

Art in the Age of Content, Value and the Corporate State  
AHD-3903-A  
Spring 2020, Tuesdays 9:00-11:50AM  
Room 804-B, 380 Second Avenue

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Class site: ahd-3903-a.info  
Office Hours: After class and by appointment

## Course Description

In the early 1980s theorists begin to speculate about how technology will impact cultural production in the future. Contemporary art, music, images, texts and other commodities will be seen increasingly as information, chaotically stored without hierarchy, in a new type of a self: "the postmodern self." In this context, people experience multiple realities simultaneously and spend most of their time on hand-held devices, swiping between content on social media, ecommerce or streaming sites like YouTube or Netflix. "The self [will exist] in a fabric of relations" that becomes (like the technology that supports them) more complex and mobile. Thirty years later, we are witnessing the stunning accuracy of these predictions. The constant consumption of culture, the merging of private and public personas, the emergence of Google/Amazon/Apple/ Snapchat/Facebook/Twitter have come to embody postmodernism's "distraction from distraction by distraction." In this course students will survey the social, political and economic issues that shape contemporary culture and its corresponding historical and material preconditions. Although the framework of the course is flexible, the focus is thematic; we will examine the meaning of such concepts as modernism, postmodernism, immaterial labor, capitalism, neoliberalism to consider the extent new technologies, and in particular, new materials or "immaterials" shape our social relationships, environment and art.

## Course Format

The course combines lecture, class discussion, film screenings, listening, gallery/museum exhibition visits, guest lectures and student presentations. You must come to class prepared to discuss the readings.

## Website

The class has a website: <http://ahd-3903-a.info>  
You can find all of the course materials here, including class readings, syllabus and other relevant materials.

## Textbooks

The class does not have a textbook, but recommended texts are below.  
Many more will be made available through the class website.

Art in Theory 1900 - 2000:  
An Anthology of Changing Ideas  
Charles Harrison (Ed), Paul J. Wood (Ed)  
Paperback: 1288 pages  
Publisher: Blackwell  
ISBN-10: 0631227083  
ISBN-13: 978-0631227083

Art Since 1900: Modernism,  
Antimodernism, Postmodernism  
Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss,  
Yve-Alain Bois,  
Benjamin H. D. Buchloh  
Paperback: 688 pages  
Publisher: Thames & Hudson  
ISBN-10: 0500285438  
ISBN-13: 978-0500285435

After Art  
by David Joselit  
POINT: Essays on Architecture  
Princeton University Press  
ISBN-10: 0691150443  
ISBN-13: 978-0691150444

Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of  
Late Capitalism  
by Fredric Jameson  
Paperback: 460 pages  
Publisher: Duke University Press  
Language: English  
ISBN-10: 0822310902  
ISBN-13: 978-0822310907

## Assignments

- 1) 3 short writing assignments (to be explained and distributed in class and via email)
- 2) Following three introductory lectures and class discussions, students are required to present the history of their work at SVA (as of Week 4) in 20-25min presentations. The presentation will familiarize the class with your work, assist you in organizing your position at SVA and to test relevant themes from the course in practice. We will work in a steady fashion from this point on, with every student showing work every two weeks.
- 3) Research paper (3,000 words)

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments (subject to change):

Readings should be completed for the class meeting under which they are listed.

### Week 1 INTRODUCTION

Assignment:

Visit Hans Haacke: All Connected at the New Museum, NY. Prepare two-three sentences explaining Haacke's use of information and the exhibition format.

### Week 2 CONTEXT

- i. Anthony Huberman, "I (not love) Information," *Afterall*, Autumn/Winter 2007 (.pdf)
- ii. Jean-Francois Lyotard, "Les Immatériaux," *Art & Text*, 17 (1985), pp. 47-57
- iii. Michael Sanchez "2011: Art and Transmission," *Artforum* Summer 2013 (.pdf)
- iv. Olav Velthuis, "ArtRank and the Flippers: Apocalypse Now?," *Texte Zur Kunst*, Issue no. 96, "The Gallerists," December 2014 (.pdf)
- v. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, pp. 7—34 (.pdf)

Suggested:

Daniel Birnbaum and Sven-Olov Wallenstein, *Spacing Philosophy: Lyotard and the Idea of the Exhibition*, Sternberg Press, 2019

Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 1984.

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 1935

Seth Price, "Dispersion" (.pdf)

Assignment

Visit Contemporary Art Daily. Select an exhibition and prepare two-three sentences explaining why.

### Week 3 MATERNITY: MODERNISM

- i. Charles Harrison, "Modernism" in *Critical Terms for Art History*, pp 188—201 (.pdf)
- ii. Raymond Williams "When Was Modernism?" (.pdf)

Suggested

Karl Marx, "Fragment on Machines," from *The Grundrisse* (pp. 690-712) (.pdf)

### Week 4 WORKSHOP

### Week 5 THE SUBLIME & THE SPECTACLE

- i. Guy Debord *The Society of the Spectacle* [Sections I-III] (.pdf)
- ii. Jean-Francois Lyotard, "The Sublime And The Avant-Garde," *Artforum* April 1984 (.pdf)

### Week 5 MATERIAL AS MEDIUM: THE MATERIALISM OF INFORMATION

(Through what medium does the message speak?)

