

How We Know About Art – Curating

Honor 2010-002

Instructor: Dr. Virginia Solomon

Course Number 19703, 3 Credits

they/them/theirs

Meeting Time: Tu/Th 12:25-1:45pm

Office: MHC 1202

Meeting Location: HC 150

Email: virginia.solomon@honors.utah.edu

Office Hours: Tu/Th after class, and by appointment online

Course Description:

This course examines curation as the practice of displaying art and making art exhibitions, as an end unto itself but also as a case study through which to consider larger humanities questions. Oftentimes we think of meaning as something inherent and transparent within a text or object. This is almost never the case, and this course will see how institutions, frameworks, and context, amongst myriad other things, impact the central question of this class – how we know about art. This pertains to specific works of art, but also the entire concept of art more broadly.

Course Overview:

Via in class discussion, assigned readings, reflective writing assignments, a final project, and meetings with museum professionals, students will understand a variety of different ways that the practice of curating has been approached, and even how different individuals working in the field define that very practice. By studying historical theories of and examples of art exhibitions, and by hearing from curators how they have approached current exhibitions that we will also go visit, students will experience firsthand the range of issues and concerns that surround the presentation of art. They also will gain a greater understanding of the various overlapping systems and structures that impact the presentation of art.

Readings:

Readings are all available on the course website. Please have each day's reading accessible for discussion and reference in class. Readings are listed on the syllabus on the day that they are due and you are expected to have completed reading them.

Teaching and Learning Methods:

If students need to miss class and let me know in advance, I can set up a zoom for you to be able to participate. I would rather you stay home than come in and get others sick!

Class will include guest lectures, museum visits, informal lectures, discussion of readings, and presentations. Students are expected to actively participate in all aspects of the course, and if there is a problem, to bring it to the professor's attention as soon as possible so that we have time to work out a solution. Students are also expected to complete at

home assignments prior to the class where they are listed on the course schedule (that is the day where we will use those materials you have prepared). Readings will be accompanied by reading responses, there will be reflections to complete after museum visits, and there will be periodic writing and presentation assignments that will ask you to apply what you have learned to areas of your own interest. There will be opportunities to meet with the professor and also take written work to the writing center prior to due dates, and also opportunities to meet and discuss graded work to help students improve their writing and their understanding of course concepts.

Course Schedule:

Week 1

8/20 – Introductions

8/22 – History of Art Museums

Bruce Altshuler. "Introduction," *Salon to Biennial – Exhibitions that Made Art History Volume I: 1863-1959*. Ed. Bruce Altshuler. NYC: Phaidon, 2008, pp 9-19.

Carol Paul. "Preface: Towards a Collective History," *The First Modern Museums of Art: The Birth of an Institution in 18th and Early 19th Century Europe*. Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2012, pp vii-xii.

*8/23 – Alisa McCusker Talk for Openings of Shows at UMFA, not required but extra credit opportunity

Week 2

8/27 – Differences in Display

David Carrier. "The Display of Art: An Historical Perspective," *Leonardo*. Vol. 20, No. 1 (1987), pp. 83-86.

Elena Filipovic. "What is An Exhibition?," *Ten Fundamental Questions of Curating*. Ed. Jens Hoffman. Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2013, pp 69-77.

8/29 – Purpose of Museums (Wadsworth Athenaeum)

Tony Bennet. "The Political Rationality of the Museum," *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. NYC: Routledge, 1995, pp 89-105.

Week 3

9/3 – Museum of Jurassic Technology (Inhaling the Spore)

Lawrence Weschler. "Inhaling the Spore: Field Trip to a Museum of Natural (un)History," *Harper's Magazine*, September 1994, pp 47-58.

9/5 – Art About Museums (Andrea Fraser, Marcel Broodthaers)

Svetlana Alpers. "The Museum as a Way of Seeing," *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Eds. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991, pp 25-32.

Rhiannon Mason, Alistair Robinson, and Emma Coffield. "First Principles," *Museum and Gallery Studies: The Basics*. London: Routledge Press, 2017, pp 17-53.

Week 4

9/10 – visit UMOCA

9/12 – Laura Hurtado class visit

John Falk. "Understanding Museum Visitors' Motivation and Learning," produced with Slots-og Kulturstyrelsen.

