

Syllabus, Spring 2011
INTD 319-Core 320: A Social History of the Arts
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This course looks at the role of the arts in shaping culture and identities in societies around the world. It will explore art in its broadest definition (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, material expression) as ritual, cultural transmitter, community power and prestige, propaganda, and as purely personal expressions from the Paleolithic to Modern Times. The primary goal is to examine what it means to be a human being, what the arts tell us about our human condition, and how these shape our societies as a whole and the values we hold close.

Outline of course topics:

- Prehistoric origins of the arts. How the making of art is a uniquely human activity.
- The arts as expressions of group identity and cohesion.
 - rooted in time and place.
 - creators and interpreters.
 - magic and ritual
 - the arts as conveyors of cultural information
- Constraints upon artistic expression
 - taboos, superstitions
 - proscriptions in pre-history.
- Concepts of beauty, ideal form, the sublime, and ancient archetypes.
- Forces and influences shaping the evolution of western styles and conventions in the arts: from propaganda to art for art's sake.
 - The rise of civilizations: art as secular and religious propaganda
 - The middle ages and the age of faith: arts as religious propaganda and court flattery
 - Humanists, mass-produced books, and the birth of science
 - Renaissance to Enlightenment: the emergence of the artist as a special actor
 - The law and the arts medieval to modern era.
 - Modern movements, and influences of Darwin, Compte, Freud, and Jung
- Forces and influences shaping the evolution of eastern styles and conventions in the arts: from propaganda to patronage systems and struggles for identity.
 - Early civilizations: India, China, Japan
 - Court, religious, and secular art,
 - Colonialism, wars, and political shifts
 - Modern impulses struggle for their voice, western popular culture intrusions.
- The arts as politics.
 - Protest artists and propagandists
 - Artists as reformers
- Censorship, legal protections, and copyright as they apply to the arts.
- The rise of popular culture and the retreat of high culture. Art and class.
- The arts in a digital age. New media.

Note: This outline of topics is a general guide. It can be revised as the term progresses to adjust to time constraints or to take advantage of other exigencies.

Term project: select one of the options below. It will be due April 21, 2011. Worth a maximum of 50 points.

Option 1: Examine a popular myth in western culture. Identify its central archetype Discuss its origins and give specific examples of how it shapes attitudes and behaviors in society. You can use images and examples from art, photographs, poems, plays, novels, movies, or TV shows that support or shoot down the myth or its central archetype. Minimum length will be five pages, but no more than eight pages. (Example: the myth of the rugged individualist in modern America, the cowboy being a popular version of the archetype, a photo of the Marlboro man to sell cigarettes a supporting image – you can't use my archetype example, by the way... find your own).

Option 2: Jean Genet's "Screens" directed by Georgij Paro, will be presented in April (date not yet set). Between now and April research the play and its author, explain the play's connection to historical events, the author's interest in those events, as well as the larger social context of play. You should include critical and public reactions to play when first performed. Armed with that background of understanding, attend the campus production of the play so that you can include your own critique of the play in the final paper. The paper should be a minimum of five pages in length, but no more than eight pages.

Option 3: What limits, if any, should be put on artistic expressions? Who should decide what is permissible and what isn't? Whose version of morality applies? What effect do limits placed on artistic expression have on society as a whole? Give examples of types of artistic expressions that either test limits or should be subject to limits. Should there be penalties for expressions that cross the line? Are political critiques by artists and writers subject to limits. Explore these questions fully in a paper of not less than five pages, but not exceeding eight pages.

Exams: There will be five quizzes, each worth a maximum of 10 points, and a final exam worth a maximum of 50 points.

Attendance: Because there is no textbook for this course it is imperative that you attend the lectures. For this reason attendance will affect your grade. I will not call roll, however. There will be a sign-in sheet on the table for every class meeting. It is up to you to sign in upon arrival to class.

Missed quizzes and exams: If you miss a quiz or exam there will be no make up exam unless you have made prior arrangements.

Grading: Grades will be based on total point accumulation for the term. For each missed day of attendance 1 point will be deducted from the total.

Special note: I may from time to time offer opportunities for extra credit.

Web Site www.exhumanitas.com

This website provides information about the courses I teach and other information. Importantly, a copy of this syllabus is available online there in PDF format.