Course Title

Contemporary Art in Berlin and Beyond

Course Number
ARTCR-UE 9052001

SAMPLE SYLLABUS – ACTUAL SYLLABUS MAY VARY

Instructor Contact Information
Kimberly Bradley
kab2107@nyu.edu

Course Details
Thursdays 3:00pm to 5:45pm
Location of class: NYUB AC, room TBC

Prerequisites
None

Units earned
3

Course Description
The international contemporary art world is a convoluted interplay of aesthetics and economics; ego and idealism. Museums mount blockbuster shows, art biennials proliferate, art fairs go corporate, and auction sales hit new records. At the same time, public arts funding is slashed, emerging artists struggle, and art criticism remains in a perpetual crisis. Berlin’s art world may be more production-based and experimental than the art scenes of other major western cities, but it is still a microcosm of larger movements.

Through readings of theory and criticism, lectures, discussions, site visits, guest speakers, and short- and long-form writing, this course offers an overview of the conventions, trends, history, current developments and myriad structures of today’s art world in general; always keeping Berlin’s local context in mind.

This course delves into contemporary art’s current prevailing discourse via methodological analysis, practical observation, and input from professionals currently working in the art’s institutional and commercial sectors. It also offers a critical look at how these larger art-world structures translate to Berlin. This is not an art history course, but our discussions will connect to art history where relevant.

Course Objective
Through primary and secondary sources (including current art journalism), students learn to identify, analyze and navigate the international contemporary art scene’s idiosyncrasies and issues. Students also gain insights into local and hyperlocal norms in Berlin and, through close contact with Berlin’s experts and institutions, learn about the specificities of working as an artist, curator, critic, museum director, or collector in a city in which many boundaries and roles have not yet been defined.
Assessment Components
Class participation: 15% of total marks

Writing assignments (350-1,000 words): 20% of total marks

Midterm exam (in-class essay exam): 30% of total marks

One final research paper 3,000-4,000 words counting 35% of total marks
(including an approx. 10-minute presentation of first concepts for said paper in class)

Failure to submit or fulfill any required component may result in failure of the class, regardless of grades achieved in other assignments.

Assessment Expectations

Grade A: The student makes excellent use of empirical and theoretical material and offers well-structured arguments in his/her work. The student writes comprehensive essays / answers to exam questions and his/her work shows strong evidence of critical thought and extensive reading.

Grade B: The candidate shows a good understanding of the problem and has demonstrated the ability to formulate and execute a coherent research strategy.

Grade C: The work is acceptable and shows a basic grasp of the research problem. However, the work fails to organize findings coherently and is in need of improvement.

Grade D: The work passes because some relevant points are made. However, there may be a problem of poor definition, lack of critical awareness, poor research.

Grade F: The work shows that the research problem is not understood; there is little or no critical awareness and the research is clearly negligible.

Grade Conversion
Your instructor may use one of the following scales of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

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<td>D</td>
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Alternatively:

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Attendance Policy
Participation in all classes is essential for your academic success, especially in NYU Berlin’s content courses that, unlike most courses at NYU NY, meet only once per week in a double-session for three hours. Your attendance in both content and language courses is required and will be checked at each class meeting. As soon as it becomes clear that you cannot attend a class, you must inform your professor by e-mail immediately (i.e. before the start of your class). Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, religious observance or emergencies. If you want the reasons for your absence to be treated confidentially and not shared with your professor, please approach NYUB's Director or Wellness Counselor. Your professor or NYUB's administration may ask you to present a doctor's note or an exceptional permission from the Director or Wellness Counselor. Doctor's notes need to be submitted to the Assistant Director for Academics or the Arts Coordinator, who will inform your professors.

Unexcused absences affect students' grades: In content courses each unexcused absence (equaling one week's worth of classes) leads to a deduction of 2% of the overall grade and may negatively affect your class participation grade. Three unexcused absences in one course may lead to a Fail in that course. In German Language classes two or three (consecutive or non-consecutive) unexcused absences (equaling one week's worth of classes) lead to a 2% deduction of the overall grade. Five unexcused absences in your German language course may lead to a Fail in that course. Furthermore, faculty is also entitled to deduct points for frequent late arrival to class or late arrival back from in-class breaks. Being more than 15 minutes late for class counts as an unexcused absence. Please note that for classes involving a field trip or other external visit, transportation difficulties are never grounds for an excused absence. It is the student's responsibility to arrive at the announced meeting point in a punctual and timely fashion.

