Course Title

Art and Ideas: The Art World Today - Berlin and Beyond

Course Number
ARTCR-UE.9153001

SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Lecturer Contact Information
Kimberly Bradley
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Course Details
Thursdays 3:00 – 5:45pm
Location of class: NYUB Academic Center, Room “Tempelhof” (tbc)

Prerequisites
none

Units earned
3

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

How can an emerging artist navigate these layers? Through readings, discussions, site visits, guest speakers, and student responses in the form of multimedia art projects and art writing, this course explores and exposes the conventions, trends, and current developments of art today, always keeping Berlin’s local context in mind.

This course delves into contemporary art’s prevailing discourses – and develops students’ own artistic practices and ambitions – via analysis, experiential learning, and input from professionals currently working in the art’s institutional and commercial sectors. This is not an art history course.

Course Objective
Through primary and secondary sources, writing and/or multimedia art production, students learn to analyze and navigate the international contemporary art world. Students also gain
insights into local and hyperlocal norms in Berlin and connect their own art practices (art writing/curatorial studies/artistic production) to those in a city in which many boundaries and roles have not yet been defined.

Beginning mid-term, each student will develop an independent final project, which can take the form of a written paper (3200-4200 words) OR multimedia artwork or project. Its initial abstract/concept will be presented and discussed in class in the middle of the term.

Assessment Components
Class participation: 15% of total marks

Assignments (four short writing assignments — response, criticism, and an interview – during semester): 25% of total marks

Mid-term exam (in-class essay exam): 25% of total marks

One final project/paper (in mid-term each student will present preliminary final ideas for eight-ten minutes): 35% of total marks

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 their work. The student writes comprehensive essays / answers to exam questions and their 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 lecturer may use one of the following scales of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

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\begin{align*}
    B+ &= 87-89 \\
    C+ &= 77-79 \\
    D+ &= 67-69 \\
    F &= \text{below 65} \\
    A &= 94-100 \\
    B &= 84-86 \\
    C &= 74-76 \\
    D &= 65-66
\end{align*}
\]
Attendance Policy
Participation in all classes is essential for your academic success, especially in courses that meet only once per week. 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. Your professor or NYU Berlin's administration may ask you to present a doctor's note or an exceptional permission from NYU Berlin's Director or Wellness Counselor as proof. Emergencies or other exceptional circumstances must be presented to the Director. Doctor's notes need to be submitted to the Academics Office, who will inform your professors. Doctor's notes need to be from a local doctor and carry a signature and a stamp. If you want the reasons for your absence to be treated confidentially, please approach NYU Berlin's Director or Wellness Counselor.

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. 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. Three unexcused absences in one content course and five unexcused absences in your German language course may lead to a Fail in that course. Furthermore, your professor is entitled to deduct points for frequent late arrival or late arrival back from in-class breaks. Being more than 15 minutes late counts as an unexcused absence. Please note that for classes involving a field trip, transportation difficulties are never grounds for an excused absence. It is the student's responsibility to arrive in time at the announced meeting point.

Exams, tests and quizzes, 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 Academics Office; until this doctor's note is produced the missed assessment is graded with an F and no make-up assessment is scheduled. 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 due to religious observance should notify their lecturer AND NYU Berlin's Academics Office in writing via e-mail one week in advance. If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day the student will be absent, the Academics Office will schedule a make-up examination or extend the deadline for assignments. Please note that an absence is only
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 lecturer or to the Academics Office, 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) Work submitted late receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100 point scale for each day it is late (excluding weekends and public or religious holidays), unless an extension has been approved (with a doctor's note or by approval of NYU Berlin's administration), in which case the 2 points per day deductions start counting from the day the extended deadline has passed.

(4) Without an approved extension, written work submitted more than 5 days (excluding weekends and public or religious holidays) following the submission date receives an F.

(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 (https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/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).

NYU Berlin takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. Your lecturer 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)
Electronic Resources (via NYU Classes / NYU Library)

*Isabelle Graw  

(NYUB has a package of this book available from previous semesters, wait before purchasing, it's likely we have enough to go around)

NYU Berlin Library Catalogue: http://guides.nyu.edu/global/berlin or follow the link on NYU Berlin's website (Academics/Facilities & Services).

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.

Internet Research Guidelines  
TBD in class

Session 1 – 31 August 2017, 3–5:45pm

Introduction to the course:

What is contemporary art?  
What is the superstructure that allows its production and distribution (the art world)?  
What is Berlin’s role and history within it?  
How can an artist navigate this structure?

Session 2 – 7 September 2017, 3–5:45pm

Berlin’s artistic legacy; explorations of how location affects art production.