Bruce Althuser. "Introduction," *Biennials and Beyond – Exhibitions that Made Art History 1962-2002*. Ed. Bruce Althuser. NYC: Phaidon, 2013, pp 9-24.

Review:

Global Feminisms -

https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/global_feminisms/

Points of Entry: William S. Burroughs and the Arts

<https://wanafoto.blogspot.com/1996/07/william-s-burroughs-at-lacma-los.html>

Week 5

9/17 – Convo with Alisa McCusker on impressionist and photo shows, at UMFA

9/19 – In class convo with LACMA curator of UMFA Impressionist painting show

*Evening conversation on Impressionist painting show, not required but extra credit opportunity

Week 6

9/24 – Class at Kimball (Field Trip)

Hans Ulrich Obrist, with Asad Raza. "Curating, Exhibitions, and the *Gesamtkunstwerk*," *Ways of Curating*. NYC: Faber and Faber Inc., pp 22-35.

Suzanne Mulder. "From Cathedral to Disneyland: Archetypes of Narrative Space," *Narrative Spaces: On the Art of Exhibitions*. Eds. Herman Kossmann, Suzanne Mulder, and Frank den Oudsten. Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2012, pp 128-191. (don't panic, it is GENEROUSLY illustrated).

Review:

Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College 1933-1957

<https://hammer.ucla.edu/exhibitions/2016/leap-before-you-look-black-mountain-college-1933-1957>

Wolfgang Tillmans: To Look Without Fear

<https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/5440>

Ends of the Earth: Land Art to 1974

<https://www.moca.org/exhibition/ends-of-the-earth-land-art-to-1974>

9/26 – On Wall Labels

Ingrid Schaffner. “Wall Text.” *What Makes a Great Exhibition?*, ed. Paula Marincola. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Exhibition Initiative, 2006, pp. 154-167.

Gail Gregg. “Your Labels Make Me Feel Stupid,” *ARTnews*, published 7/1/2010. <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/your-labels-make-me-feel-stupid-319/>

Orit Gat. “Could Reading be Looking?,” *e-flux #72*, published April 2016. <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/72/60501/could-reading-be-looking/>

Week 7

10/1 – In class on Memory Show

Review: *In Memory* <https://utahmoca.org/exhibition/in-memory/>

10/3 – Memory Show Walkthrough at UMOCA

Week 8

Fall Break

Week 9

10/15 – Decolonizing Museums

Elif M. Gokcigdem, “Five Ways Museums Can Increase Empathy in the World,” *Greater Good Magazine*, https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/five_ways_museums_can_increase_empathy_in_the_world, accessed July 15, 2024.

Yesomi Umolu, “On the Limits of Care and Knowledge: 15 Points Museums Must Understand to Dismantle Structural Injustice,” *Artnet*, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world-archives/limits-of-care-and-knowledge-yesomi-umolu-op-ed-1889739>, accessed July 15, 2024.

“Work in Progress: Decolonizing the UMFA,” Utah Museum of Fine Arts, <https://umfa.utah.edu/Decolonizing-the-UMFA>, accessed July 15, 2024.

10/17 – Museums and Politics/Protest

Helen Molesworth. “How to Install Art as a Feminist,” *Women Artists at the Museum of Modern Art*. Eds. Cornelia Butler and Alexandra Schwartz. NYC: MoMA, 2010, pp 499-513.

Charlotte Kent. “Public Relations: On Museums and Protest,” *ArtForum*. V 62, N 10, Summer 2024. <https://www.artforum.com/features/charlotte-kent-museums-and-protest-554702/>

Aruna D’Souza. “Who Speaks Freely?: Art, Race, and Protest,” *The Paris Review*, May 22, 2018. <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/05/22/who-speaks-freely-art-race-and-protest/>

Week 10

10/22 – BYU Visit

Shari Tishman. “Look for Yourself... and Visit a Museum,” *Slow Looking: The Art and Practice of Learning through Observation*. NYC: Routledge, 2018, pp 67-87.

10/24 – UMFA Contemporary Permanent Collection Visit

Terry Smith. “What is Contemporary Curatorial Thought?,” *Thinking Contemporary Curating*. NYC: D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishing, 2012, pp 26-59.

