

Course Title

Art and Ideas: Art World Today – Berlin and Beyond

Course Number

ARTCR-UE 9153D01

Spring 2020**Syllabus last updated on:** 22 January 2020**Lecturer Contact Information**

Kimberly Bradley

Course Details

Thursdays 3:30pm–6:15pm

Location: Rooms will be posted in Albert before your first class. Please double check whether your class takes place at the Academic Center (BLAC – Schönhauser Allee 36, 10435 Berlin) or at St. Agnes (SNTA – Alexandrinenstraße 118–121, 10969 Berlin).

Prerequisites

interest in contemporary art and its industry structures

Units earned

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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 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.

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. Although we contextualize what we are learning, 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 shortly after mid-term, each student will develop an independent final project, which can take the form of a written paper (3000–4000 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

Required Text(s)

*Isabelle Graw

High Price, Art between the Market and Celebrity Culture, Sternberg Press, Berlin, 2010.

(No need to purchase this book; your professor will provide you with a used loan copy. Please be aware that these books may contain markings from previous students. You may of course always purchase your own copy.)

One copy is kept in the Reading Room of NYU Berlin's Academic Center, for you to read in the center but not to take out.

Please follow this link for the [NYU Berlin Library Catalogue](#) or the link on NYU Berlin's website (Academics/Facilities & Services).

Supplemental Text(s) (not required to purchase)

The texts assigned below will be provided as PDFs or links

Internet Research Guidelines

To be discussed in class.

Session 1 – 6 February 2020, 3:30–6:15pm

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?

Session 2 – 13 February 2020, 3:30–6:15pm

Readings for this session:

*Graw, Isabelle: "The Myth of Remoteness from the Market," *Texte zur Kunst*, 94, June 2014, pp. 34–58.

* Alloway, Lawrence: "The Artworld described as a System," (1972) in *Network, Art and the Complex Present*, UMI Research Press, 1984, pp. 1–15.

* optional (an older text, but still helpful as a preview for exploring Potsdamer Strasse):

Bradley, Kimberly: "[Gentrify This](#)," *ArtReview*, January 2013.

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

Writing assignment (due by midnight 12 February)

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 and conditions you see.

Session 3 – 20 February 2020, 3:30–6:15pm

THE ART MARKET:

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

*Graw, Isabelle: *High Price, Between the Art Market and Celebrity Culture*, pp. 19–80.

Visiting speaker Lisa Bosse

Session 4 – 27 February 2020, 3:30–6:15pm

THE COLLECTOR

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

Visit: Boros Collection with guided tour and discussion, discussion at AC

Readings:

*Wuggening, Uwe: "Attached by an Umbilical Cord of Gold," *Texte zur Kunst*, 83, September 2011, pp. 56–72.

*Bourdieu, Pierre: "Introduction," *Distinctions: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, 1984. pp. 1–7.

optional: *Fraser, Andrea: "Le 0.01%, C'est Moi," *Texte zur Kunst*, 83, September 2011, pp. 1–7.

***** ASSIGNMENT TO BE SUBMITTED BY 6 MAY, MIDNIGHT *****

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 (no longer than eight minutes)
OR an edited, narrated podcast/audio interview. (no longer than eight minutes)**

Session 5 – 5 March 2020, 3:30–6:15pm

WRITING ABOUT ART. Criticism now and then

Readings:

*Groys, Boris: "Critical Reflections," *The State of Art Criticism, The Art Seminar*, James Elkins, ed., New York and London, 2007, pp. 1–9.

*Elkins, James: "On the Absence of Judgment in Art Criticism." *The State of Art Criticism, The Art Seminar*, James Elkins, ed., New York and London, 2007, pp. 71–95.

optional: *Fenstermacher, Will: "The Ten Essays That Changed Art Criticism Forever," Artspace, 14 June 2017 https://www.artspace.com/magazine/art_101/know-your-critics/the-10-essays-that-changed-art-criticism-forever-54846

(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 4 March midnight):

Find a work or work group at the Boros collection that resonated with you. Write a positive review (350 words).

Find a work or work group at Boros that you feel is 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 6 – 12 March 2020, 3:30–6:15pm

**ARTIST STUDIO VISIT, ARTIST TBC
Meet at AC.**

Readings:

*Graw, Isabelle: *High Price, Art Between the Market and Celebrity Culture*, pp. 81–116.

*Kaprow, Allan: "The Artist as a Man of the World," *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993, pp. 46–58.

* "Is there a way out of self-exploitation: Jan Ritsema" *Spike Art Quarterly*, Spring 2015. <http://www.spikeartmagazine.com/en/articles/qa-0>

Session 7 – 19 March 2030, 3:30–6:15pm

IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAMINATION

***** SPRING BREAK NO SESSION ON MARCH 26 *****

Session 8 – 2 April 2020, 3:30–6:15p

THE GALLERIST

And sociocritical/political art's place in the art world

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.

