

Draft Syllabus – Subject to Change
HR1001: Ways of Seeing: Exploring Visual Culture
Semester 1 AY2025-26

Course Code: HR1001
Course Title: Ways of Seeing: Exploring Visual Culture
Pre-Requisites: Nil
No of Aus: 3
Contact Hours: 39 hours

Course Co-ordinator: Sushma Griffin, PhD
Email: sushma.griffin@ntu.edu.sg
Office Location: HSS-03-30
Office Hours: In-person and Zoom online appointments by email.

Course Aims

This course explores the interrelated realms of art and visual culture. By maintaining focus on ways of seeing and the visual, we will examine key works of art in a global field spanning periods from ca. 2500 BCE to the contemporary. We will analyse art objects by situating them within debates and discourses specific to the contexts of their production and reception. Each week's learning activities will centre around specific case studies as a starting point for exploration. We will learn to apply important methodological approaches and major theoretical frameworks (for instance postcolonialism; feminism; critical frameworks examining the post-digital production and reception of images; surveillance theories; and ecocriticism) and core concepts relating to art and visual culture (for instance representation, mimesis, ekphrasis, modernism, race, spectacle, surveillance, resistance, and post-truth) and develop foundational skills pertaining to analytical writing (such as framing an argument; compiling a bibliography; and so on).

Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

1. Learn foundational theoretical and critical approaches in the inter-related fields of art history and visual culture studies; develop methods and techniques for the visual analysis of images and articulate considered responses to images.
2. Think about and write critically about images utilising relevant visual vocabulary, and maintaining focus on the visual in your written analysis of images.
3. Display a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental critical methodologies for analysing images.
4. Use visual analysis and concepts, themes, ideas, theories and debates from the weekly readings to think about and write about images critically and in a focused and coherent way.

5. Participate respectfully in class discussion, share your research with your peers in presentation formats, and provide constructive criticism and feedback on your peers' oral presentations.

Course Requirements and Expectations

- Students are expected to attend the weekly seminars and participate fully in class discussion and other activities.
- Students must read the assigned prescribed readings prior to class in preparation for the weekly topic.
- The use of AI software such as ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot and any other such writing-assistant software to generate text for course assignments will be penalised and may result in failure in the course, including the use of grammar-correcting software such as "Grammarly".
- Plagiarism of any material will be penalised and will result in failure in the course. Plagiarism includes self-plagiarism. Assignments plagiarising other assignments that you may have written or prepared as class presentations for other courses are not acceptable and will be penalised and may result in failure in the course.
- Please email me to arrange a consultation. I welcome consultations in person and over Zoom.

Course Content

This course is an introduction to the interpretation of visual imagery. It surveys images on a global scale across various media including painting, drawing, photography, moving image, sculpture, architecture and installation. It also takes into consideration everyday practices of seeing and showing. We will explore how visual culture has expanded art history's critical domains by bringing into focus images that were not previously considered as art and ways of seeing that reveal inherent political and cultural ideologies and biases. We will consider key themes in the history of vision and visual culture including the relationship between discipline, surveillance, and vision; and race, gender and visibility. We will learn to apply a variety of critical and theoretical frameworks that incorporate feminist, decolonising, postcolonial, post-truth, and ecocritical perspectives.

Weekly Schedule of Learning Activities

Week 1: Course Introduction ILO 1, 2, 3, 5

- Course Introduction: Introduction to the course contents. Utilising a range of images from across periods and geographies, we will consider questions such as: What is art? What is art history? What is visual culture? We will go over the various aspects of the course including the weekly schedule of learning activities and assessment exercises followed by a Q&A session.

Weeks 2-4: Locating Art in Space and Time: Reading and Writing about Issues and Problems in the Description and Analysis of Visual Art. ILO 1, 2, 3, 5

- Week 2: Locating Art in Space and Time – Undertaking a Visual Analysis
Donna K. Reid, "Describing a Work of Art," *Thinking and Writing About Art History* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004), 5-9.

E.H. Gombrich, "Moment and Movement in Art", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 27 (1964): 293-306.

- Week 3: Field Visit to Gilman Barracks to NTU's Centre for Contemporary Art, and the Sundaram Tagore Gallery (tbc, transport provided).
- Week 4: Space, Time and Location in Contemporary Art – Understanding and Writing About Spatial and Temporal Concepts in a Work of Art
Sean Lowry and Adam Geczy, "Where is Art" in *Where is Art: Space, Time and Location in Contemporary Art*, eds. Simone Douglas, Adam Geczy, and Sean Lowry (New York: Routledge, 2022), 4-34.

