Chicana and Chicano Art:
A History of an American Art Movement, 1965 to the Present

Professor Holly Barnet-Sanchez
University of New Mexico
T/Th, 12:30-1:45

Course Description: The Chicano Art Movement began in the mid-1960s in support of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement (el movimiento). For the next two decades Chicana and Chicano artists throughout the nation created artworks in all media that addressed, celebrated, and critiqued the rich cultural heritage of the Mexican American people, the political and civil struggles of their communities, and their commitment to international contemporary cultural and political innovation. If the Chicano Art Movement ended in 1985 or 1990 (as is debated) what has been happening in the past 20 + years?

This semester we will explore the history of Chicana/o artistic production from its beginnings in political struggle, aesthetic exploration, and community building, to recent developments in the art world and in digital/new media, among other areas of engagement. We will examine the critical role of collective art forms and practices and the relationship to other Chicana/o arts (teatro, cinema, music, literature). In addition, we will address the historical and ongoing debates within Chicana/o communities about the purposes and limits of art, how it can affect understanding and effect meaning, how it can or cannot change lives, social structures, and systems of control and knowledge.

Within a structure that organizes the material both chronologically and thematically, we will study the work of individual artists, grupos (artists’ groups or collectives), and several of the key centros (cultural centers) throughout the United States in order to arrive at a hopefully extensive, if not exhaustive, overview of the myriad forms, transformations of traditional practices, iconographical and formal innovations, practices, issues, and debates that inform this movement. Throughout the semester, we will also work with and through different disciplinary approaches to the study of art: art history, Chicana/o Studies, Cultural Studies, and with different critical theories of modernism, post-colonialism, and post-modernism, to explore how these structures of creating, organizing and explaining knowledge, discursive practices, and forms of representation have been employed to discuss, analyze, explain, celebrate/dismiss, and categorize/delimit Chicana/o art.

This is a combined lecture/discussion course, focusing on the readings, the images, possible guest artists and scholars, the topics set forth in this syllabus, and topics brought to the class by your own interests. All students will be graded on their participation in these discussions. Students are definitely expected to attend all classes. This is particularly important because materials of all kinds will be addressed that both incorporate and go beyond the assigned and optional readings. Your own participation and resulting class notes, therefore, will be essential. If you do have three unexcused absences, I reserve the right to drop you from the class. It is very important,
therefore, that a) you don’t miss classes, and b) if you have to – please let me know, in advance, if possible. It is your responsibility to keep me informed.

Goals of this course are for the students to:
1. learn about and be able to discuss and analyze the many and varied contexts for the development of Chicano/a art and its growth into a movement and beyond.
2. learn about, be able to discuss and analyze, and perhaps even locate or identify new ways of understanding historically significant individual works of art, collective projects, and themes and issues addressed by Chicano/a art.
3. be able to determine, discuss, and analyze what was at stake for the artists and their communities, as well as what is currently at stake for the artists, their communities, and expanded audiences.
4. be able to determine and articulate the ways in which this art has been positioned and written about by scholars in all fields, cultural theoreticians, curators, critics, and the artists themselves.
5. be able to identify, locate, and analyze multiple venues for the dissemination of the art itself, and writings about it from alternative arts organizations, neighborhood walls, alternative and mainstream art galleries and museums, television and radio programs, popular and scholarly publications, exhibition catalogues, and web-based sites of all kinds.
6. be able to critically analyze and evaluate writings about art, art and politics, art in the public sector, art in the digital age, curatorial practices, art historical and other kinds of scholarship, art criticism, and the ways in which multiple and varied theoretical discourses have been applied to Chicana/o art.
7. be able to write about works of art using a number of different approaches including formal and iconographical analyses, contextualizing disciplines such as art history, history, political science, anthropology, literature, area studies, etc.

If you have any special pedagogical or accessibility needs, please let me know early in the semester so that we can make the appropriate accommodations to ensure an effective and positive environment for learning and participation.

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BOOKS


Vargas, George. 2010. Contemporary Chican@ Art: Color and Culture for a New America. Austin: University of Texas Press. (required)
Additional Books for Graduate Students:


Lists to be handed out early in the semester:
1) Reading Assignments and on-campus resources – week 2
2) Requirements: Writing and exam assignments/schedule – week 2
   2) Publications recommended for reading and research
   3) Websites: scholarly, institutional, artists
   4) Artists discussed in this course
   5) Suggested topics for research papers

Journals
A list of important journals will be part of the publications list

Exhibition Catalogs
There are several significant, even ground-breaking studies on the histories of Mexican American, Chicano/a, and Chicano/a – Latino/a art that have been written specifically for exhibition catalogues. A significant portion of our readings will come from them. These resources are also useful for your research.

Other Important Resources – On-line and otherwise
Reference librarians are very helpful when trying to locate materials in the libraries. There are many hard-copy and on-line bibliographies and indexes of art and other periodical literature they can suggest. If you use on-line resources, such as websites, for your research papers, they must be approved by me in advance of turning in the assignment. Accessing actual magazine or newspaper articles on-line does not require prior authorization.

