

Penn State University – School of Visual Arts

Spring 2014

ART 476 History of Digital Art

Professor: Eduardo Navas (ean13@psu.edu)

Thursdays 2:30 – 5:30 PM

Office hours: Mondays 11 to 2 PM, Vis Arts 207A (e-mail for appointment)

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 Angel forums. 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

Digital Culture by Charlies Gere

Digital Art by Christiane Paul

New Philosophy for New Media by Mark B. N. Hansen

Available at the bookstore.

Recommended:

New Media Art by Mark Tribe & Reena Jana

Available online at

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

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 Forum 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.

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 16, 2014

Introduction | Brief overview of the History of Digital Art
Lecture on Modernism, Postmodernism and New Media

Week 2:

Thursday, January 23, 2014

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 and be ready to discuss:

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)

Giorgio Agamben "What is an Apparatus?" (PDF)

Answer questions available on Angel. Discussion takes place from Friday, January 24, to Wednesday, January 29, 2014.

Week 3:

Thursday, January 30, 2014

Read and be ready to discuss:

Digital Culture, pp. 1 – 16

Digital Art, pp. 7 – 46

Answer questions available on Angel. Discussion takes place from Friday, January 31, to Wednesday, February 5, 2014.

Week 4:

Thursday, February 6, 2014

Read and be ready to discuss:

Mark B. N. Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media*, pp. 1–47

Answer questions available on Angel. Discussion takes place from Friday, February 7, to Wednesday, February 12, 2014.

Week 5:

Thursday, February 13, 2014

Finish discussing Giorgio Agamben and Mark B. N. Hansen.

Answer questions available on Angel. Discussion takes place from Friday, February 14, to Wednesday, February 19, 2014.

Week 6:

Thursday, February 20, 2014

Read and be ready to discuss:

Digital Culture, Chapter 2: 47 – 74

Answer questions available on Angel. Discussion takes place from Friday, February 21, to Wednesday, February 26, 2014.

Week 7:

Thursday, February 27, 2014

Midterm Essay Released

Read and be ready to discuss:

Digital Art: Chapter 1: 27 – 65

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 28 to Friday, March 7, 2014.

Week 8:

Thursday, March 6, 2014

Midterm Essay Due

Lecture on Media Art: Postmodernism and Posthumanism

Week 9:

Thursday, March 13, 2014

Spring Break

Week 10:

Thursday, March 20, 2014

Read and be ready to discuss:

Internet Art, Chapter 3: 75 – 111

Digital Art, Chapter 2: 67 – 138

Answer questions available on Angel. Discussion takes place from Friday, March 19 to Wednesday, March 26, 2014.

Week 11:

Thursday, March 27, 2014

Read and be ready to discuss:

Deleuze and Guatarri, "Of the Refrain," PDF

Mark B.N. Hansen, *New Philosophy* [...] Chapter 2, pp. 47 - 93

Answer questions available on Angel. Discussion takes place from Friday, March 28 to Wednesday, April 2, 2014.

Week 12:

Thursday, April 3, 2014

Read and be ready to discuss:

Digital Culture, Chapter 4, 112 – 149

Mark B.N. Hansen, *New Philosophy* [...] Chapter 3, pp. 93 - 126

Week 13:

Thursday, April 10, 2014

Final Essay Guidelines Released

Read and be ready to discuss:

Digital Culture, Chapter 5 and Conclusion, 150 - 202

Answer questions available on Angel. Discussion takes place from Friday, April 11 to Wednesday, April 16, 2014.

Week 14:

Thursday, April 17, 2014

Read and be ready to discuss:

"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 18 to Wednesday, April 23, 2014.

Week 15:

Thursday, April 24, 2014

Read and be ready to discuss:

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

Hansen, *New Philosophy*, Chapter 6, pp. 197 - 234

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

Week 16

Thursday, May 1, 2014

Final Lecture

Week 17:

Thursday, May 8, 2014

Final Essay due