

**INDS 305A - ART, POWER, AND POLITICS
HATHORN 104**

1:05 – 4:00 PM, Tuesday

Instructor: Joshua D. Rubin (Pettengill 161)

Office hours: Mondays 12-2pm, Wednesdays 1-2pm, and by appointment



This course is a theoretical examination of the relationship between art, power, and politics. What can the artistic works of various societies say about their worlds that other creations cannot? What claims can art make about the workings of power, and what artistic techniques does power itself employ? Why can some artworks persuade and manipulate us while others leave us cold? This course approaches these questions from a number of different directions, including: the politics of perception, the place of art in modern life, the artistry of terror, the art of protest and propaganda, and the dream of building a beautiful regime.

Course objectives:

1. Introduce students to a range of critical theorists who examine the political significance of art and aesthetics.
2. Provide examples of the social, cultural, economic, and historical forces that shape perception.
3. Demonstrate how political projects are inscribed on bodies, living and dead.
4. Offer a safe and theoretically rigorous space for students to analyze the aesthetic dimensions of their lived experiences.

Required texts:

Seremetakis, C. Nadia, ed. 1996. *The senses still : perception and memory as material culture in modernity*. University of Chicago Press ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Stewart, Kathleen. 2007. *Ordinary Affects*. Durham: Duke University Press.

All other readings will be available to you on Lyceum. All film clips will be shown in class. Assigned readings are to be completed for the class under which they are listed. If for some reason you find that you are unable to access a particular reading, please contact me immediately and I will address the problem.

Though you should feel free to email me any time you like, please be advised that I generally do not answer emails that I receive after 8 pm until the following day. If you haven't received an immediate response, don't worry. I will respond as soon as I can.

Assignments and grading:

ESSAYS:

This course is designed to be reading and participation intensive, and the assignments conform to this expectation. Our semester is organized into three distinct sections (sensory perception, state spectacles, and bodies and images), and you will submit a 6-10-page essay at the conclusion of each section. Though this essay must focus on a single week's readings (Taussig and Benjamin together, for example, or – in the case of a book – that book and one other assigned reading from the same section), it should also be *synthetic* and *synoptic*—it should combine your ideas, our in-class conversations, and relevant concepts from other readings. (50 points each)

OPTIONAL REVISED ESSAY:

If, at the end of the semester, you wish to improve your grade, you may revise and resubmit one of your three essays for a new grade. This option is designed to give you a chance to profit from your hard work and improvement during the semester. Should you choose this option, you will, of course, be expected to draw from any relevant materials that we covered after the original essay was submitted.

Late work will be marked down 5% per day and unexcused assignments that are more than one week late will be graded as a 0. Exceptions will be made for Dean's Excuses.

PARTICIPATION AND READING QUESTIONS:

This class depends on your active and thoughtful participation. If you remain silent in the classroom, you limit your own understanding of the material and you deny us the opportunity to learn from you! To encourage conviviality and intellectual engagement, a premium has been placed on your classroom demeanor, engagement with the material and your classmates. (50 points)

This participation score will be supplemented by a randomized drawing of one or two (depending on final enrollment) reading question sheets per class. These questions are designed to help lead you through the more theoretically treacherous parts of the assigned readings. PLEASE BRING TWO COPIES OF YOUR ANSWERS WITH YOU TO EVERY CLASS SESSION. These answers will be returned at the beginning of the following class with a score of ✓, ✓+ or ✓-, depending on their quality. You are allowed ONE opportunities to remove yourself from our weekly lottery, but you *must* notify Prof. Rubin of your decision by 8 PM on the night before class. (20 points total)

Each student is also permitted ONE “free pass” absence during the semester. All subsequent absences will negatively affect participation grades unless accompanied by Dean's Excuses.

Your course grade will be calculated as a percentage of accumulated points (A = 94-100; A- = 90-93; B+ = 87-89; B = 84-86; B- = 80-83; etc.).

Academic integrity:

Bates College defines plagiarism as claiming another's words and/or ideas as your own. Both plagiarism and failing to cite source materials are serious classroom concerns and they will be treated as such. At the same time, it has been my experience that instances of plagiarism are rarely premeditated acts of deception. More commonly, they stem from misunderstandings and time-

related panic. If this is the case, then it is as much my job as yours to make sure plagiarism does not occur in our class. With this in mind, I have designed this course specifically to alleviate the finals-week time crunch. The assignments are designed to help you think critically about art and improve your command of the course materials. They will also provide you with opportunities to receive semi-regular feedback on your ideas as the semester unfolds.

It is also my responsibility to communicate to you my citation guidelines. They are as follows: I will expect you to provide references whenever you quote or paraphrase the work of another person. When in doubt, cite!

You are welcome to use this example as a template for your in-text citations:

In *Ordinary Affects*, Stewart writes, “XXX XXX” (Stewart 2007, 30).

For full bibliographic references, you can take your cue from the course texts cited on the previous page.

