# Contemporary Art in Britain

**Class code**
V43.9675.001

**Instructor Details**
Dr Jane Beckett  
jb3103@nyu.edu  
Office: Bedford Square

**Class Details**
Spring 2011  
Tuesday 2-5

Location to be confirmed. But there are also fieldtrips to museums and galleries in London: Tate Britain, Modern; Saatchi Gallery, Hawyard Gallery, White Cube and other dealer galleries

**Prerequisites**
None

**Class Description**
This course introduces you to some key issues in contemporary art with a focus on current exhibits in London; and looks at the problematic of dealing critically with contemporary art and the global interconnections within the art world. The course explores art produced in Britain since the 1970s and its global links through case studies of the work of individual artists and through themes which include notions of the “Englishness” of British art, representations of the body; gallery display; photographic and video practice and installation art. Among other things we consider how contemporary art came to look as it does [with a focus on British art]; the different forms of material and presentation artists have employed; why and how diverse audiences are addressed; and how markets, national prizes and private collections shape the kinds of art produced and inform public taste. We also look at the collection and display of contemporary art, on a private and a public scale; dealer galleries and issues of curation. Critical and historical writings by artists and theorists will be considered.

The course will be conducted mainly as a seminar plus tutor led lectures, video interviews with artists, critical texts or gallery and museum visits will form the basis for class discussions and presentations.

**Desired Outcomes**
The goal is to facilitate familiarity with issues in Contemporary art and visual culture, give an historical focus and critical framework for consideration of the themes and propositions presented in different works of art; an ability to analyse and explore the context in which art is made

**Assessment Components**
One Short paper: 30%; final research paper 40%  
Class preparation [10% presentation, 10% text write-up; 10% analysis and discussion in class]

Failure to submit or fulfil any required course component results in failure of the class.
**Assessment Expectations**

**Grade A:** Demonstration of detailed familiarity with the visual and critical material under discussion; evidence of ability to engage critically with the main and secondary texts, pertinent, imaginative visual examples perceptively analysed and discussed; Fluent and articulate expression combined with ability to organise material and establish argument and main ideas. Positive participation in the classroom and on visits.

**Grade B:** Demonstration of familiarity with the visual and critical material under discussion evidence of ability to engage with critical secondary material and visual analysis. Positive participation in classroom and on gallery visits.

**Grade C:** Limited reference to the primary and secondary visual and critical material and lacking the ability to organise material coherently.

**Grade D:** Little or no reference to the visual and critical course material. May be descriptive with uncritical accounts and unfocused account of the subject of the paper; summaries of the main issues rather than argument; Inadequate or no bibliography.

**Grade F:** Little or no understanding of the subject and little evidence of visual analysis or reading. Poorly organised and confused argument; clearly failed to understand the material under discussion. Inadequate or no referencing of source material.

**Grade conversion**

NYU in London uses the following scale of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Numerical Equivalent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>65-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Below 65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where no specific numerical equivalent is assigned to a letter grade by the class teacher, the midpoint of the range will be used in calculating the final class grade (except in the A range, where 95.5 will be used).
Grading Policy

NYU in London aims to have grading standards and results similar to those that prevail at Washington Square. At the College of Arts and Sciences, roughly 39% of all final grades are in the B+ to B- range, and 50% in the A/A- range.

We have therefore adopted the following grading guideline: in any non-Stern course, class teachers should try to insure that no more than 50% of the class receives an A or A-. (Stern has a different grading policy that we follow in all Stern courses, please see below).

A guideline is not a curve. A guideline is just that-it gives an ideal benchmark for the distribution of grades towards which we work.

Stern School of Business classes adhere to the following Stern grading guidelines:

There should be no more than

- 25-35% A's - awarded for excellent work
- 50-70% B's - awarded for good or very good work
- 5-15% C's or below - awarded for adequate or below work

Attendance Policy

NYU-L has a strict policy about course attendance. **No unexcused absences are permitted.** Students should contact their class teachers to catch up on missed work but should NOT approach them for excused absences. Excused absences will usually only be considered for serious, unavoidable reasons such as personal ill-health or illness in the immediate family. Trivial or non-essential reasons will not be considered.

Please note that you will need to ensure that no make-up classes – or required excursions - have been organised before making any travel plans for the semester.

*All absences due to illness must be reported on the first day of absence via phone (Freephone 0800 316 0469) or email (nyu.in.london@nyu.edu).* Absences due to illness must be discussed with the Assistant Director for Student Life. You will be asked to complete an Excused Absence Form (which can be obtained from NYU in London staff) and you will also need to produce a valid doctor’s note, having sought treatment for the illness within one week of your return to class.

**Absence requests for non-illness purposes** must be discussed with the Assistant Director for Academic Affairs prior to the date(s) in question – no excused absences for non-illness purposes can be applied retrospectively.

Unexcused absences will be penalized by deducting 3% from the student’s final course mark. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence.

