

Penn State University – School of Visual Arts
Spring 2013
ART 476 History of Digital Art
Professor: Eduardo Navas (eduardo@navasse.net)
Thursdays 2:30 – 5:30 PM

Course Description

History of Digital Art is a survey class that offers participants an opportunity to examine the humanistic aspects of contemporary digital art. Through readings and direct interaction with digital media and digital artists, the class will develop an appreciation of the ways in which the interface between human beings and technology has been historically constructed and is subject to critical investigation. The goal of the class is to prepare each student so that she or he may engage with digital media in a way that is ever more historically and socially relevant.

Students will address the ways in which digital technologies transform artistic practices such as museum display, the writing of art criticism, the definition of works of art, changing role of the artist and the changing space of the art studio. More important, however, by engaging with digital works of art students will learn to think critically about technology and its engagement with culture at large. They will be encouraged to think about the political, economic and social impact of digital technologies. This humanistic approach to technology makes this course particularly useful to students of art history, philosophy, comparative literature, art education, and the visual/plastic arts. A significant portion of the course will be devoted to the ways in which art on the Internet and digital art in general challenge the integrity of categories such as race and national identity.

Class Structure

Class will consist of lectures and discussions of works that are important in the history of digital art. Students will be assigned readings that will complement in-class lectures. There will be two major papers, the first around the middle of the term, and the second at the end. For each paper students will need to write concisely about works of art and topics and themes discussed in class throughout the term. Students will be expected to post reactions to in-class discussions on an Angel forum created specifically for the class. Forum postings will be considered part of your class participation.

Learning Outcomes:

1. To understand how form and content are combined to communicate a message.
2. To understand the history and theory that is relevant to the history of digital art.
3. To acquire a basic understanding of conceptual models important in visual culture and especially digital art.
4. To gain knowledge of the diverse production in digital art and their relation to art history.
5. To produce effective critical analysis.

A Note on Plagiarism

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. A student who commits plagiarism will be reported to

the office of the visual arts. The student's behavior will be taken very seriously and dealt with according to the guidelines provided by Penn State University – School of Visual Arts. To avoid plagiarism, please cite your sources when appropriate.

Required Readings

Internet Art by Rachel Greene

Digital Art by Christiane Paul

The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge by Jean-Francois Lyotard

Available in the bookstore.

Recommended:

New Media Art by Mark Tribe & Reena Jana

Available online at

<https://wiki.brown.edu/confluence/display/MarkTribe/New+Media+Art>

Digital Culture by Charlie Gere

Course Requirements

Please note that final grades are dependent upon consistent performance in all course requirements.

- **Attend every class session.** (See attendance below for more details.)
- **Participate in class and online discussions.**
- **There are a total of 2 major written assignments.** The point breakdown is below.
- **There are no make-ups.** Please check with me for possible exceptions. Not consulting with me prior to the dates when assignments are due will lead to an automatic F for the respective assignment.

Grading

- Attendance 10%
- Class Participation (affected by attendance) 10%
- Online Participation 10%
- First Major Essay 35%
- Second Major Essay 35%

Total 100%

Grade Scale

Letter grade assignments are as follows:

- 94-100 = A
- 90-93 = A-
- 87-89 = B+
- 84-86 = B
- 80-83 = B-
- 77-79 = C+
- 74-76 = C
- 70-73 = C-
- 60-69 = D
- 0-59 = F

Attendance

- Three Absences = F, Three tardies (15 minutes late or early departure) = one absence.
- One Absence will take away 1.5% from attendance grade and 1.5% from class participation.
- There are no excused absences unless it is an extreme case. Please check with me for exceptions.

Office hours: Tuesdays, 2:15 to 4:15 by Appointment.