Bibliographies and footnotes/endnotes in your required readings are another valuable resource.

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SCHEDULE OF TOPICS
As mentioned in the Course Description above, this class is organized both chronologically and thematically. We will be moving through the materials and works of art decade by decade keeping in mind that there are no simple or clean beginnings, overlapping, or endings that conform to this straightforward organizational strategy. For the purposes of this course, for example, the 1960s began around 1964-65 and ended approximately in 1974.

The broad-based themes we will address throughout this semester – both separately and inter-woven in multiple combinations through time and over territory – are the following:

1) *El Movimiento* – an umbrella designation for multiple paths and initiatives of the Chicano/a Civil Rights Movement;

2) *The Power of Place* – encompassing Aztlan, the Border / border crossers / border crossings, urban barrio logos, land and landscape, nationalism, cultures in contention;

3) *Identities as they change over time and territory* – *mestizaje* / hybridity, *indigenismo*, gender / sexualities;

4) *The Chicana/o Mexico*;

5) *Places & Spaces for Art* – institutional practices – exhibitions, publications, education;

6) *Chicana/o Artistic Vocabularies, Forms, & Aesthetics* – visual / literary / performative, *rasquachismo* / *domesticana*;

7) *Hybrid, politicizing spirituality*;

8) *Memory*;

9) *Popular Culture*;

10) *Humor and Irony*.

**WEEK ONE: Introduction, Precursors, and The 1960’s; August 20 and 22**

**Topics:**

1) Almost 50 years from the beginning: looking at Chicana/o art from the end of the first decade of the new millennium – what are we looking for and what do we see?
2) Who is a Chicana/o and what is Chicana/o Art: a brief overview of the parameters of the course; historical, political and cultural antecedents; the significance of terminology and language;

3) Course themes, works of Chicana/o art, and documentary images: a run-through.

Readings:

Vargas, *Contemporary Chican@ Art*, “Preface,” and Chapter 1: “Chicano Art as American Art,” xv-16.

Two Handouts:


Optional Reserve Readings (useful throughout the semester):


Field Trip to be scheduled to the Albuquerque Museum of Art and History to see the exhibition: “Estampas de la Raza; Contemporary Prints from the Romo Collection.” (on view until September 29)

ART, POLITICS, AND PROTEST

5
WEEK TWO: The 1960s and the Protest Era

Topic: El Movimiento

La Causa: The beginnings of the Chicano Civil Rights and Art Movements

1) The United Farm Workers Union & the Teatro Campesino (California), the 1966 March from Delano to Sacramento; teatro, murals, posters, the March as performance art
2) The Raza Unida Party (Crystal City, Texas), founded in 1969; rhetoric & posters
4) The Land Grant Movement (New Mexico), Alianza Federal de las Mercedes works to reclaim royal land grants, storms the Tierra Amarilla Court House in 1967, rhetoric, posters, murals

Also: the Anti-war Movement against the Viet Nam War, Student Movements, other Civil Rights Movements (Black, Japanese-American, Native American, Women’s), the greater labor movements in the U.S.

The significance of the Movement for Chicana/o artists and the significance of artists for the Movement.

Mexican American art followed by Chicanismo: Murals, posters, photography, the role of early publications: newspapers, magazines, academic and alternative journals.

Readings:
Jackson, Chapter 2, “Art and the Chicano Movement,” 60-86.


Reserve Readings:


Read the following three chapters:
• Noriega, Chon, “Postmodernism, or Why this is Just Another Poster,” 19-24.

• Lipsitz, George, “Not Just Another Social Movement, Poster Art and the Movimiento Chicano,” 71-90.

• Romo, Tere, “Points of Convergence: The Iconography of the Chicano Poster 91-115.


WEEK THREE:  The 1970’s  September 3 and 5

Topics: The Power of Place, the border, Chicana/o Imagery, and the Chicana/o Mexico – what constitutes tradition, transformation, innovation? Grupos y Centros, Painting and drawing, sculpture Ordinary People – Everyday Lives Labor, Home, Family War at Home and Abroad Feminism and the Chicano Civil Rights Movement

Readings:
Jackson, Chapter 3, “Prominent Themes in Chicano Art,” 87-140.
Vargas, Chapter 5, “Catalogue of Selected Chicana and Chicano Artists,” 117-244.

Graduate Student Readings (Weeks Three through Eight):

Reserve Readings:

Readings on Murals:

**Feminism: (These readings are for the entire semester)**

- Mora, Pat, “Nepantla: Essays from the Land in the Middle,” 292-293.
- Pesquera, Beatriz M. and Denise A. Segura, “There is no Going Back: Chicanas and Feminism,” 294-309.


