COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This upper-division English majors course introduces students to a range of contemporary visual culture and performance forms in the Americas. Thematic units focus on select examples of performance, digital and visual art, and popular and mass culture, while also familiarizing students with basic terms and concepts associated with performance studies and visual cultural analysis. Among the specific topics that we consider are Mexican lucha libre and its interactions with WWE; carnival; diva fan culture; cosplay and the real-life superhero movement; funerary and mourning spectacles; political cabaret, and socially engaged, avant-garde, digital, and performance art. The assigned texts include artists’ websites and exhibition catalogs, videos and movies (many available online), and critical essays. Assignments include quizzes, short essays, and a final research project. Two weeks at the end of the semester are reserved for student workshop sessions and presentation of final research projects. In addition to English, this course fulfills requirements for International Studies and Latina/o Studies.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


ONLINE RESOURCES:

In addition to the assigned readings, we will frequently view slides, videos, dvds, and internet media in class, and I will also ask you to review online media as part of your homework. The movies and videos that appear on the syllabus are on reserve in the UI Main Library, and, almost all of the artists whom we study this term have a significant internet presence. Since you will eventually be selecting a particular artist or performance for your final paper topic, I encourage you to familiarize yourself with the websites and YouTube videos of artists and performances discussed in this class. The Hemispheric Institute of Performance Studies at NYU also has a great number of resources available via its video archive (http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/hidvl).
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

**Three two- to three-page response essays (10% ea. for a total of 30%).** Your response essay should address the assigned reading/viewing for the week in which it is due. In addition to submitting your essays via Dropbox, please bring a personal copy of your essay to class with you. You should be prepared to comment on your response essay during group discussion.

**Reading quizzes to be given throughout the semester (seven quizzes; each quiz counts 2.5% for a total of 15%; lowest score is dropped).** I will give seven quizzes without prior notice on T or Th throughout the semester in the weeks noted on the syllabus. These brief quizzes assess whether you have done the assigned reading/viewing and also serve as a lead-in to group discussion. There are no quizzes during the first week of class, mid-term exam week, the last two weeks of the semester, and the four weeks in which a reader response is due. Please note that I do not offer make-up quizzes without a written medical excuse.

**Midterm exam given in class (20%).** This exam will assess the course material covered from weeks 1-8. The exam will consist of identification of key terms, concepts, and passages or scenes from our reading and viewing and short-answer questions. The content and format of the exam will be discussed in class prior to the exam date.

**Seven-page final paper; this assignment will be discussed in class.** The final two weeks of instruction will be dedicated to work on the final paper. Students meet individually with the professor to discuss their final paper topic during Week 15. Class time during Week 16 is dedicated to small group workshop sessions in which students exchange feedback about draft pages of their final papers.

**Participation (15%).** The participation grade is based upon your demonstration of having done the assigned course reading; making frequent, productive, and unsolicited contributions in class; demonstrating collegiality toward me and your fellow students; and showing attentiveness in class. Depending on class size and classroom dynamics, I may assign in-class writing exercises or small-group activities, which also fall under the participation requirement. I assign a comprehensive participation grade at the end of the semester; if you would like to inquire about your participation grade at any point during the semester, please see me during office hours.

**Attendance.** Good attendance will not boost your grade, but poor attendance will hurt it. More than two unexcused absences in a semester will lower your final grade by one-third grade (a plus or minus point). After that, your final grade will continue to drop by one-third grade per each two absences. If you find yourself in a situation that affects your ability to attend class over a period of time (e.g., a hospitalization), please advise me early in the process, so that we can work out an arrangement for you to make up missed coursework.
Screenings. Please note that there are several screenings scheduled on Tuesday evenings throughout the semester. If you are unable to attend a screening due to a schedule conflict, it is your responsibility to view the assigned movie or video before class on Thursday.
SYLLABUS

Week 1 Introduction to the course

T
Introduction to course and presentation of syllabus

Th

Week 2 Scenarios of contact
Quiz week

T


Th
Discussion of movies in class


Week 3 The visual cultures of the new world baroque
Essay week

T


Th
Review Alma López website: http://www.almalopez.net


Week 4 From baroque to neobaroque: Pepón Osorio
Quiz week

T
Jennifer A. González, Pepón Osorio, 1-59.

Th
Jennifer A. González, Pepón Osorio, 60-94.

**Week 5 Lucha libre**  
**Quiz week**

T


Th
Discussion of *Tales of Masked Men* in class


**Week 6 Performance as immanence**  
**Essay Week**

T
Review YouTube clips of Eddie Guerrero, Rey Misterio, Sin Cara, and Alberto del Río in WWE (e.g., WWE Battleground)


Th
Discussion of *Super Amigos* in class


Response essay #2 due in Dropbox

**Week 7 Devotion to divas: Selena and surrogation**

**Quiz week**

T


Th
Discussion of *Selena* in class


**Week 8 Political cabaret: Astrid Hadad**

T
Laura G. Gutiérrez, “Gender Parody, Political Satire, and Postmodern Rancheras,” *Performing Mexicanidad*


Th
Midterm exam in class

**Week 9**

SPRING BREAK
Week 10 Diaspora and place-making: Ana Mendieta and Tania Bruguera
Quiz week

T


Th
Discussion of Ana Mendieta in class


Week 11 Mourning and Performance: Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, H.I.J.O.S., and Teresa Margolles

T
Diana Taylor, The Archive and the Repertoire, “‘You Are Here’: H.I.J.O.S. and the DNA of Performance”


Th
Discussion of *Las Madres* in class

Review Teresa Margolles’ works on the web


**Week 12 Media interventions: Nao Bustamante and Minerva Cuevas**

**Essay week**

T
Laura Gutiérrez, “Nao Bustamante’s ‘Bad-Girl’ Aesthetics,” *Performing Mexicanidad*

View Nao Bustamante shorts in class

T

Th
Discussion of *America, the Beautiful* in class

Review Minerva Cuevas website: [http://www.irational.org/minerva/resume.html](http://www.irational.org/minerva/resume.html)

Response essay #3 due in Icon Dropbox

**Week 13 Conceptual and post-conceptual art: Celia Alvarez Muñoz**

**Quiz week**

T
Roberto Tejada, *Celia Alvarez Muñoz*, 1-52

Th
Roberto Tejada, *Celia Alvarez Muñoz*, 53-100
Week 14 Digital and post-conceptual art: Ricardo Domínguez and Francis Alýs
Quiz week

T


Th
Discussion of Politics in class


Week 15 Conclusion: greater American visual culture after 9/11

T
Diana Taylor, The Archive and the Repertoire, “Lost in the Field of Vision: Witnessing September 11” and “Hemispheric Performances”

Discussion of final projects, sign up for meetings with professor

Th
Individual meetings with professor

Week 16 Workshop sessions

T
Workshop groups

Th
Walk-in paper consultations in my office

Week 17 EXAM WEEK/FINAL PAPER DUE