Readings for this session:  
* 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/

Second half of class: A brief walking tour of Auguststrasse, post-Wall Berlin’s original art hub

Writing assignment (due by midnight 6 September)

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 words) to the art you see.

Session 3 – 14 September 2017, 3–5:45pm

The art market: its current dominance, and the eternal tension between art and money.


Second half of class: Visit to the first annual Art Berlin art fair.

Session 4 – 21 September 2017, 3–5:45pm

Writing about art, criticism now and then

Readings:
Optional:

(also: I will provide examples of current short art reviews, to aid with the writing assignment, and we will unpack these during class)

Writing assignment (due 20 September, midnight):
Find a booth at the fair that you think is particularly successful or resonates with you. Write a positive review (350 words).
Find a booth at the fair that you think is particular unsuccessful or fails. Write a negative review (350 words). Submit both reviews on one document.

Substantiate your opinions, contextualize the work, research the artist.

Be prepared to ‘workshop’ in class; we will read parts of your work aloud and analyse them.

Session 5 – 28 September 2017, 3–5:45pm

THE ARTIST

ARTIST STUDIO VISIT, ARTIST OLAF NICOLAI (TBC)

Readings:

*** ASSIGNMENT TO BE SUBMITTED BY NOVEMBER 30 ***
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)
OR an edited, narrated film version of the interview
OR an edited, narrated podcast/audio interview.

Session 6 – 5 October 2017, 3–5:45pm

THE COLLECTOR

How and why have art collectors gained so much power in today’s market-driven art world?

Discussion at NYU Berlin; then visit to the Boros Collection with guided tour and discussion.

Readings:
Optional: *Fraser, Andrea: “Le 0.01%, C’est Moi,” Texte zur Kunst, 83, September 2011, pp. 1–7.
Session 7 – 12 October 2017, 3–5:45pm

IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAMINATION

Session 8 – 26 October 2017, 3–5:45pm

THE GALLERIST
AND SOCIOPOLITICAL ART’S PLACE IN THE AW

An unusual combination, unique to Berlin – a commercial gallery that focuses on sociopolitical art. Begin at AC, then a visit to Galerie KOW Koch Oberhuber Wolff, and gallerist Alexander Koch. Brunnenstrasse 9.

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.

Optional:


Session 9 – 2 November 2017, 3–5:45pm

PRESENTATION OF FINAL ART PROJECT CONCEPT OR FINAL PAPER TOPIC

Topics/proposed art projects/research to this point will be presented (approx. 8-10 minutes) then workshoped/critted/discussed in class.

THOSE MAKING ART WORKS AS FINAL PROJECTS: please submit an abstract – ungraded, preliminary ideas – of your final project to me in advance, deadline TBD. 100-150 words.

Session 10 – 9 November, 3–5:45pm

THE CURATOR
The rise and changing roles of the independent curator.

Discussion and lecture at AC first half of class, then a visit to IFA (the gallery of the Institut für Auslandbeziehungen) with curator Alya Sebti.
Readings:

Session 11 – 16 November, 3–5:45pm

**ART’S GLOBAL REACH – EAST-WEST; NORTH-SOUTH, PERIPHERY VS. CENTER**


Assignment, choose one (due November 15, midnight):
*Write a 500-word critique of a “political” exhibition or artwork you have seen in Berlin*  
*Write a 500-word critique of a “global” exhibition or artwork in Berlin*  
*Create an *artwork* you consider political (medium to be discussed, must be brought into class)*

Session 12 – 23 November, 3–5:45pm

Where are we now? How technology and image distribution (art-school conformity, and market dominance) are currently affecting art production.

Readings:

Session 13 – 30 November, 3–5:45pm

Art’s plurality, and a last gallery tour/assignment advising

Reading:
Session 14 – 7 December, 3–5:45pm

Open, crowdsourced discussion on art’s present and future, in Berlin and elsewhere.

Assignment

Please email two questions on anything that inspires or concerns you about contemporary art, Berlin’s (or the greater) art world, art criticism, art production. The discussion will be based on your questions, which will remain anonymous.

Reading:

Session 15 – 14 December, 10am – 12:45pm (NOTE TIME CHANGE)

FINAL PROJECTS DUE DURING CLASS TIME. WE WILL CRIT THE ARTWORKS AS A GROUP, PAPERS WILL BE SUBMITTED INDIVIDUALLY.

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/)

... as well as at Index Berlin: http://www.indexberlin.de/

Berlin Independent Guide (http://www.bpigs.com/), an artist-run portal, also has art-opening schedules, along with some very 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 unnarrated 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 Lecturer
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.