Exams, tests, deadlines, and oral presentations that are missed due to illness always require a doctor's note as documentation. It is the student's responsibility to produce this doctor's note and submit it to the Assistant Director for Academics; until this doctor's note is produced the missed assessment is graded with an F. In content classes, an F in one assignment may lead to failure of the entire class.

Attendance Rules on Religious Holidays
Members of any religious group may, without penalty, excuse themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Students who anticipate being absent because of any religious observance should notify their instructor AND NYUB's Academic Office in writing via e-mail one week in advance before being absent for this purpose. If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day the student will be absent, the Director or Assistant Director will re-schedule a make-up examination or extend the deadline for assignments. Please note that an absence is only excused for the holiday but not for any days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday.

Late Submission of Work
(1) Written work due in class must be submitted during the class time to the professor.

(2) Late work should be submitted in person to the instructor or to the Assistant Director for Academics, who will write on the essay or other work the date and time of submission, in the presence of the student. Another member of the administrative staff may also personally accept the work, and will write the date and time of submission on the work, as above.
(3) Unless an extension has been approved (with a doctor's note or by approval of the Director or Assistant Director), work submitted late receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100 point scale for each day it is late.

(4) Without an approved extension, written work submitted more than 5 weekdays following the session date fails and is given a zero.

(5) End of semester essays must be submitted on time.

(6) Students who are late for a written exam have no automatic right to take extra time or to write the exam on another day.

(7) Please remember that university computers do not keep your essays - you must save them elsewhere. Having lost parts of your essay on the university computer is no excuse for a late submission.

Provisions for Students with Disabilities
Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or see their website (http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-andwellness/students-with-disabilities.html) for further information.

Plagiarism Policy
The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism. Proper referencing of your sources avoids plagiarism (see as one possible help the NYU library guide to referencing styles: http://nyu.libguides.com/citations).

NYUB takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. All your written work must be submitted as a hard copy AND in electronic form to the instructor. Your instructor may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form.

It is also an offense to submit work for assignments from two different courses that is substantially the same (be it oral presentations or written work). If there is an overlap of the subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you MUST inform your professor.

For a summary of NYU Global's academic policies please see: www.nyu.edu/global/academic-policies

Required Text(s)

*Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle, eds.

*Isabelle Grow

*Course reader.

Books can be bought at Saint Georges bookshop in Wörther Straße 27 near NYUB, where the books are pre-ordered for students. Students can re-sell their used books at the end of the semester to Saint Georges (with the exception of German language books). Additionally, one copy of each book is kept in the Reading Room of NYUB's Academic Center, for you to read in the center but not to take out.

Readers can be bought at Sprintout copy-shop (situated under the railway arches in front of Humboldt University's main library, the Grimm-Zentrum, in Georgenstraße / Universitätsstraße – S-Bahn-Bogen 190 - please allow five hours between booking and collecting readers).

Supplemental Text(s) (not required to purchase)

Additional texts may be mailed as PDFs or handed out in class. I will also occasionally assign breaking stories on the art world as they emerge.

Session 1 – Thursday, 4 Feb 2015, 3:00pm – 5:45pm

Introduction to the course:
First, what is contemporary art? Then, what has shaped Germany and Berlin's art scenes? A historical contextualization.

*** WRITING ASSIGNMENT (DUE BY 27 APRIL OR BEFORE) ***:
Interview a person active in Berlin's art world: a gallerist, artist, art historian, critic, collector, art-magazine editor, auction-house employee. Submit an edited Q/A interview of 1,000-1,500 words (including short introduction). THIS INTERVIEW MUST TAKE PLACE IN PERSON. No email or Skype interviews.
(Which so much bold, it's kind of hard to tell where one assignment ends and the next session begins. I would consider making only the header, i.e. « Writing Assignment (due by...) » bold and the explanation/details in standard font. This also applies to the other assignments.)

