduced. Further, the final project will not be able to be accepted late. No extra credit will be given.

Grade Breakdown:

Participation: 10%

Film Reviews: 15%

Notable Exhibition Presentation: 20%

Curating an Exhibition Project: 30%

Seeing Art in Person: 20%

Reflection Paper: 5%

Grade Scale:

A = 90%-100% (exceptional)

B = 80%-89% (good)

C = 70%-79% (average)

D = 60%-69% (minimally sufficient)

F = 50%-59% (failure)

*subject to change

Note: Personal computer problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the school or local library, office service companies, an Internet cafe, or a bookstore, such as Barnes & Noble, etc.

DISCUSSION:

Each person will bring their own experiences to this class and should feel comfortable expressing their opinions and vulnerabilities. We will look at a wide array of media and examples of visual culture, some of which might include nudity, intense language, violence, etc. The classroom is a safe environment, and each student should behave with integrity and treat their peers with respect. See D2L for more information about course material.

HANDING IN ASSIGNMENTS

Each assignment must be uploaded on time. Discussion posts will not be accepted after their due date. For other assignments, for each class day late, the grade will be deducted. **Assignments will NOT be accepted over ONE week late.**

*** THERE WILL BE NO EXTRA CREDIT ASSIGNMENTS***

WORKLOAD

The rule of thumb for time required for course study and preparation each week for a face-to-face class or an online course during the spring and fall semesters is three times the number of credit hours (or 9 hours per week) for the course. If you find yourself unable to complete course requirements in a timely manner, refer to the University's withdrawal policy and the appropriate dates. Incomplete grades are only granted for extreme emergencies. Being "overloaded" either from other class assignments or job commitments are not considered to be emergency situations.

SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

NONDISCRIMINATION NOTICE

East Texas A&M University comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

CLASSROOM POLICIES:

Statement on Student Behavior:

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenet of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment (See Student's Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct).

All students must show respect toward the instructor and the instructor's syllabus, presentations, assignments, and point of view. Students should respect each others' differences. If the instructor determines that a student is not being respectful towards other students or the instructor, it is the instructor's prerogative to ask the student to leave, to refer the student to the department head, and to consider referring the student to the Dean of Students who may consider requiring the student to drop the course. Please refer to pages 42 – 46 of the East Texas A&M University Student guidebook's Codes of Conduct for details.

Academic Dishonesty: Students at East Texas A&M University are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. There is **no tolerance** for any kind of academic dishonesty in this course. This includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, cheating on exams, theft of instructional material or exams, representing the work of someone else as one's own, and misrepresenting absences. Academic dishonesty is a severe transgression and may result in referral to the Dean of Students, expulsion from class and/or the University, and a failing grade.

It is the student's responsibility to:

1. research and write their own papers
2. give proper credit through documentation when using words or ideas of others
3. rely on their own knowledge when taking tests
4. refuse to give another student the opportunity to be dishonest

Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10GraduateStudentAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

Artificial Intelligence (AI): The use of ChatGPT, Copilot, or any other AI platform or tool to generate ideas, write content, or produce any material is strictly prohibited in this course.

This class is designed to develop your writing skills, and if you are using AI, you are not writing or learning. This is because the use of AI diminishes opportunities to learn from our experiences and from each other, to play with our creative freedoms, to problem-solve, and to contribute our ideas in authentic ways. In a nutshell, college is a place for learning, and this AI simply cannot do that learning for us.

Any work written, developed, created, or inspired by generative artificial intelligence does not lend itself to our learning goals and is a breach of ethical engagement and our academic integrity policy. Using AI opens up academic honesty issues, both because it raises the question if the work is "your" work, and also because tools like ChatGPT rely on taking material from uncredited scholars and writers. **If discovered that you have used any type of AI for your work, you will face negative consequences, which will include failing the assignment and potentially failing the course and facing discipline from the university.**

Please be cautious using tools like Grammarly, which can be very helpful with spell check and grammar help but should be avoided when they generate content.