If you have any additional questions or concerns about citation guidelines, assignments, or any other aspect of the course, feel free to speak to me or visit the Bates writing center. You may also consult the Bates Academic Integrity Policy at the following URL:

<http://www.bates.edu/entering/policy/judicial-affairs/code-of-student-conduct/academic-misconduct/>

Please note: I reserve the right to revise this syllabus during the semester, as the class requires.

Course Schedule

WEEK ONE:

January 14

Film: *The Wonderful Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl* (1993)

WEEK TWO: Please email a “childlike” photograph to Prof. Rubin before class!

January 21

1: Benjamin, Walter. 1968. "The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations*, 219-251. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.

2¹: Taussig, Michael T. 2004. *My Cocaine Museum*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Selections: “Heat”; “Wind and Weather”)

Please bring TWO COMPLETED COPIES of your answers to the posted reading questions to this and all subsequent classes.

¹ Readings numbered “1” on the syllabus are your top priority. Readings numbered “2” are designed to clarify and/or engage productively with your #1 readings. If you see 1a/1b, they are of equal importance, relative to each other. The same for 2a/2b. All of the listed readings are required reading, of course, no matter the numerical designation.

WEEK THREE:

January 28

Seremetakis, C. Nadia, ed. 1996. *The senses still : perception and memory as material culture in modernity*. University of Chicago Press ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
(Selections: Seremetakis; Buck-Morss; Feldman)

WEEK FOUR: Please come to class with a paper topic in mind!

February 4

1: Rancière, Jacques. 2009. "The Aesthetic Dimension: Aesthetics, Politics, Knowledge." *Critical Inquiry* 36 (1):1-19.

2: de la Cadena, Marisol. 2010. "Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual Reflections beyond "Politics"." *Cultural Anthropology* 25 (2):334-370.

"Senses and the Shapes of our Worlds" paper due by Saturday at 11:59 PM, via email.

Of States, Spectacles, and the Perceptible

WEEK FIVE:

February 11

1: Foucault, Michel. 1995 *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

(Selection: Introduction)

2a: Biehl, João. 2001. "Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment." *Social Text* 19 (3):131-149.

2b: Kafka, Franz. "In the Penal Colony" (Translator: Ian Johnston)

FEBRUARY 18: NO CLASS, WINTER RECESS

WEEK SIX:

February 25

1: Mbembe, Achille. 2003. "Necropolitics." *Public Culture* 15 (1):11-40.

2: Fausto-Sterling, Anne. 1995. "Gender, Race and Nation: The Comparative Anatomy of "Hottentot" Women in Europe, 1815-1817." In *Deviant Bodies*, edited by Jacqueline Urla and Jennifer Terry, 19-49. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

WEEK SEVEN: Please email a meme to Prof. Rubin before class!

March 3

- 1: Mitchell, W. J. T. 2005. "The unspeakable and the unimaginable: Word and image in a time of terror." *ELH* 72 (2):291-308.
- 2: Daniel, E. Valentine. 1996. *Charred Lullabies: Chapter in an Anthropography of Violence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
(Selections: "Introduction" and "Embodied Terror")

WEEK EIGHT: Please come to class with a paper topic in mind!

March 10

- 1: Adorno, Theodor W. 2007. "Commitment." In *Aesthetics and Politics*, 177-195. New York: Verso.
- 2: O'Brien, Tim. 1991. "How To Tell A True War Story." In *The Things They Carried*, 75-91. New York: Penguin Books.

"States, Spectacles and the Perceptible" paper due by Saturday at 11:59 PM, via email.

Of Beings, Bodies, and Images

WEEK NINE:

March 17

- 1: Butler, Judith. 2010. *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* New York: Verso.
(Selection: "Precarious Life, Grievable Life")
- 2: Ticktin, Miriam. 2017. "A World Without Innocence." *American Ethnologist* 44 (4):577-590.

WEEK TEN:

March 24

- 1: Stewart, Kathleen. 2007. *Ordinary Affects*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- 2: Ahmed, Sara. 2004. "Collective feelings: Or, the impressions left by others." *Theory, Culture & Society* 21 (2):25-42.

WEEK ELEVEN: Please come to class with a paper topic in mind!

March 31

- 1: Haraway, Donna. 2006. "Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late 20th Century." In *The International Handbook of Virtual Learning Environments*, edited by Joel Weiss, Jason Nolan, Jeremy Hunsinger and Peter Trifonas, 117-158. Dordrecht: Springer.
- 2a: Kosek, Jake. 2010. "Ecologies of Empire: On the New Uses of the Honeybee." *Cultural Anthropology* 25 (4):650-678.
- 2b: Anzaldúa, Gloria. "How to Tame a Wild Tongue."

"Beings, Bodies, and Images" paper due by Saturday at 11:59 PM, via email.

WEEK TWELVE:

April 7

- 1: Bennett, Jane. 2010. *Vibrant matter: a political ecology of things*. Durham: Duke University Press.
(Selection: The Force of Things)
- 2a: Cheng, Anne Anlin. 2018. "Ornamentalism: A Feminist Theory for the Yellow Woman." *Critical Inquiry* 44 (3):415-446.
- 2b: Nguyen, Mimi Thi. 2015. "The Hoodie as Sign, Screen, Expectation, and Force." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 40 (4):791-816.