Weeks 5-7: Art and the Politics of Representation: Interpreting Self and the Other ILO 1, 2, 3, 5

- Week 5: Art, Poetry and Interpreting Self: Reading the Ancient Pre-Babylonian Figure of the World's First Author Enheduana ca. 2300 BCE.
Sophus Helle, "The Birth of the Author: Co-creating Authorship in Enheduana's *Exaltation*", *Orbis litterarum*, 2020-04, Vol.75 (2), 55-72.
- Week 6: Real and Imagined: Medieval and Renaissance Images of African Kingship
Henry Louis Gates Jr. "Balthazar's Blackness: Equally Noble, Equally Foreign" in *A Black African King in Medieval and Renaissance Art* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2023), x-xiv.
Geraldine Heng, "Why Black: The Meaning of Epidermal Race in the European Middle Ages" in *A Black African King in Medieval and Renaissance Art* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2023), 40-41.
- Week 7: The Art and Science of Representing Animals
Sarah Bezan, "The Species Revivalist Sublime: Encountering the Kaua'i O'o Bird in Jakob Kudsk Steensen's *Re-animated*" in *Animals, Plants, and Afterimages: The Art and Science of Representing Animal Extinction*, eds. Valerie Bienvenue and Nicholas Chare (New York: Berghahn Books, 2022), 211-229.

Week 8-10: Modernism and Contemporary Art from the Global South ILO 1, 2, 3, 5

- Week 8: Field Visit to the National Gallery of Singapore to view and analyse Southeast Asian modernist works of art (tbc, transport provided).
- Week 9: Modernisms in the Global South
Guest Lecture on "Modernism in the Global South" (tbc)
- Week 10: Contemporary Art from the Global South
Michelle Antoinette, "Contemporary Southeast Asian Art: Regional Interventions", *Reworlding Art History: Contemporary Southeast Asian Art after 1990* (Amsterdam: Brill, 2014), 3-77.

Weeks 11-12: Contemporary Art's Decolonising Imperatives ILO 1, 2, 3, 5

- Week 11: Field Visit to the ADM Galleries or The Art Gallery at NIE (tbc).

- Week 12: Ecofeminism and Contemporary Art: Water as Agent of Decolonisation
Jamie-Hamilton Fairey, “Gestures of Survivance: Angela Tiatia’s *Lick* and Feminist Environmental Performance Art in Oceania”, *Pacific Arts*, 20.1 (2020-2021): 6-22.

Week 13: End-of-Semester Assessment: In-Class Open-Book Quiz comprising Four Short Answer Responses to Stimulus Materials: Responding with a Visual Analysis and Referencing Prescribed Readings - Weighting 40% ILO 1, 2, 3, 4

Students will respond to four images (10marks each) provided as stimulus materials, writing short answer responses (around 300-400 words each) with a brief visual analysis and referring to prescribed readings from the course relevant to the stimulus material.

Assessment (including continuous and summative assessment)

Class Participation Weighting 20% ILO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 [Continuous Assessment]

Weekly attendance and participation in class discussion on the works of art and prescribed readings will count towards your final grade. Please read the prescribed readings and come to class with prepared comments and questions to contribute to the discussion on a weekly basis.

Class Presentations (between Weeks 2 to 12) Weighting 20% ILO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 [Continuous Assessment]

Fifteen-minute group presentations of 1500 words (two presenters – 700 words each) focusing around a visual analysis of works of art relevant to the week’s topic and theme. The presentations also require you to situate your selected works of art within the concepts, ideas, and theories from the prescribed weekly readings. Please submit any notes, handouts and powerpoint slides 48 hours prior to class.

Mid-Semester Assessment: Short Essay (800 words) based on Class Visit to NTU’s Centre for Contemporary Art and the Sundaram Gallery at Gilman Barracks - Weighting 20% ILO 1, 2, 3, 4:

Your essay will focus on one work of art from either of the two exhibitions visited in Week 3 on the Field Visit. This essay assignment will require you to i) undertake a visual analysis of your selected work, ii) situate it within the theme of the exhibition, iii) comment on its contribution to the exhibition theme as a whole – how does its inclusion contribute to the exhibition -- does it problematise, challenge, or extend the exhibition in any way? Discuss, explain, and justify your critique in relation to the artwork’s inclusion in the exhibition.

End-of-Semester Assessment: In-Class Open-Book Quiz comprising Four Short Answer Responses to Stimulus Materials: Responding with a Visual Analysis and Referencing Prescribed Readings - Weighting 40% ILO 1, 2, 3, 4

Students will respond to four images (10marks each) provided as stimulus materials, writing short answer responses (around 300-400 words each) with a brief visual analysis and referring to prescribed readings from the course relevant to the stimulus material.

Provisional