

Art History and Visual Culture Studies

Dennis Crockett, *Chair*

(*on Sabbatical, Fall 2008*)

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The discipline of art history embraces aspects of a broad array of academic areas, including history, politics, philosophy, aesthetics, religion, anthropology, sociology, and literature. The visual culture of various parts of the world is investigated through a variety of perspectives in order to gain insight into human values, beliefs, and self identity. Whitman College offers major and minor study programs in art history and visual culture studies.

A student who enters Whitman without any prior college-level preparation in art history will have to complete 36 credits to fulfill the requirements for the art history major. Courses completed in the major apply to the fine arts and alternative voices (selected courses) distribution areas.

The major: A minimum of 36 credits, including Art History 103, 490, at least one 300-level course and one nonwestern course, and two studio art courses. A maximum of eight credits of approved coursework from outside the department may be used to satisfy major requirements. This includes credit from off-campus programs, transfer credit, and appropriate Whitman courses that focus on the functions of visual culture. The senior assessment, administered during the student's final semester, is a two-hour oral exam that focuses on course work in the major completed at Whitman.

The minor: A minimum of 18 credits, including Art History 103 and one studio art course.

For the art history major with an art studio minor, no course in art may satisfy both the major and minor requirements. When the same class is required in both the major and minor, an additional class will be required after it has been approved by the art history department.

The P-D-F option may not be used for the major or minor.

103 Introduction to Art History and Visual Culture Studies

3, 3

Staff

Using a variety of works in various media from antiquity to the present-day, this course introduces the historical discipline of art history and the contemporary study of visual culture. Emphasis is placed on historical, social, and interpretive issues relevant to the critical analysis of artistic production and meaning. Topics to be explored include: the problem of the canon and the museum; patronage and power; and the visual construction of race, gender, and sexuality. Designed for first- and second-year students, and required for the art history major and minor. Short papers and/or exams required.

208 Art of the Americas

4; not offered 2008-09

This course examines the art and visual culture of North and Latin America from the era of conquest and colonialism to the signing of the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA). Each year will focus on one particular theme, such as: the visual culture of conquest, the cultivation of independent and distinctly national identities apart from Spain, France, and England in the late-colonial periods; the role of art in sustaining nationalist historical narratives; the appropriation of pre-conquest history and myth and contemporary indigenous and/or peasant culture; and the uses of art to resist and critique political regimes and powerful elites. Distribution area: fine arts or alternative voices.

218 Renaissance Art 1300-1500

x, 4

Crockett

A study of the production and reception of visual culture in Late Medieval and Renaissance Europe within the context of the municipality, the court, the church, and the private citizen. This course will call into question traditional approaches to Renaissance art, and focus on recent approaches. Various primary and secondary readings, regular response papers, and a book review are required.

220 History of Photography

4, x

R. Masteller

A survey of 19th- and 20th-century photography, emphasizing its relation to aesthetic and cultural practices and values, as well as technical developments that have shaped the nature of the photographic image. We will examine such issues as "pictorialism," "straight" photography, "the documentary mode," and the "snapshot aesthetic" and will consider various strategies of photographic interpretation, especially as these reflect notions of sight and insight, the photograph as window or mirror. By focusing on the history of the medium and some of its most influential practitioners, we will explore how photographers have used images to shape attitudes and values in our culture. Examples may include the work of Matthew Brady, Jacob Riis, Lewis Hine, Gertrude Kasebier, Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Weston, Edward Steichen, Walker Evans,

Dorothea Lange, Robert Frank, Helen Levitt, Minor White, Diane Arbus, Judy Dater, and others. Papers, class presentations, and exams. Open to all students.

221 American Art and Visual Culture, Colonial to 1900

4; not offered 2008-09

A study of the emergence and development of American visual culture from the colonial era to the end of the 19th century. Emphasis is placed on historical, social, and political interpretations of American art, including the visual construction of race, gender, and nationhood. A research paper, two presentations, exams, and class participation are required.

222 American Art and Visual Culture of the Twentieth Century

4; not offered 2008-09

A study of the production and reception of American art and visual culture from 1913 to approximately 1970. Emphasis is placed on the development of Modernism in the United States, with a strong consideration of historical, social, and political interpretations of American Art. Issues to be discussed include: the rise and fall of Modernism, the impact of the art market, the dematerialization of the art object, and artistic strategies to engage the visual construction of race, gender, and sexuality. A research paper, two presentations, exams, and class participation are required.

224 Greek and Roman Art

4, x

Vandiver

An exploration of the arts of ancient Greece and Rome, from the Bronze Age of Greece to the end of the Roman Empire. Particular emphasis will be placed on sculpture, painting, and architecture. We also will investigate the cultural contexts from which the art forms arise. May be elected as Classics 224. Open to all students. Offered in alternate years.

227 European Art: 1780-1880

4; not offered 2008-09

A study of the period in which art first became a public issue in cities throughout Europe due to regularly-staged, state-sponsored exhibitions and the opening of state art collections. Emphasis on the political structures of the European art establishment and various artists' attempts to produce vital work regardless of the establishment. Issues to be discussed include: the competing concepts of *the public*, the role of art criticism; the politics of landscape painting in Germany and England; art and socialism; modernity and the painting of *La vie moderne*. Three exams, a paper and class participation are required. *Recommended:* completion of Art History 103.

228 Modern Art: 1874-1924

x, 4

Staff

Issues of modern visual culture in Europe and the United States from the time of the first Impressionist exhibition to the end of World War I. Emphasis on the social status and intentions of the *avant-garde*. Three

exams, a paper and class participation are required. *Prerequisite:* Art History 103 or 227 or History 278 or consent of instructor.