Unexcused absences from exams are not permitted and will result in failure of the exam. If you are granted an excused absence from examination (with authorisation, as above), your lecturer will decide how you will make-up the assessment component, if at all (by make-up examination, extra coursework, viva voce (oral examination), or an increased weighting on an alternate assessment component, etc.). In the past, students have asked about early departure from the program at the end of the semester. This will not normally be allowed. Under no circumstances will we allow a student to take a final exam at any time other than it has been scheduled - neither before the other students in the class, nor afterwards. Students have been informed not to make return travel plans before the end of the exam week. Exams may not be held during your regularly scheduled class meeting. Please do not make plans during the exam period until you know the exact times of your exams.

NYU-L also expects students to arrive to class promptly (both at the beginning and after any breaks) and to remain for the duration of the class. If timely attendance becomes a problem it is the
prerogative of each instructor to deduct a mark or marks from the final grade of each late arrival and each early departure.

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 an agreed meeting point in a punctual and timely fashion.

Please refer to the Student Handbook for further details.

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**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 Administrative Assistant for Academic Affairs in office hours (Mon – Fri, 10:30 – 17:30), 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 can accept the work, in person, in the absence of the Administrative Assistant for Academic Affairs and will write the date and time of submission on the work, as above. Please also send an electronic copy to academics@nyu.ac.uk for submission to Turnitin.
3. Work submitted within 5 weekdays after the submission time without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 10 points on the 100 point scale.
4. Written work submitted after 5 weekdays after the submission date without an agreed extension fails and is given a zero.
5. Please note end of semester essays must be submitted on time.

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**Plagiarism Policy**

Plagiarism: 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.

All students must submit an electronic copy of each piece of their written work to www.turnitin.com and hand in a printed copy with the digital receipt to their professor. Late submission of work rules apply to both the paper and electronic submission (see section 12 below) and failure to submit either copy of your work will result in automatic failure in the assignment and possible failure in the class.

**Electronic Submission**

All students must submit an electronic copy of their written work to www.turnitin.com. This database will be searched for the purpose of comparison with other students’ work or with other pre-existing writing or publications, and other academic institutions may also search it. The database is managed by JISC (Joint Information Systems Council) and has been established with the support of the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

In order for you to be able to submit your work onto the Turnitin website, you will need to set up an account:

1. Go onto the Turnitin website http://www.turnitin.com
2. Click ‘New Users’ in the top right hand corner
3. Select user type of ‘student’
4. Enter your class ID & Turnitin class enrolment password (these will be e-mailed to you after the drop/add period, or contact academics@nyu.ac.uk if you have misplaced these.
5. Follow the online instructions to create your profile.
To submit your work for class, you will then need to:

1) Log in to the Turnitin website
2) Enter your class by clicking on the class name
3) Next to the piece of work you are submitting (please confirm the due date), click on the ‘submit’ icon
4) Enter the title of your piece of work
5) Browse for the file to upload from wherever you have saved it (USB drive, etc.), please ensure your work is in Word or PDF format, and click ‘submit’
6) Click ‘yes, submit’ to confirm you have selected the correct paper (or ‘no, go back’ to retry)
7) You will then have submitted your essay onto the Turnitin website.
8) Please print your digital receipt and attach this to the hard copy of your paper before you submit it to your professor (this digital receipt appears on the web site, immediately after you submit your paper and is also sent to your e-mail address). Please also note that when a paper is submitted to Turnitin all formatting, images, graphics, graphs, charts, and drawings are removed from the paper so that the program can read it accurately. Please do not print the paper in this form to submit to your lecturers, as it is obviously pretty difficult to read! You can still access the exact file you uploaded by clicking on the ‘file’ icon in the ‘content’ column.

Please also see the Late Submission of Work policy, above.

Students must retain an electronic copy of their work for one month after their grades are posted online on Albert and must supply an electronic copy of their work if requested to do so by NYU in London. **Not submitting a copy of a piece of work upon request will result in automatic failure in the assignment and possible failure in the class.** NYU in London may submit in an electronic form the work of any student to a database for use in the detection of plagiarism, without further prior notification to the student.

Penalties for confirmed cases of plagiarism are set out in the Student Handbook.

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**Required Text(s)**


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**Further Reading (recommended), Copies in NYU-L course collection at Senate House Library**


Brilliant: New Art from London, catalogue Walker Art Center, Minn. 1995


I am a camera, catalogue Saatchi Gallery,

M. Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational identity*, MIT 2002


E. Suderburgh, (ed), *Space, Site, Intervention: Situation Installation Art*, Univ. of Minnesota, 2000


Internet Research Guidelines

The potential value of the internet for the study of contemporary art is enormous; there are very many useful websites available which provide much valuable information—visual, factual and critical—but they need to be used with discretion as the material immediately available is often very limited. Remember anyone can put material on the Web and that most that is there is not subject to critical review. However there are useful links via many gallery and museum sites and via Google to academic and professional articles and reviews. Addresses for museums and galleries pages and other sites of interest are listed where appropriate.