Semester Schedule

*Check Angel for PDFs as noted in the schedule below. Also make sure to purchase the required books when they become available at the university bookstore. Also, there will be more readings in additions to the basic ones below. **Check Syllabus link on Angel for updated reading materials.***

Week 1:

Thursday, January 10, 2013

Introduction | Brief overview of the History of Digital Art

Lecture on Modernism, Postmodernism and New Media

Week 2:

Thursday, January 17, 2013

Lesson online

Complete assigned reading plus online material available on Angel and answer and discuss questions available on Angel Forum for the readings below

Read:

David Hopkins, "The Politics of Modernism: Abstract Expressionism and the European Informel," *After Modern Art: 1945 – 2000*, pp. 5 – 34 (PDF)

David Hopkins, "Postmodernism: Theory and Practice in the 1980s," *After Modern Art: 1945 – 2000*, pp. 197 – 231 (PDF)

Fredric Jameson "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," (PDF)

Answer questions available on Angel. Discussion takes place from Friday, January 18, to Wednesday, January 23, 2013.

Week 3:

Thursday, January 24, 2013

Read:

Internet Art, "Introduction," pp. 8 – 28

Digital Art, "Introduction," pp. 7 – 25

(PDFs available on Angel until you acquire your own copy)

Answer questions available on Angel. Discussion takes place from Friday, January 25, to Wednesday, January 30, 2013.

Week 4:

Thursday, January 31, 2013

Read:

Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, pp.vii - 67

Answer questions available on Angel. Discussion takes place from Friday, February 1, to Wednesday, February 6, 2013.

Week 5:

Thursday, February 7, 2013

Finish discussing Fredric Jameson and Jean-Francois Lyotard.

Answer questions available on Angel. Discussion takes place from Friday, February 8, to Wednesday, February 13, 2013.

Week 6:

Thursday, February 14, 2013

Bily Kluver, "Four Selections by Experiments in Art and Technology," in *The New Media Reader*, pp. 211 – 226 (PDF)

Vannevar Bush, "As we May Think" in the *New Media Reader*, pp. 35 – 48 (PDF)

Read:

Bily Kluver, "Four Selections by Experiments in Art and Technology," in *The New Media Reader*, pp. 211 – 226 (PDF)

Vannevar Bush, "As we May Think" in the *New Media Reader*, pp. 35 – 48 (PDF)

Answer questions available on Angel. Discussion takes place from Friday, February 15, to Wednesday, February 20, 2013.

Week 7:

Thursday, February 21, 2013

Midterm Essay Released

Read:

Internet Art, chapter 1: 31 – 72

Digital Art: Chapter 1: 27 – 65

Answer questions available on Angel. Discussion takes place from Monday, March, 11 to Wednesday, March 13, 2013.

Week 8:

Thursday, February 28, 2013

Midterm Essay Due

Lecture on Media Art: Postmodernism and Posthumanism

Week 9:

Thursday, March 7, 2013

Spring Break

Week 10:

Thursday, March 14, 2013

Read:

Internet Art, Chapter 2: "Isolating Elements," 73 – 116

Digital Art, Chapter 2: "Digital Technologies," 67 – 138

Answer questions available on Angel. Discussion takes place from Friday, March 15 to Wednesday, March 20, 2013.

Week 11:

Thursday, March 21, 2013

Read:

Jean Baudrillard "Precession of Simulacra" (PDF)

Jean-Francois Lyotard "What is the Postmodern?" *The Postmodern Condition*, pp. 71 – 82

Answer questions available on Angel. Discussion takes place from Friday, March 20 to Wednesday, March 28, 2013.

Week 12:

Thursday, March 28, 2013

Read:

Internet Art, Chapter 3, "Themes in Internet Art," 119 – 168

Week 13:

Thursday, April 4, 2013

Final Essay Guidelines Released

Read:

Internet Art, Chapter 4, "Art for Networks," 173 - 212

Answer questions available on Angel. Discussion takes place from Friday, April 4 to Wednesday, April 10, 2013.

Week 14:

Thursday, April 11, 2013

Read:

"Introduction" and Cartographic Imaginaries," from *Latin American Identity in Online Cultural Production*, by Claire Taylor and Thea Pitman

Answer questions available on Angel. Discussion takes place from Friday, April 12 to Wednesday, April 17, 2013.

Week 15:

Thursday, April 18, 2013

Read:

Digital Art, Chapter 3, "Themes in Digital Art," 139 - 246

Answer questions available on Angel. Discussion takes place from Friday, April 19 to

Wednesday, April 16, 2013.

Week 16:
Thursday, April 25, 2013
Final Lecture

Week 17:
Final Essay due