**Centros and Regional Expression: (These Readings are for the entire semester, especially relevant for Weeks 3 and 5)**


WEEK FOUR: The 1970’s

September 10 and 12

Topics: Place and Identity: Aztláén and Mestizaje,
Chicana/o performance art: the edgy style and flash in the work of Asco

Readings:
Jackson, Chapter 4, “Chicano Art Collectives,” 141-155

Jackson, Chapter 5, “Community Art Centers and Workshops,” 156-172.

Reserve Readings:
Place and Identity:


Asco:
SYNTHESIS AND CULTURAL RECLAMATION

WEEK FIVE: The 1970’s into the ‘80s September 17 and 19

Topics: Las Diosas y los Pachucos: gender, popular culture, and the reworking of powerful symbols; mestizaje, and politicizing spiritualities; Places and Spaces for Art – institutional practices within and outside of the barrios. mixed media

Reserve Readings:

Las Diosas y Politicizing Spiritualities:


Ana Castillo, ed.1996. Goddess of the Americas / La Diosa de las Américas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe. New York: Riverhead Books. Selections from the text – look through them all and select two of the following:

- Cisneros, Sandra, “Guadalupe, the Sex Goddess,” 46-51.


- Castillo, Ana, “Extraordinary Woman,” 72-78.


• Ehrenberg, Felipe, “Framing an Icon: Guadalupe and the Artist’s Vision,” 170-177.


• Paz, Octavio, “The Sons of La Malinche,” 197-208.


Los Pachucos:


WEEK SIX: The 1980’s September 24 and 26
**Topic:** Still Chicana/o, but…..: The Art Movement on its own

**Reading:**
*** See Jackson’s “Timeline of Selected Chicano Art Exhibitions,” 175-177.

**Reserve Readings:**


*High Performance Magazine*, “¡Nuevo Latino!” 1986. #35, 9, no. 3. Entire issue devoted to the topic of Latino art.


**WEEK SEVEN: The 1980’s**

October 1 and 3

**Topic:** Chicana/o aesthetics: politics, spirituality, popular culture, humor
Reserve Readings:

   • Barnet-Sanchez, Holly, “Chicano/a Critical Practices: Reflections on Tomás Ybarra-Frausto’s Concept of Rasquachismo,” 56-87. Includes:


WEEK EIGHT: The 1980’s

Topic: Diosas y Pachuca/os revisited, Chola/os, Chicana/os,
The Power of Place
Places & Spaces for art

Mid-Term Take Home Exam
No Class October 10, Fall Break

SELLING THE VISION

WEEK NINE: The 1980’s into the ‘90s October 15 and 17

Topics: Redefining American Art – Reconsidering Chicano/a Art – the CARA Exhibition and Hispanic Art in the United States
International Recognition: Le Demons des Anges and other interventions

***Refer to Jackson’s “Timeline of Selected Chicano Art Exhibitions,” pp.175-177, and take time to look at those readings that are on reserve in the Fine Arts and Design Library.

Readings:

Vargas, Chapter 3, “Resistance and Affirmation in the 1990s,” 51-84.

The U.S. / Mexican Border:


The United States & Mexico:

**Museums and Exhibitions:**


Essays translated into English:

**WEEK TEN: The 1990’s October 22 and 24**

**Topic:** Themes in Print

**Reserve Readings:**


If you are interested in research on posters the above issue of Art Journal is entirely devoted to this topic.


**WEEK ELEVEN: The 1990’s October 29 and 31**
Topics:
Radical Mestizaje / Hybridity: foregrounding tradition – practicing innovation
The Post-Colonial and the Postmodern
Is there a Chicana/o avant-garde? If so, what does it look like?

Readings:

TRANSFORMING THE VISION?

WEEK TWELVE: The New Millenium
November 5 and 7

Topic: New Interpretations, New Contexts, New Work

Readings:

Vargas, Chapter 4, “Into the Twenty-First Century,” 85-116, and “Conclusion,” 245-248.

Reserve Readings:


WEEK THIRTEEN: The New Millenium, cont. November 12 and 14

Topic: Looking Forward – Looking Back

Reading:

Reserve Readings:


WEEK FOURTEEN: Current Issues November 19 and 21

NO READINGS

WEEK FIFTEEN: Student Presentations November 26 and 28

NO READINGS

No Class on Thursday, 11/28, Thanksgiving

WEEK SIXTEEN: Final Discussion & Review December 3 and 5

NO READINGS

Tuesday, December 3 – last official class meeting

Topic: Chicana/o Art: What are the good questions to ask ourselves now?

This is an opportunity for the entire class to review the material covered during the course and participate in creating the final exam questions.

No scheduled class on Thursday, 12/5
I will be in the classroom that day during our regularly scheduled time to answer any last minute questions, and continue any incomplete discussions,
to
hand out the final exam – this is the only time and place you can get it --
and to
accept all research papers – due that day in class

FINALS WEEK: December 9-13

Final exam is due in my office on Monday, 12/9 by 5 p.m.