TURNITIN

East Texas A&M University uses Turnitin software to help students avoid plagiarism and cheating. Turnitin is a 'text-matching' software which is designed to educate students regarding appropriate citation and referencing techniques. Turnitin is also used to provide East Texas A&M University with confidence in the academic integrity of students work. Turnitin does this by comparing a student submission against an archive of Internet documents, Internet data, a repository of previously submitted papers, and subscription repository of periodicals, journals, and publications. Turnitin then creates an 'Originality Report' which can be viewed by both lecturers and students, which identifies where the text within a student submission has matched another source.

EAST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SUPPORTS STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M University, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

STATEMENT ON ACCOMMODATIONS FOR ADA ELIGIBLE STUDENTS:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
East Texas A&M University, Waters Library, Room 162
Phone (903) 886-5150, Fax (903) 468-8148

StudentDisabilityServices@etamu.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

After contacting the Office of Student Disability Resources and Services, it is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor of what accommodations are needed **IN ADVANCE** of when they are needed (for example, if testing accommodations are necessary, please inform the instructor with appropriate documentation at LEAST one week before the test date).

EMAIL POLICY:

Email is the preferred form of communication, with a general response time of 24 hours during the week (do not expect replies over the weekend). For all emails sent, please **include full name, student ID, and the class** that you are attending. Do not send emails to myself and other professors at once, as each professor has different issues to address. You are allotted three absences for this course; plan accordingly and there is no need to contact me about unexcused absences that are incorporated into this allowance. For excused absences, you need to bring in a hard copy of appropriate documentation of your absence.

GRADE POLICY:

If you have concerns regarding a grade, email me **within one week of receiving the assignment back** clearly explaining why you think the assignment was addressed incorrectly. After the email is received, we will then set up an appointment to discuss the concern.

CAMPUS CONCEALED CARRY

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in East Texas A&M University buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and East Texas A&M University Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations, please refer to (<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>) and/or consult your event organizer). Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all East Texas A&M University campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements:

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@etamu.edu.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here: <https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

MINIMAL TECHNICAL SKILLS AND PROGRAMS NEEDED

At a minimum, you must have access to and be able to use Microsoft Office 2013, 2010, 2007 or Open Office. Microsoft Office is the standard office productivity software utilized by faculty, students, and staff. Microsoft Word is the standard word processing software, Microsoft Excel is the standard spreadsheet software, and Microsoft PowerPoint is the standard presentation software. Copying and pasting, along with attaching/uploading documents for assignment submission, will also be required. If you do not have Microsoft Office, the university provides access here:

<https://inside.tamuc.edu/facultystaffservices/academictechnology/documents/Office-365-Students.pdf>

SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

Please note that on the 4th Sunday of each month there will be System Maintenance which means the system will not be available 12 pm-6 am CST.

Class Schedule
subject to change

1/13 – Introduction

1/15 – no class, **Seeing Art Around Campus Due**

1/20 – History of Exhibitions

- READ: Bruce Altshuler, "Introduction" in *Salon to Biennial - Exhibitions that Made Art History: Volume 1: 1863-1959*. London and New York: Phaidon, 2008, 9-19.

1/22 – History of Exhibitions (continued)

- READ: Bruce Altshuler, "Introduction" in *Biennials and Beyond - Exhibitions that Made Art History: Volume 2: 1962-2002*. London and New York: Phaidon, 2008, 11-24.
- WATCH: *Taking Venice* (2024)

1/27 – Curating

- READ: Adrian George, "What is a Curator?" *The Curator's Handbook*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2015, 2-27.
- WATCH: *Herb and Dorothy* (2008)

1/29 – Curating

- READ: Beatrice von Bismarck, "Curatorial Criticality: On the Role of Freelance Curators in the Field of Contemporary Art," *oncurating.org*, no. 9(2011): 62-69.
- READ: Mari Carmen Ramírez, "Brokering Identities: Art Curators and the Politics of Cultural Representation" in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, edited by Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne. London and New York: Routledge, 1996, 15-26.

2/3 – Exhibition Discussion 1

- READ: Jens Hoffman, "Talking about Exhibitions," in *Show Time: The 50 Most Influential Exhibitions of Contemporary Art*. London and New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2014, 240-249.