Session 2 – Thursday, 11 Feb, 3:00pm – 5:45pm

Berlin's artistic legacy: Explorations of how the urban landscape affects art production, and an overview of current art micro-movements.

Readings:
*Optional* (but recommended and helpful as a preview for exploring Potsdamer Strasse): Bradley, Kimberly: “Gentrify This,” *ArtReview*, January 2013, online at: [http://artreview.com/features/city_focus_berlin_part_1/](http://artreview.com/features/city_focus_berlin_part_1/)

Writing assignment (due by midnight, 10 Feb)

Explore Potsdamer Strasse art hub on your own (a list of important galleries will be emailed and other writing guidelines provided in class). Write a response (800–1,000 words) to the urban structure, the gallery spaces, and the art you see.

Session 3 – Thursday, 18 Feb, 3:00 pm – 5:45pm

The art market: Its current dominance, and the eternal tension between art and money. Discussion, then a talk on market issues with guest speaker Lisa Bosse (director Blain|Southern gallery/adjunct market instructor at Weissensee art school)

Readings:


Session 4 – Thursday, 25 Feb, 3:00pm – 5:45pm

PLAYERS OF THE ART WORLD 1 – THE ARTIST

ARTIST STUDIO VISIT, ARTIST TBD

Readings:

Please research the artist.

Session 5 (makeup class) – FRIDAY, 26 Feb, 3:00pm – 5:45pm

THE PLAYERS OF THE ART WORLD 2 – THE COLLECTOR

What is the motivation of a collector, and why are collectors (consumers of art) currently so powerful?

Discussion at NYU Berlin; then visit to the Boros Collection with guided tour (class will likely go over by 15 minutes): Address: Reinhardtstrasse 21, near Friedrichstrasse.
Readings:
* Fraser, Andrea: “Le 0.01%, C’est Moi,” Texte zur Kunst, 83, September 2011, pp. 56–72.


(See writing assignment below, the preliminary research takes place at Boros Collection)

Session 6 – Thursday, 3 Mar, 3:00pm – 5:45pm

1st half of class: Art criticism: What are its forms? Why is it in a perpetual crisis? And – does anyone care?

2nd half of class: What is contemporary art (again)? Where is the new avant-garde?

Readings:
(I will also provide examples of short art reviews, to aid with the writing assignment)

On new avant-gardes:

Writing assignment (due by midnight, 2 March):
While at BOROS, find a) one work or group of works you find particularly successful and write a 350-word positive review. Find b) one work or group of works you find particularly unsuccessful, and write a 350-word negative review. Substantiate your opinions, contextualize the work, research the artist. Please submit the two reviews as one document.

Session 7 – Thursday, 10 Mar, 3:00pm – 5:45pm

IN-CLASS MID-TERM ESSAY EXAMINATION

Session 8 – Thursday, 17 Mar, 3:00pm – 5:45pm

THE PLAYERS OF THE ART WORLD 3 – THE GALLERIST

AND SOCIOPOLITICAL ART: What is its place in the art world?
An unusual combination, unique to Berlin – a commercial gallery that focuses on sociopolitical art. A visit to Galerie KOW Koch Oberhuber Wolff, and gallerist Alexander Koch. Brunnenstrasse 9. (meet for discussion in the NYU AC first)

Readings:
*Davis, Ben: “What Good is Political Art in Times Like These?,” 9.5 Theses on Art and Class, New York, 2013, pp. 41–49.

Writing assignment (due by midnight, 16 Mar): A 350-word abstract for final paper. This paper, which should explore an aspect of contemporary art or the contemporary art world, should have at least ten sources, and be 3,000-4,000 words long. Topic choice open; a list of topic areas will be provided for those needing direction. Abstract should be a short description of planned topic, preliminary research methodology and possible sources.

Session 9 – Thursday, 24 Mar, 3:00pm – 5:45pm

PRESENTATION OF CONCEPTS/CURRENT RESEARCH ON FINAL PAPERS
Topics and research up until this point will be presented (approx. 10 minutes) then workshopped and discussed in class.

