

FA330 Politics, Practices and Theories of Contemporary Art

Seminar Leader: Prof. Dr. Dorothea von Hantelmann

Course Times: Fridays, 14:00 - 17:15 (with offsite visits to museums and galleries outside regular course hours)

Office Hours: Fridays 11:00 – 13:00

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Course Description

Where is art situated in modern societies? Is it part of everyday life, or something apart? How did its social function evolve historically – and how is it transformed today? Are concepts such as “autonomy” and “criticality” still appropriate to describe the position and function of art in society? These are among the questions we will explore in this course, which combines the study of texts by scholars of philosophy, art theory and sociology with excursions into Berlin's art scene. In the theory part we will discuss authors such as Immanuel Kant and Theodor W. Adorno. The aim will be to understand art's double character as “autonomous” and “social fact” (Adorno). How can we comprehend this ambiguous condition that situates art simultaneously in and outside of society? How does the fact that “creativity” today has become a major social force, even a cultural imperative, challenge this position? In order to understand how politics, economy and creativity are linked in the 21st century, we will read several chapters of Andreas Reckwitz' seminal book “The Invention of Creativity” (2019). Our discussions will be complemented by field trips to artist studios and exhibitions. All classes marked “on campus” will take place in classroom and in person as long as this is possible. In case of a lockdown or other restrictions some classes may be rescheduled and adapted to be held online over zoom. If students miss classes due to Covid-19 related policies remote participation via zoom will be arranged. We will spend several sessions visiting the 11th Berlin Biennial (<https://11.berlinbiennale.de>) and the exhibition “Down to Earth” at Gropius-Bau (https://www.berlinerfestspiele.de/en/berliner-festspiele/programm/bfs-gesamtprogramm/programmdetail_309206.html). Some of these field trips will take place on Saturdays and schedule changes may occur.

Week 1 (on campus)

04.09., Friday, 14:00 – 17:15

Dissolving the Boundaries of Art Practices: An Introduction into Contemporary Art

Readings

Marcel Duchamp: “The Creative Act” (1957)

Marcel Duchamp: “Apropos of ‘Readymades’” (1961)

Week 1 (field trip) ATTENTION, SPECIAL & LONGER SESSION

05.09., SATURDAY, 10:30 – 15:30: “Down to Earth” at Gropius-Bau

MEETING POINT: 10.20 at the entrance of Gropius-Bau, Niederkirchnerstraße 7, 10963 Berlin (U/S-Potsdamer Platz)

10:30 – 12:00 exhibition visit “Down to Earth” at Gropius-Bau Stegreif Orchester

12:00 – 12:30 Stegreif Orchester

12:30 – 13:30 “Inside”, a conference performance by Bruno Latour and Frédérique Ait-Touati

13:30 – 14:14 *break*

14:15 – 15:30 second walk through the exhibition / lecture by Hermann Ott / “Moving Earth” by Bruno Latour

Week 2 (on campus)

11.09., Friday, 14:00 – 16:15

Discussion of “Down to Earth”

Reading

Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth. Politics in the New Climatic Regime* (Cambridge: Polity, 2017) (chapter 1-12)

Week 3 no class

(compensation for the double session in week 1)

Week 4 (on campus)

25.09., Friday, 14:00 – 17:15

Foundations of western modern and contemporary art: Kant, Adorno, Greenberg, Groys

Readings

Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgement (§1-5) (1790)

Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” (1947)

Clement Greenberg, “Avantgarde and Kitsch” (1939)

Boris Groys, “The New” (1993)

Week 5 (on campus)

02.10., Friday, 14:00 – 16:30

Overcoming the foundations (I)

Edouard Glissant’s concept of mondialisation

Screening and discussion of the film “A world in relation” (2010) by Manthia Diawara

Reading

Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990) (first and last chapter)

Week 6 (on campus)

09.10., Friday, 14:00 – 16:00

Overcoming the foundations (II)

Theoretical approaches of the 11th Berlin Biennial

Readings

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling* (2003) (Interlude)

Zairong Xiang, *Queer Ancient Ways: A Decolonial Exploration* (2018) (preface)

Statement of the curators of BB11 (not out yet, will be given to you in time to read for this session)

Week 7 (field trip)

16.10., Friday, 14:00 – 17:15

Exhibition visit 11th Berlin Biennial (part I: KunstWerke)

Fall Break

Week 8 (field trip)

30.10., Friday, 14:00 – 17.15

Exhibition visit 11th Berlin Biennial (part II: Gropius-Bau)

Week 9 (on campus)

06.11., Friday, 14:00 – 17.15

Art in the age of the creativity complex

Reading:

Andreas Reckwitz, *The Invention of Creativity* (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley & Sons 2017).

Week 10 (on campus)

13.11., Friday, 14:00 – 16.30

Current transitions in the art world

Reading:

tbc

Week 11 (field trip)

20.11., Friday, 14:00 – 17.15

Exhibition visit “Masculinities. Liberation through Photography” at Gropius-Bau

Week 12 (on campus)

27.11., Friday, 14:00 – 17.15

What comes after the museum? New presentation formats

Reading

Dorothea von Hantelmann, *Art institutions as ritual spaces* (2018)

Week 13 (field trip)

04.12., Friday, 14:00 – 17:15

Exhibition visit “Jeremy Shaw” at Julia Stoschek Collection

Exhibition visit “Katharina Grosse” at Hamburger Bahnhof

Week 14 (on campus)

11.12., Friday, 14:00 – 17:15

Wrap-up session

Requirements

Attendance

Attendance at ALL classes is expected. More than one absence in the seminar (e.g. one double session) will significantly affect the grade for the course. Please also make sure you depart early in order to reach the museums and exhibition spaces in time.

If absent, a short notification via email, sent before the beginning of class, is expected. Please note that punctuality is essential. Also note that the use of smartphones and notebooks is not allowed during seminars. Students are advised to consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

Assessment

The course assessment consists of the overall seminar work (one 20-min-presentation in addition to class participation) and two essays. See also “Grade Breakdown”.

Presentation

Each student will be in charge of one oral presentation of 20 min length. These presentations can either be reflections on one of the exhibitions we’ve seen together or they can reflect on a theoretical reading. Topics will be discussed and assigned in the first session.

Writing Assignments

There are two essays for this course, one mid-term essay (ca. 2000 words) and one longer final essay (ca. 3000 words). A range of prompts will be provided in advance.

The mid-term essay is due on 16th October, midnight.

The final essay is due on 18th December, midnight.

Essays should include footnotes/references, bibliography and a list of illustrations. The structure and draft of your essays can be discussed in individual tutorials.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

All written work must be submitted electronically and on time. Please note that essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C.

Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grade Breakdown

Seminar Grade = Attendance (preparation of texts/participation in discussions, presentation)

Seminar Grade: 50% (25% /25%)

Essay 1: 20 %

Essay 2: 30 %