

Postwar American Avant-Garde (AE 117)

<http://eclass.uoa.gr/courses/ENL325/>

Fall 2014

Course Convenor: Mata Dimakopoulou (sdimakop@enl.uoa.gr)

Mondays 12.00-15.00 Room 824

Office Hours: Thursdays 15.00-17.00 and by appt.

Description and general scope of the course

Much experimental and avant-garde art in the US from the late 1950s onwards emerged against the backdrop of an intense questioning of the modernist canon, and responded to wider historical shifts that involved the dissolution, and the redefinition of boundaries in diverse and interconnected areas of cultural and social life. The course maps important strands in the post-WWII avant-garde from the late 1950s to the present day. The reaction against Abstract Expressionism, the emergence of happenings in the late 1950s, will constitute the point of departure for an examination of the work of artists who experimented with diverse forms, practices, and media, moved beyond traditional genres, and challenged the boundaries, and the institutions that had defined the production of art. We will work with a variety of sources and documents, including poems, paintings, films, performances, videos, and artists' writings. Throughout the course, we will be establishing connections between artistic movements and developments in postwar American poetry. Teaching consists in lectures, as well as seminar activities and discussions developing connections across different themes and artistic forms. Course material and bibliography can be accessed online on the e-class site. Depending on attendance and participation, additional seminar sessions may be organised during term-time.

Assessment

The course is **assessed** by coursework only. Students are expected to participate in **TWO mid-term examinations** that will be held during term-time and submit **ONE short research paper** (circa 1,500) on any of the movements, artistic practices, forms, media, and themes explored in class. In the mid-term, students are expected to write an analytical, critical essay, based on a critical commentary of a given work, and/or text. Feedback and corrected mid-terms will be returned within a week, and you are welcome to revise and resubmit your work. A list of topics and additional seminar and research material will be provided for the research paper. As this is a third year option course, you are expected to use secondary bibliographical material in your paper. Your paper should include a word count and a bibliography, and you will need to submit a hard copy of your work and upload your essay in electronic form on the eclass. PLAGIARISED submissions will receive a **FAIL**; verbatim or paraphrased reproduction of unacknowledged sources is plagiarism (please read "what is plagiarism?" at (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/current-students/guidelines/plagiarism/#whatis>)). Students who do not wish to be assessed by coursework, may participate in the resit examination in September which will be weighted at 100% of the mark.

Mark Breakdown

MIDTERM I (40%) Tuesday 18 November 2014 (time and room TBC)

MIDTERM II (40%) Monday 8 January 2015

ESSAY (20%): Submission deadline Monday 8 January 2015

SEMINAR PARTICIPATION (10%) (optional; extra credit that will be weighted towards your overall mark)

Course Outline

Week 1

General Introduction to the postwar period [*Overview and Aims*]

Week 2

Beyond Abstract Expressionism: happenings and the "blurring of art and life"

Seminar Material

Allan Kaprow, "How to Make a Happening" (LP record 1965), [transcript and sound on ubu.com]

"The Happenings Are Dead: Long Live the Happenings!" (1966) [*pdf file on the eclass*], "Some Recent Happenings" (1966), [*on ubu.com*], "Art Which Can't Be Art" (1986)

Week 3

Pop art: breaking down the boundaries between high and low

Seminar Material

Claes Oldenburg, "Store Days" (1967), Andy Warhol, "Work" in *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol from A to B and Back Again* (1975) [*pdf files on the eclass*], Robert Rauschenberg, "Monogram, *Free Standing Combine* (1955-59), James Rosenquist, "President Elect" (1961-2), Andy Warhol, "Marilyn Diptych" 1962

Week 4

American experimental cinema in the 1960s

Seminar Material

Stan Brakhage, *Anticipation of the Night* (1958), Kenneth Anger, *Scorpio Rising* (1963), Jonas Mekas, *Walden, Diaries Notes and Sketches* (1964) [on UbuFilm]

Week 5

Conceptual art and the critique of the institution of art

Seminar Material

Joseph Kosuth, *Titled (Art as Idea as Idea)* (1966), *Art After Philosophy* (1969), Mel Bochner, *Language is not Transparent* (1970), *Theory of Boundaries* (1969-70), Sol Le Witt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" (1967), Dan Graham, "Poem, March 1966 / Dan Graham" (1967) [on ubu.com]

Week 6

Feminism and the (en)gendering of postmodernism: power, difference, and the politics of meaning

Seminar Material

[overview] Linda Nochlin 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?' (1971) [pdf file on the eclass], Mary Beth Edelson, *Some Living American Women Artists/Last Supper* (1971), Martha Rosler, "Semiotics of the Kitchen" (1975), "The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems" (1974-1975), "Domination and the Everyday" (1975)

Week 7

MID TERM I

Week 8

"There is no such thing as art for art's sake": The Black Arts Movement and Beyond

Seminar Material

Amiri Baraka, "Black Dada Nihilismus" (1964), "Black Art" (1966), Faith Ringgold, *The Flag is Bleeding* (1967), Betye Saar, "The Liberation of Aunt Jemina" (1972), "Victory of Gentleness (For Rosa Parks)" (1975), Nikki Giovanni, "Nikki-Rosa" (1968), Adrian Piper, *The Mythic Being: I/Your (Her)* 1974

Week 9

Earthworks, Video, Performance

Seminar Material

Robert Smithson, "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic- New Jersey" (1967) [pdf file on the eclass], and [selections from William Carlos Williams's *Patterson* (1946-51), Gordon Matta-Clark, "Fresh Kill" (1972), Vito Acconci, "Three Adaptation Studies" (1970), Joan Jonas, "Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy" (1972)

Week 10

"We the *mestizas* and *mestizos*, will remain": Chicano/a Art and Poetry

Seminar Material

John Valadez, *Getting Them Out of the Car* (1984), Judy Baca, *Dead Homeboy Killed by a Placa* (1974) Yolanda López, *Portrait of the Artist as the Virgin of Guadalupe* (1978), Alma Villanueva, "Of Utterances" (1978)

Week 11

Beyond "survivance": Native American Art

Seminar Material

Gerald Vizenor's "Survivance," Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, *Indian, Indio, Indigeouns* (1992) *Trade (Gifts for Trading Land with White People)* (1992), Hulleah Tsinnahjinnie, from *Portraits against Amnesia* (c2000)

Week 12 Student Presentations

Week 13 Mid-TERM 2 –Submission of Research Paper