***********31 MAR – SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS ***********

Session 10 – Thursday, 7 Apr, 3:00pm – 5:45pm

THE ART WORLD’S GLOBAL REACH – EAST-WEST; NORTH-SOUTH, PERIPHERY VS. CORE

A visit to Savvy Contemporary (Wedding) at 3pm, then discussion in a nearby cafe. TBC

Readings:

Writing assignment (due by midnight, 6 April): Choose one piece of political and/or “global” art – from your museum and gallery visits, or from history (post-1920) – and write 500 words on why it works artistically and politically.
Session 11 – Thursday, 14 Apr 3:00pm – 5:45pm

THE PLAYERS OF THE ART WORLD 4: THE CURATOR

The rise and changing roles of the independent curator.

Discussion and lecture at AC, then visit to Kunst-Werke and DIS (curators of the 9th Berlin Biennale) TBC.

Readings:

Session 12 – Thursday, 21 Apr 3:00pm – 5:45pm

Where are we now?
How technology, image distribution, and structural shifts are currently affecting aesthetic production.

Readings:

Session 13 – Thursday, 28 Apr 3:00pm – 5:45pm

THE PLAYERS OF THE ART WORLD 5: THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

Of what importance are public art institutions? Berlinische Galerie director Thomas Köhler explains (meet at museum). (! Provide address?)

Readings:
* Belting, Hans: “A Place of Reflection or a Place of Sensation?,” The Discursive Museum, Vienna, 2002, pp. 72–82.

INTERVIEWS (due by midnight, 27 Apr).

**** 5 MAY – PUBLIC HOLIDAY – No Class *****

Session 14 – Thursday, 12 May, 3:00pm – 5:45pm
Questions, answered and discussed. Crowd-sourced discussion on art’s current issues and future scope in Berlin and elsewhere.

Readings:

Assignment (due after 12 May session):
Please email two questions on anything that inspires, concerns, or confuses you about contemporary art, the greater art world, and/or Berlin’s art world. The lecture and discussion will be based on your questions, which will remain anonymous.

Session 15 – Thursday, 19 May 3:00pm – 5:45pm

**FINAL PAPERS DUE DURING CLASS TIME:** Individual submissions and “exit chats” per schedule, please submit both in person and electronically.

Classroom Etiquette
Turn off mobile phones, smart phones and iPads in class.

We will discuss laptop use in the first session (I do not allow normal note-taking on laptops as I’ve found all aspects of in-class discussion and information retention much better without them; but in two or three of our sessions, laptops may be necessary).

No hot food in class. Hot drinks are permitted.

Required Co-curricular Activities
None beyond those outlined in assignments.

Suggested Co-curricular Activities
Visit galleries, museums, and art events as much as possible. There are hundreds of visual arts outlets in Berlin.

An ongoing, always updated schedule of openings (as well as a wide variety of other local information, such as artist interviews and films) is available at Berlin Art Link ([http://www.berlinartlink.com/](http://www.berlinartlink.com/))

... as well as at Index Berlin:
[http://www.indexberlin.de/](http://www.indexberlin.de/)

Berlin Independent Guide ([http://www.bpigs.com/](http://www.bpigs.com/)), an artist-run portal, also has art-opening schedules, along with some lively commentary on the inner workings of Berlin’s art world from an artist’s point of view.
Current and historical exhibition openings around Europe (including the Venice Biennale, and Art Basel) are viewable as un-narrated films on VernissageTV (vernissage.tv), a Swiss website.

The local version of this is the Kunstkontakter (http://www.berlinerkunstkontakter.de/). Kunstkontakter is less professional but an intriguing filmic documentation of the social side of Berlin’s art world.

For broader discussions of the contemporary art world, reading Frieze magazine (www.frieze.com/magazine) and Artforum (www.artforum.com) is highly recommended.

Your Instructor

Kimberly Bradley has been a critic, journalist, and editor since the 1990s and has written about art and other visual culture for a long list of magazines, newspapers, books, websites, and exhibition catalogues. Born in California and raised in the Midwest, she graduated from Middlebury College in 1990. After several years in Hamburg, Germany, and a decade in New York, she moved to Berlin in 2003 and now lives and works in Berlin and Vienna.