229 Modern and Contemporary Art: 1924-Present

4, 4

Staff

Issues of visual culture in Europe and the USA from the rise of Surrealism to the present, with emphasis on the impacts of the World Wars on the visual arts of Europe and the USA and on the art world in the context of the political world. Three exams, a paper and class participation are required. *Prerequisite:* Art History 103 or consent of instructor.

241 Environmental Aesthetics

4; not offered 2008-09

Beginning with an examination of the claim of the beautiful in Elaine Scarry's *On Beauty and Being Just*, we will turn to experiment with the perception of sculpture in space working with reflections by Kant and Heidegger and public artworks on campus. This will lead to an examination of architecture in Karsten Harries' *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, and the Japanese garden in Marc Keane's *The Art of Setting Stones*. Beyond the opening exercises in the aesthetic perception, you will design your own home with a garden. May be elected as Philosophy 241.

243 Buddhist Art in Asia

4; not offered 2008-09

This course will examine the development of Buddhist art throughout Asia, from the creation of the first Buddha image to the transmission of Indian Buddhism and its artistic tradition to East and Southeast Asia. Topics will include: the absence of the Buddha image, the artistic interaction between Buddhist and indigenous elements in East and Southeast Asia, the royal patronage of Buddhism. Two exams, several written assignments, and class participation are required. Distribution area: fine arts or alternative voices.

245 Art of East Asia

x, 4

B. Kim

A survey of art production in various media in China, Japan, and Korea from the Neolithic period to the 20th century. This course will investigate the intersections between art and society, specifically considering the roles of politics and patronage. Two exams, several written assignments, and class participation are required. Distribution area: fine arts or alternative voices.

246 Art of South and Southeast Asia

x,4

B. Kim

A survey of art production in South and Southeast Asia, exploring three major religious traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. This course will examine the effects of religion and social structures on art production. Two exams, several written assignments, and class participation are required. Distribution area: fine arts or alternative voices.

247 Monuments in Asia**4; not offered 2008-09**

This course will explore a variety of monuments with different religious backgrounds in India, China, Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia. Special emphasis will be placed on how these monuments have functioned within specific cultural, social and religious contexts. Two exams, several written assignments, and class participation are required. Distribution area: fine arts or alternative voices.

248 Ways of Seeing: Japanese Art and Aesthetics**x, 4** **Takemoto**

The literary, visual, and performing arts of Japan. As we survey the traditional arts of Japan from pre-historic times (before 552 C.E.) to the Edo-Tokugawa period (1600-1868). What it means to be a craftsman, an artist, a performer, or any person who has developed the skill "to see." Buddhist ideas that form the foundation for a uniquely Japanese vocabulary of aesthetics. Classes will meet for slide lectures and discussion. Demonstrations of the Japanese tea ceremony will be given in "Chikurakken," the Whitman College tea room located within the Sheehan Gallery. Two examinations, oral presentations, and several short essays will be required. Two periods a week. Distribution area: fine arts or alternative voices.

249 Aesthetics**4; not offered 2008-09**

After developing a critical vocabulary through an examination of Hume's notion of taste, Kant's "reflective judgment," and Heidegger's reconceptualization of the work of art in "Building Dwelling Thinking," we apply this vocabulary to architecture using Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* to help us critically assess the "aesthetic" governing Whitman's Penrose Library renovation project. Then moving from the "public" to the "private," we consider the sense of "aesthetics" at work in building your own home, using as a guide Witold Rybczynski's *The Most Beautiful House in the World*. May be elected as Philosophy 239.

257-260 Topics in Visual Cultural Studies**4****329 Gender in Contemporary Visual Culture****4; not offered 2008-09**

This course examines how concepts of masculinity and femininity are produced and defined visually. We will examine how artists of the late 20th century developed new techniques (installations, performance, video, etc.) to examine how gender mediates modern identities (class and race); ideals of nationhood; key spaces such as the museum and the domestic interior; and the cultural politics associated with the body, sexuality, and the self. Distribution area: fine arts or alternative voices.

355 German Visual Culture: 1871-1937**4; not offered 2008-09**

The painting, prints, sculpture, architecture, design, popular illustration, photography, and film of German Europe during a period which witnessed the establishment of an Empire, a lost World War, a failed revolution, a failed economy, a failed democracy, and the establishment of another Empire. Emphasis is placed on the art theory and the artists' status within this rapidly transforming political spectrum. Two exams, several short papers and class participation are required. *Prerequisite:* Art History 103 or consent of instructor. Offered in alternate years.

357-360 Seminar in Visual Culture Studies**4**

Special studies not generally considered in other courses offered by the department. The specific material will vary from semester to semester and may cover various subjects from early times to contemporary developments in art.

421, 422 Individual Projects**2-3, 2-3****Staff**

Projects for the advanced student in art history under supervision of the particular teacher concerned. *Prerequisites for art history projects:* ArTH 103 and a 200-level art history course in the area of the project. *Consent* of the supervising instructor.

490 Senior Seminar in Art History**4, x****Staff**

Weekly discussions and critical papers based on: 1) selected primary and secondary readings in the history of western art theory (ancient, medieval, renaissance, the academy); 2) primary and secondary readings in the methodology of modern art history; and 3) primary readings in contemporary approaches to art. Emphasis will be placed on the role of the art theorist/historian in the history of art. Required for the major.

493 Thesis in Art History**4, 4****Staff**

Open only to senior art history majors except those registered for Art History 498. Taken during the spring (or final) semester of the senior year. Devoted to the completion of a substantial written project under the supervision of at least one faculty member.

498 Honors Thesis**4, 4****Staff**

Designed to further independent investigation leading to the preparation of a written thesis or research project in art history. Taken during the spring (or final) semester of the senior year. Required of and limited to senior honors candidates in art history and visual culture studies.