Week 11

10/29 – Speak with Emily Lawhead on Permanent Collection Reinstall, at UMFA

Nina Simon. “Introduction: Unlocking Relevance” and “Community First Program Design,” *The Art of Relevance*. Museum 2.0, 2016. <https://artofrelevance.org/read-online/>

10/31 – Presentation on Important Historical Exhibition

Important Exhibition Paper Due

Week 12

11/5 – Visit Memory Show, choose objects for Audio Stop

11/7 – Work on and workshop Audio Stop

Week 13

11/12 – Exhibitions by Artists

Alison Green. “Introduction,” *When Artists Curate*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018, pp 7-27.

Alison Green. “Citizen Artists: Group Material,” *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, 26 (2011). pp. 17-25.

11/14 – speak with SALT artist

11/15-16 Memory Show Symposium (Mandatory on 11/15)

Record Audio Stop (Audio Stop Due)

Week 14

11/19 – Biennials etc

Paloma Checa-Gismero. “Biennial Conversions at the Border of Liberalism,” *Biennial Boom: Making Contemporary Art Global*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2024, pp 1-26.

11/21 – Monuments and Public Art

Miwon Kwon. “From Site to Community in New Genre Public Art: The Case of “Culture in Action”,” *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identities*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002, pp 100-137?

Week 15

11/26 – “Studio Visit” final projects

Week 16

12/3 – Work on final projects, time to consult with professor

12/5 – Present final projects to class

Final Projects Due

Grades:

Participation 20%

Reading Responses 10%

Museum Reflections 10%

Important Exhibition 20%

Audio Stop 20%

Final Project 20%

Assignments:

Participation 20%

Participation includes attendance and engagement with the course material in class. This could include asking questions of guests and the professor, and also perhaps more importantly responding to questions and comments raised by classmates. The objective of participation is not to answer questions correctly. Posing questions and admitting confusion is really more important. As this will be a conversation based class, it is key to take part in those conversations with care, thoughtfulness, respect, humility, and openness.

Reading Responses 10%

Reading responses will be due each class meeting where there are assigned readings. If there is more than one reading assigned for the day, you are welcome to choose 1, or to respond to them both together. For full credit, a reading response will identify the primary argument of the reading, and then include a reflection on any particular aspect of the reading that you find interesting, that applies to other things you are thinking about in this class or other classes, or that caused confusion for you.

Museum Reflections 10%

Museum reflections will offer you an opportunity to reflect on your experience visiting the museum and, when applicable, the difference between your initial impression when visiting the museum by yourself versus with the curators. As best as you can, identify the mission of the museum, and then reflect on how you can see that mission in your experience at that museum. In what ways did the museum seem successful? Give specific examples. What did you enjoy most and why? Are there any connections to anything you are thinking about or larger questions that you have outside of class?

Important Exhibition 20%

Students will work in groups of 3 or 4 to put together 10 minute presentations on an important exhibition of their choice from a list that will be provided. The presentation needs to cover the concept and content of the exhibition, as well as explain in detail what it is that made it important. Students need to speak to as many of the aspects of exhibition design that we have considered in class as they can, including curatorial concept, use of space, audience engagement, and so forth.

Audio Stop 20%

We will be recording audio stops for the *In Memory* show at UMOCA as a part of their symposium 11/15-16. We will be recording on the 15th. If you cannot make the symposium on the 15th, let me know immediately and we will figure out how to accommodate you. Audio stops are responses to specific works in the show. They can be as informative or creative as you like. For examples, see: <https://umfa.utah.edu/many-vests/audio-stops>.

Final Project 20%

Your final project will be to curate an exhibition for the lobby of MHC. You will be provided with a floor plan, and your project will consist of two parts. The first will be a miniature

presentation of your exhibition, using the floor plan, that places the works you have selected in site. The second will be a written component, where you lay out our curatorial intention and describe how the works you have selected, and where you chose to place them, help realize that intention. The topic is entirely up to you – art, biology, sports, as long as you can make it work, it is fair game!

Food and Drink:

Class is during lunchtime. As long as what you're eating or drinking isn't distracting (loud or strong smelling) please fuel yourself. However do plan ahead – you will not be able to eat while inside any of the museums we will be visiting.