You should use the Web to complement your reading and not replace it. Like books and articles websites should be acknowledged with appropriate references. All sources for your own research for papers and presentations should be academic or related institutional literature and web sites.

Additional Required Equipment

Notebook and camera for gallery visits

Session 1

[25-1-11]

Introduction: General introduction and discussion of the course, an outline of assignments and a broad map for studying contemporary art and the problems this introduces Key texts and images; broad historical map for studying contemporary art. What part do exhibitions and gallery curators play in forming ideas of value and importance, and the forms of contemporary art?


First paper given

Session 2

Institutions in which contemporary Art is displayed and given a framework.

Visit to Gallery-

[1-2-11]

J.Stallabrass, *High art Lite*, Chap. 3 Artist Curators and the ‘alternative scene, pp. 49-83 and Stallabrass, Chapter 6 The Market and the State, pp. 170-175; 181-195

Session 3

New Definitions of the Artist:

Lecture and class discussion Francis Bacon and Pop Art in England How have notions of the artist changed since 1950?.

Reading Stallabrass, *High Art Lite* ‘The artists persona’, pp.46-8

Second part of Class:

Spalding, Chap. 7 ‘Realism and Angst in the post War Years’ and Chap 9 ‘Pop Art and New Generation sculpture’.

*Encyclopaedia Acephalica*,(ed.) Georges Bataille et al., 1995 posted on Blackboard

D.Sylvester, *Conversations with Francis Bacon*, (London), pp. 46-60 and 65-67 posted on Blackboard

Pop Art:


Session 4

Photography, Words and Images

Lecture and Discussion of contemporary Photography. Case Study Gilbert and George

Reading:

Spalding, Chaps.9 and 10

[15-2-11]
M. Bracewell, Gilbert and George *The Dirty Word Pictures*, Serpentine Gallery 2002 posted on Blackboard
Y-A Bois, “1977 The Pictures Exhibition”, *Art since 1900*, pp 580-583 posted on blackboard

First paper due

Prepare installation presentation for session 5

**Session 5**

British art of the Nineties: The shock of the Sensation exhibition, London 1997

Reading

Sensation catalogue 1997

[22-2-11]

J. Stallabrass, *High Art Lite*, Chap. 7 “Saatchi and Sensation”, 204-233

James Gaywood, "yba" as critique: the socio political inferences of the mediated identity of recent British art’, chap. 7 in *Theory in contemporary art since 1985*, eds. Z. Kocur and S. Leung, pp 89-100. posted on Blackboard


Prepare presentations for Session 7- topics will be discussed and handed out

**Session 6**

Gallery Visit

[1-3-11]

**Session 7**

British Art of the Nineties 2: Sensation: Presentations and Discussion

Case Studies Presentations in class with material provided: discussion: Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin. Marcus Harvey and Chris Ofili

[8-3-11]

First paper handed back

**Session 8**

West End Galleries Visit

[15-3-11]

**Session 9**

Questions of Installation: Discussion and Group Presentations

Discussion of installation art drawing on Erika Suderberg, Miwon Kwon and Claire Bishop and how installation art engages issues of space, time, history and memory –

Reading

E. Suderburg and Stallabrass, *art Incorporated* on the problematic of Installation art handed out before class for discussion.

Miwon Kwon, ‘One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity’ in *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art*, E. Suderburg (ed) Univ. of Minnesota, 2000 posted on blackboard

Claire Bishop, ‘But is it- Installation art?’ in *Tate magazine*, Spring 2005- blackboard link

**Session 10**

Body Parts: Lecture and Discussion

Why did artists representations of the body become a key issue in the 1980’s and 1990s? Under consideration will be global representations of the body, how film and photography have impacted on painting. What forms for representation of the body have contemporary artists drawn on?

Case Studies: Tracey Emin; Sarah Lucas; Marc Quinn

[29-3-11]
**Session 11**

Questions of Installation 2: Discussion and Group Presentations
Visit to Galleries with major new installation work

[5-4-11]

**Session 12**

Gallery Visit or Visit to Artists studio

[12-4-11]

**Session 13**

Rethink and discussion of issues around Gallery visits, reading etc.
Analysis of issues seen on gallery visits

[3-5-11]

**Session 14**

Contradictions and Omissions lecture and discussion
Stallabrass *Contemporary Art* Chap. 6 Contradictions

[10-5-11]

hand in Final Essay

**Session 15**

Concluding Contemporary Art –

[17-5-11]

**Classroom Etiquette**

Eating is not permitted in any classrooms in 6 Bedford Square or at Birkbeck College. Please kindly dispose of rubbish in the bins provided.

**Required Co-curricular Activities**

[Click here and enter information about required activities, whether organised by NYU-L or not.]

**Suggested Co-curricular Activities**

It’s worth making the most of your time in London where there are many excellent galleries to view contemporary art and culture- see listings in *Time Out* magazine; The ICA, in The Mall has a range of exhibitions, film, theatre and contemporary performance and seminars discussions. Both Tate Galleries have continuous exhibitions and screenings of films and live music. There is a vast range of dealer galleries to visit.