- i. Rosalind Krauss, "Two Moments from the Post-Medium Condition," October, Vol. 116 (Spring, 2006), pp. 55-62 (.pdf)
- ii. Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labor," from Radical Thought In Italy: A Potential Politics (.pdf)
- iii. Bourriaud, Nicolas, Postproduction (excerpt). New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2002 (.pdf)
- iv. Bourriaud, Nicolas, "Seven Notes on the Immaterial," Parkett, 71, 2004 (.pdf)

VIEWING: Seth Price: Redistribution, 2007

Week 6 WORKSHOP

Week 7 THE CULTURAL INDUSTRY

- i. Theodor W. Adorno "The Schema of Mass Culture," The Culture Industry, New York: Routledge, 2002

Suggested

Theodor W. Adorno Minima Moralia New York: Verso, 2005.

Soren Kierkegaard The Present Age: On the Death of Rebellion, Harper Perennial Modern Thought

Week 7 THE NEW SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM

- i. Stephen Metcalf, "Neoliberalism: The Idea that Swallowed the World," The Guardian (.pdf)

Suggested

Luc Boltanski & Eve Chiapello "The New Spirit of Capitalism," presented to the Conference of Europeanists, March, 14-16, 2002, Chiacgo

Week 9 WORKSHOP

Week 10 MATRIX AND SPEED

- i. Elie Ayache: In the Middle of the Middle of the Event (.pdf)
- ii. Benjamin Kunkel, The Capitalocene, Vol. 39 No. 5 · 2 March 2017 (.pdf)
- iii. Erik Morse & Peter Sloterdijk, "Something in the Air," Frieze Nov 2009 (.pdf)

VIEWING Kevin Slavin's How Algorithms Shape Our World

Week 11 IDENTITY AND THE NETWORK

- i. Brian Droitcour, "Young Incorporated Artsits," Art in America March 21, 2014 (.pdf)
- ii. Lawrence Alloway, "Network: The Art World Described as a System," Artforum, September 1972 (.pdf)
- iii. David Joselit, "Painting Beside Itself," October No. 130 | Fall 2009, p.125-134 (.pdf)

Suggested:

David Joselit After Art, Princeton University Press

Week 13 final presentations (group #1)

Week 14 final presentations (group #2)

Week 15 final presentations (group #3)

Additional Course Requirements

Attendance Policy: Each student is allowed up to 3 absences per course, regardless whether the absences are attended

1) by a doctor's note or other documentation. At the fourth absence, the student will receive an F. Each class meeting will begin at either 9:00 am or 10:30 am, depending on the section. Students who arrive after the beginning of class and up to 20 minutes into the session shall receive a tardy. 2 tardies equal one absence. Students who arrive after the 20 minute mark will not be admitted to class for the day and will be marked absent.

You may use your laptops to take notes, but NO CELL PHONES are permitted in class. Please turn them off and

2) put them away before class.

3) Late papers will be docked a half grade per day. Deadline extensions will be made only when students present the instructor with compelling justification in accordance with SVA policy.

4) Plagiarism policy: In order to protect the academic integrity of the Art History and VCS curricula, our departmental policy on plagiarism has been revised to insure that repeat-offenders are identified and subjected to the appropriate disciplinary action. Beginning September 2007, all confirmed cases of plagiarism will be forwarded to and kept on file by the Provost's Office. First-time offenders will continue to be faced with either a failing grade for the plagiarized paper or a failure for the course; repeat offenders will additionally be subjected to disciplinary action which may result in suspension or expulsion from the college.

A final grade of X+ (withdrawal without failure) will not be considered an appropriate option in cases of confirmed plagiarism.

Tips for avoiding plagiarism:

When you quote, paraphrase or summarize ideas – whether from a periodical, book, interview or from non-print or electronic sources – you must cite the source. Use footnotes or endnotes after the quotation, summary or paraphrase, giving the name of the author, title of the publication, publisher's information, and the page(s) number(s). On the final page of your own paper, include a bibliography that lists all sources you have used. Include the author's name, the title of the work, and the publication information (publisher's name; place and date of publication). For more information, consult your instructor or an MLA guide.

5) Learning Disabled (LD) Students: If you have a disability and would like to receive course accommodations including taking tests with extended time and/or with use of a computer, you must first register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS). Call 212-592-2281 or email ODS at [disabilityservices@sva.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@sva.edu). Once you have completed registration, ODS will meet with you to make arrangements for implementing accommodations. Please be aware that in order to take an extended time test (time and a half) with or without a computer, eligible students must make arrangements a full two weeks in advance. Otherwise requests cannot be honored.