Electronic Devices in Class:

Please do bring a device of your choosing so that you can reference readings when we are discussing them in class. If you need to google something, even if it is out of curiosity, chances are other classmates have the same question so please share that with the class, or make a note of it for you to look up later. Any non-course use of electronic devices is strictly not allowed. You are welcome to leave the room to take phone calls or texts, but please do not do so in class. It distracts your classmates and it distracts me. If I notice you using electronics for a purpose outside of what is needed in the class, I will remind you of this policy and invite you to step out and take care of what you need to take care of.

Course Communications:

Communications from me about the course (for example clarifications, changes, etc) will be communicated via Announcements on Canvas. I suggest you turn your notifications on for those for this course. If you have a question, I am much more reachable via email than via Canvas, particularly this semester with my family leave. I do try and keep my work email checking to work hours (am-5pm), so please be patient that if you email me in the evening I will likely reply the next day. I will check email frequently (too frequently, let's be real), but I won't check Canvas messages with the same regularity. My email is on the top of this syllabus, and also here: virginia.solomon@honors.utah.edu.

Classroom Compartment:

This course welcomes you to disagree with each other's ideas. At no point is it acceptable to disagree with a person or to speak disparagingly of any identity, set of beliefs, or group of any kind. We can disagree with ideas, we cannot disagree with people. Remember that there are different kinds of people, with different kinds of beliefs, in this class, and we want to make sure that this classroom is a place that feels safe and supportive to be intellectually uncomfortable, otherwise known as learning.

Class AI Policy (adapted from Randy Dryer):

In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged and work that is presented as original must be, in fact, original. Using an AI content generator (such as ChatGPT or similar programs) to complete coursework without proper attribution or authorization is a form of academic dishonesty and plagiarism.

Nonetheless, if you use an AI content generator in any way to assist with an assignment beyond spell-check or grammar suggestions, you must expressly acknowledge its use and adhere to the following:

- All strings of four or more words, and all tables, figures, images or other content that are coming from an AI program must be delineated in green font.
- No more than 25% of your submitted writing may be AI generated.
- Your submitted writing must include a statement at the end of the writing that (a) acknowledges the use of AI, (b) identifies the specific technology used, (c) describes in reasonable detail how the technology was used and for what purpose, (d) identifies the prompts used and (e) explains how the output was used in your work. Examples of the required statement may be found at the following link <https://www.monash.edu/student-academic-success/build-digital-capabilities/create-online/acknowledging-the-use-of-generative-artificial-intelligence>

You may use AI programs to help generate ideas, outline or organize your writing, research information on your final paper or blog post or otherwise assist in the writing process subject to the above parameters. If you have a question or concern about whether your use of AI is acceptable for a particular assignment, please discuss it with me before use.

You should be aware that AI is not always accurate and is subject to ‘hallucinations’ where it makes up facts, events, citations and other information. You are responsible for what you submit, including its accuracy, truthfulness, ethics, and compliance with intellectual property laws. AI programs, if used at all in this course, should be used with great caution. I may employ plagiarism detection software if I suspect that this policy has not been complied with.

Please note that other professors may have different policies regarding the use of AI software.

University Policies:

[The following statements are **required** on every course syllabus.]

1. ***The Americans with Disabilities Act.*** The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to

the Center for Disability & Access, 65 Student Services Building, (801) 581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability & Access.

In compliance with ADA requirements, some students may need to record course content. Any recordings of course content are for personal use only, should not be shared, and should not be made publicly available. In addition, recordings should be destroyed at the conclusion of the course.

- 2. *University Safety Statement.*** The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit <https://safeu.utah.edu>

- 3. *Addressing Sexual Misconduct.*** Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 383 South University Street, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).
 - a. *Lauren's Promise:*** Lauren's Promise is a vow that anyone – faculty, staff, students, parents, and community members – can take to indicate to others that they represent a safe haven for sharing incidents of sexual assault, domestic violence, or stalking. Anyone who makes Lauren's Promise vows to: 1.) listen to and believe those individuals who are being threatened or experiencing sexual assault, dating violence or stalking; 2.) represent a safe haven for sharing incidents of sexual assault, domestic violence, or stalking; and 3.) change campus culture that responds poorly to dating violence and stalking. By making Lauren's Promise, individuals are helping to change campus cultures that respond poorly to dating violence and stalking throughout the nation.