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.

*Bruguera, Tania, "Political Art Statement," (2010)

optional: *Rosler, Martha: "Take the Money and Run: Can Political and Socio-Critical Art Survive?" *What is Contemporary Art*, pp. 104–137.

Session 9 – 9 April 2020, 3:30–6:15pm

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 workshopped/critted/discussed in class. **Please submit an abstract – ungraded, preliminary ideas – of your final project to me in advance, deadline TBD. 100-150 words.**

Session 10 – 16 April 2020, 3:30–6:15pm

THE CURATOR

The rise and changing roles of the independent curator.

Discussion and lecture at AC first half of class, then a visit to Gropius-Bau and curator Natasha Ginwala (TBC)

Readings:

* Vidokle, Anton: "Art Without Artists?" *e-flux journal*, 16/2010, pp. 1–9.

* von Bismarck, Beatrice: "Curatorial Criticality – On the Role of the Freelance Curator in the Field of Contemporary Art," *On Curating*, issue 0911, pp. 19–23.

*Obrist, Hans-Ulrich: "Taxi, Paris, 8–10pm," *Everything you ever wanted to know about curating but were afraid to ask*, Berlin, 2011, pp. 165–172.

optional (but highly recommended): "Art Demystified: What Do Curators Actually Do?" [artnet.com](https://news.artnet.com/art-world/art-demystified-curators-741806), 10 November 2016, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/art-demystified-curators-741806>

Session 11 – 23 April 2020, 3:30–6:15pm

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

*Badonivac, Zdenka: "Contemporaneity as Points of Connection," *What is Contemporary Art*, pp. 152–164.

*Belting, Hans: "From World Art to Global Art: View on a New Panorama," from *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds*, 2013, pp. 178–185.

Assignment, choose one (due 22 April, 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)**

REMEMBER INTERVIEW ASSIGNMENT ABOVE

Session 12 – 30 April 2020, 3:30–6:15pm

TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIUM

How technology and image distribution are currently affecting art production.

Readings:

*Benjamin, Walter: "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), *Illuminations*, Hannah Arendt, ed., New York, 1968, pp. 217–252.

*Allen, Jennifer: "True Blue of the Work of Images in the Age of Digital Reproduction," *Mousse Magazine*, 2013.

optional: *Steyerl, Hito: "Too Much World, Is the Internet Dead?" *e-flux journal*, 11/2013, pp. 1ff.

Session 13 – 7 May 2020, 3:30–6:15pm

PLURALISM IN ART and a last gallery tour/assignment advising

Reading:

*Heiser, Jörg: "Torture and Remedy: The End of -isms and the Beginning Hegemony of the Impure," *What is Contemporary Art*, e-flux reader, pp. 80–104.

INTERVIEWS (SEE ABOVE) DUE MIDNIGHT 6 MAY

Session 14 – 14 May 2020, 3:30–6:15pm

OPEN QUESTIONS

Class-sourced 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:

*Medina, Cuauhtemoc: "Contemp(t)orary: Eleven Theses," *What is Contemporary Art*, pp. 10–22.

*Foster, Hal: "Contemporary Extracts," *What is Contemporary Art*, pp. 141–151.

Session 15 – 22 May 2018 10am – 12:45pm

***** NOTE TIME AND DATE 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, exceptions made in certain cases).

No hot food in class. Hot drinks are permitted.

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/>

Your Lecturer

Kimberly Bradley has been an art 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. In recent years she has curated conferences and talks series for art institutions and art fairs. Born in California and raised in the American 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. She is currently working on *Navigating the Planetary*, a volume on the decolonization of the global art world, with the Salzburg Summer Academy of Fine Art.

kimberly-bradley.com

Academic Policies

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:

A = 94-100 or 4.0

A- = 90-93 or 3.7

B+ = 87-89 or 3.3

B = 84-86 or 3.0

B- = 80-83 or 2.7

C+ = 77-79 or 2.3

C = 74-76 or 2.0

C- = 70-73 or 1.7

D+ = 67-69 or 1.3

D = 65-66 or 1.0

F = below 65 or 0

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, Moses Center accommodations, 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. Being more than 15 minutes late counts as an unexcused absence. Furthermore, your professor is entitled to deduct points for frequent late arrival or late arrival back from in-class breaks. 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.

Regardless of whether an absence is excused or not, it is the student's responsibility to catch up with the work that was missed.

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 excused for the holiday but not for any days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. See also [University Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#)

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](#) 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).

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.

Note that some assignments in the course may be checked for plagiarism by using TurnItIn or other another software designed to detect offences against academic integrity.

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 please follow the link to [NYU Global's academic policies](#).