2/5 – Exhibition Discussion 2

- WATCH: *The Art of the Steal* (2009)

2/10 - Notable Exhibition Presentations – DAY ONE

- WATCH: *Black Art: In the Absence of Light* (2021)

2/12 - Notable Exhibition Presentations – DAY TWO

- WATCH: *Our City Dreams* (2008)

2/17 – Disguised Selves

- WATCH: *The Art of Making It* (2021)

2/19 – Disguised Selves

- READ: Leila Ahmed, “The Discourse of the Veil” and Ahdaf Soueif, “The Language of the Veil,” from *Veil: Veiling, Representation, and Contemporary Art* edited by David A. Bailey and Gilane Tawadros. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003, 42-55 and 110-120.

2/24 – Heritage

- WATCH: *The Cool School* (2008)

2/26 – Heritage

- READ: Karin Higa, “The Search for Roots, or Finding a Precursor,” in *Asian American Modern Art: Shifting Currents 1900-1970*, edited by Daniel Cornell. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008, 15-22.
- READ: Mary Jane Jacob, “Places with a Past” (1991) in *Situation*, edited by Claire Doherty. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009, 197-202.

2/27 – Seeing Art 1 Due

3/3 – Materiality

- WATCH: *Waste Land* (2010)

3/5 – Materiality

- READ: Marshall McLuhan, “The Medium is the Message” from *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: Signet, 1964, 23-35, 63-7.

3/10 and 3/12 – NO CLASS (Spring Break)

3/17 – TBA

- WATCH: *Blurred Lines: Inside the Art World* (2017)

3/19 - Project Discussions

- Come prepared with at least TWO ideas of themes for your exhibition project.
- Bring laptop/tablet (can rent from library if needed), as we will do some research.
- **EP: Thematic Selection Handout Due**

3/20 – Seeing Art 2 Due

3/24 – Humor

- WATCH: *Art and Craft* (2018) or *Beauty is Embarrassing* (2012)

3/26 – Humor

- READ: Mikhail Bakhtin - “Carnival and the Carnavalesque” selection from *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, edited by John Storey, 4th edition, London and New York: Routledge, 2009, 250-259.
- READ: Selections from interviews with Bruce Nauman, Sarah Lucas, Richard Prince, Peter Fischli and David Weiss, Raymond Pettibon, from Jennifer Higbie, ed. *The Artist’s Joke*. Cambridge, MIT Press, 2007.

3/31 – Time

- WATCH: *Kusama - Infinity* (2018)
- **EP: Proposal Due**

4/2 – Time

- READ: Linda Johnson Dougherty, “Making Time” and Lydia Matthews, “Against Linear Time: Icons Old, New, and Evolving” in *0 to 60: The Experience of Time through Contemporary Art*. Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 2013, 14-25 & 26-35.

4/3 – Seeing Art 3 Due

4/7 – Craft

- WATCH: *Yarn* (2016)

4/9 – Craft

- READ: Louise Mazanti, “Super Objects: Craft as an Aesthetic Position,” in *Extra/Ordinary: Craft and Contemporary Art*, edited by Maria Elena Buszek. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011: 59-82.
- **EP: Thematic Paragraph and Bibliography Due**

4/14 – Spirituality

- WATCH: *Treasures of Heaven* (2011)

4/16 – Spirituality

- READ: Selections from James Elkins, *On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art*, Routledge: 2004, 1-27 and then your choice of story.
- **EP: Annotated Bibliography Due**

4/21 – Reconciling History and Display

- WATCH: *Dahomey* (2024)

4/23 – Exhibition Project Discussion

- READ: Reading: Ingrid Schaffner, “Wall Text,” in *What Makes a Great Exhibition?* edited by Paula Marincola. London: Reaktion Books, 2007.
- Bring in one exhibition label to discuss in class

4/28 – TBA

4/30 – Gallery Talks and Exhibition Project Due

5/5 – Seeing Art 4 Due

5/5 – Reflection Paper Due