- 4. Academic Misconduct Statement.** It is expected that students adhere to University of Utah policies regarding academic honesty, including but not limited to refraining from cheating, plagiarizing, misrepresenting one's work, and/or inappropriately collaborating. This includes the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools without citation, documentation, or authorization. Students are expected to adhere to the prescribed professional and ethical standards of the profession/discipline for which they are preparing. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty or who violates the professional and ethical standards for their profession/discipline may be subject to academic sanctions as per the University of Utah's Student Code: <https://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-410.php>
- 5. Drop/Withdrawal Policies.** Students may drop a course within the first two weeks of a given semester without any penalties. Students may officially withdraw (W) from a class or all classes after the drop deadline through the midpoint of a course. A "W" grade is recorded on the transcript and appropriate tuition/fees are assessed. The grade "W" is not used in calculating the student's GPA. For deadlines to withdraw from full-term, first, and second session classes, see the U's Academic Calendar.
- 6. Other important information to consider including:**

 - a. Student Code: <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>
 - b. Accommodation Policy (see Section Q):
<http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php>
- 7. Supports for Students.** Your success at the University of Utah is important to all of us here! If you feel like you need extra support in academics, overcoming personal difficulties, or finding community, the U is here for you. Please refer to the [Student Support Services page for the U](#) for updated information.
- 8. Basic Needs Student Support Statement.** Success at The University of Utah includes learning about and using available resources. The [Basic Needs Collective](#) (BNC) is a coordinated resource referral hub. They educate about and connect students to campus and community resources to help them meet their basic needs. As a central location for resource referrals related to food, housing, health insurance, managing finances, legal services, mental health, etc., any student experiencing difficulty with basic needs is encouraged to contact them. Drop into their office located in the Union basement or schedule with them online for an in-person or virtual visit through their webpage: <https://basicneeds.utah.edu/>.

Institutional Policies:

Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities.

All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the [Center for Disability & Access](#) (CDA). CDA will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. Prior notice is appreciated. To read the full accommodations policy for the University of Utah, please see Section Q of the [Instruction & Evaluation regulations](#).

In compliance with ADA requirements, some students may need to record course content. Any recordings of course content are for personal use only, should not be shared, and should never be made publicly available. In addition, recordings must be destroyed at the conclusion of the course.

If you will need accommodations in this class, or for more information about what support they provide, contact:

Center for Disability & Access

801-581-5020

disability.utah.edu

65 Student Services Building

201 S 1460 E

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Safety at the U

The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more safety information and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.

To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, contact:

Campus Police & Department of Public Safety

801-585-COPS (801-585-2677)

dps.utah.edu

1735 E. S. Campus Dr.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Addressing Sexual Misconduct

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status, or genetic information.

If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to university officials:

Title IX Coordinator & Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action

801-581-8365

oeo.utah.edu

135 Park Building

201 Presidents' Cir.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Office of the Dean of Students

801-581-7066

deanofstudents.utah.edu

270 Union Building

200 S. Central Campus Dr.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

To file a police report, contact:

Campus Police & Department of Public Safety

801-585-COPS (801-585-2677)

dps.utah.edu

1735 E. S. Campus Dr.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

If you do not feel comfortable reporting to authorities, the U's Victim-Survivor Advocates provide free, confidential, and trauma-informed support services to students, faculty, and staff who have experienced interpersonal violence.

To privately explore options and resources available to you with an advocate, contact:

Center for Student Wellness

801-581-7776

wellness.utah.edu

328 Student Services Building

201 S. 1460 E.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Academic Misconduct

It is expected that students comply with University of Utah policies regarding academic honesty, including but not limited to refraining from cheating, plagiarizing, misrepresenting one's work, and/or inappropriately collaborating. This includes the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools without citation, documentation, or authorization. Students are expected to adhere to the prescribed professional and ethical standards of the profession/discipline for which they are preparing. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty or who violates the professional and ethical standards for their profession/discipline may be subject to academic sanctions as per the University of Utah's Student Code: [Policy 6-410: Student Academic Performance, Academic Conduct, and Professional and Ethical Conduct](#).

Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on an individual assignment, and/or failure in the course. Academic misconduct, according to the University of Utah Student Code:

"...Includes, but is not limited to, cheating, misrepresenting one's work, inappropriately collaborating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification of information...It also includes facilitating academic misconduct by intentionally helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic misconduct."

For details on plagiarism and other important course conduct issues, see the U's [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#).