Chicano Art and the Politics of Place
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the historical context around the United Farm Workers in California and the Raza Unida Party in Texas that gave way, during the 1960s and 70s, to the emergence of a vital Chicano art movement in the Southwest. By means of labor and community organizing, Mexican Americans and their allies challenged social inequities based on racial, ethnic, and cultural prejudice. A history of Chicano art after 1968 focuses not only on the creative impulse of individual makers and their artworks; it looks also at the struggle of artists to create publics while achieving recognition through mainstream institutions. Addressing issues of artistic form, historic change, and political purpose, the course looks closely at narratives of display and the making of art history in the following museum exhibitions: Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation (UCLA, 1991); Just Another Poster? Chicano Graphic Arts in California (2000, Blanton); Chicano Visions (SAMA, 2001), Road to Aztlán (LACMA, 2001), and Phantom Sightings (LACMA, 2008). Along this itinerary, discussions will examine the problem of representation in a variety of forms, media and genre; the struggle for human rights and cultural selfhood; as well as the politics of place, ethnicity, sexuality, and other mediated-identities.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Lectures, quizzes, short assignments, and exams will be directed toward achieving several broad goals (known to university administrators as “learning outcomes”). By the end of the course, students should:

- Know the major artistic developments of Chicano art and culture during the 1960s and 70s and understand their intersection with contemporaneous historical and cultural developments.
- Recognize and analyze individual works of art, media, and architecture in terms of their form, function, meaning, and reception within Chicano culture and wider contexts.
- Examine and analyze the function of museum exhibitions in the shaping of institutional art.
- Know and correctly apply terminology basic to the field.
- Effectively apply visual analysis as a component of a scholarly argument.
REQUIRED TEXTS


RECOMMENDED TEXTS


GENERAL INFORMATION

Frequency of classes: Class is held two times a week: Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Attendance at all sessions is required. Unexcused absences and repeated tardiness will be noted and will have an effect on your final grade.

Class Preparation: Students should thoroughly prepare for class by reading all material listed in the syllabus for that week. Class participation includes three 250-word postings on Blackboard. We will review various aspects of image analysis at various points throughout the semester, and study guides will be provided on Blackboard. Please bring the assigned readings and your notes to class. Helpful method: Create a binder with all the PDF printouts.

Blackboard: In this class we’ll be using Blackboard—a Web-based course management system with password-protected access: http://courses.smu.edu —to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit reading assignments, and to provide study guides. You can find support in using Blackboard at the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.; please plan accordingly.

Postings: On 3 different occasions during the 15-week course [weeks 4, 8, and 13] students will upload to Blackboard a posting that consists of 2-3 paragraphs (250 words) with a critical viewpoint. This writing should function as a review and comparison of at least two readings assigned in the weeks prior to the posting due date. There is no set format with regard to Blackboard postings; but the writing should both report and
analyze; each entry depends on a well-argued response to the material and will be assessed on the level of engagement. While there is no grade assigned to these postings, they are a requirement and can make or break a borderline grade.

**Midterm Exam:** The midterm will consist of 15 PowerPoint image identifications in which examples of important artworks discussed in class are projected during the exam period; images are to be identified by the maker, work’s title, year made. In addition you will be asked to define 5 keywords, to identify 5 of the readings, and to write a slide comparison in brief essay form. Bring a bluebook.

**Final Exam:** The final will be cumulative and will consist of 30 PowerPoint image identifications in which examples of important artworks discussed in class are projected during the exam period; images are to be identified by the maker, work’s title, year made. In addition you will be asked to define 10 keywords, to identify 5 of the readings, and to write 2 slide comparisons in brief essay form. Bring a bluebook.

**Short Research and Writing Assignment (x 2):** Artwork Analysis + Exhibition Review: 4 pages (1000 words): Two short papers that look critically at specific artworks within their exhibition context. Your research and writing assignments will involve visits to museums, galleries, and other art spaces here in Dallas, such as the Dallas Latino Cultural Center or Oak Cliff Cultural Center. The due dates for assignments are listed in the week-by-week schedule. Only students’ original work will be accepted. (Refer to the appropriate honor code and to guidelines for proper citation of sources.) No writing assignment will be accepted after the due date.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

**Disability Accommodations:** Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first be registered with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS) to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. Once registered, students should then schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements.

**Writing Assignments:** [#1: due 2-14-12; #2 due 4-24-12]

Two different assignments will focus on the aesthetic and formal qualities of one artwork to explain its formal, aesthetic qualities and meaning in terms of Chicano-US Latino visual culture and its history. The initial description should identify the artist, life dates and place of origin (or culture group), the title of the object, date of production, materials and dimensions. Then in two pages discuss the work’s visual interest as an aesthetic object. What materials and process did the artist employ? What style was she working in? What formal elements are typical of this artist, movement, or group’s style? How does it appear to the eye and what impression does it convey? Your task is to rehearse in writing the aesthetic quality, craftsmanship, or visual interest of this object. Do not overwhelm
with biographical information. Keep your focus on the object itself. The last two pages should place the artwork within the larger context of the exhibition. How is the work consistent with or different from other works on display? How does its meaning change in relation to the exhibition as a whole, and in relation to the artistic, social, or political concern it addresses? [Length of each writing assignment: 4 pages | 1000 words]

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**Summary:** Your final grade will be based on in-class participation and Blackboard postings (20%); 1 midterm + 1 final exam (40%); and 2 research-writing assignments @ 4-page (1000 words x 2), each paper being a critical analysis of a specific artwork and exhibition context (40%).

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**CLASS SCHEDULE:**

**Unit 1. History and Context**

**Week 1:**

Tuesday, January 17

—Introduction | Syllabus Review

Thursday, January 19

Screening:


Useful resource for writing assignments:


**Week 2:**

Tuesday, January 24


**Thursday, January 26**

Screening, scenes from:


**Unit II. Chicano Visions**

**Week 3: [Posting 1 due date]***

**Tuesday, January 31**


**Thursday, February 2**


Unit III. CARA: Chicano Art, Resistance and Affirmation

Week 4:

Tuesday, February 7


Thursday, February 9


Week 5:

Due date: Exhibition artwork review and analysis (4 pages: 1000 words). From:


Tuesday, February 14


Thursday, February 16

Week 6:

Tuesday, February 21


Thursday, February 23:

----- Midterm Exam (Bluebooks required)

Unit IV. Roads to Aztlán

Week 7: [Posting 2 due date]***

Tuesday, February 28


Screening:


Thursday, March 1


Unit V. Just Another Poster?

Week 8:

Tuesday, March 6

Thursday, March 8


**Week 9: Spring Break**

**Unit VI. Avant-Garde Art | Chicano Art | US Latino Art**

**Week 10:**

**Tuesday, March 20**


**Thursday, March 22**


**Week 11:**

**Tuesday, March 27**


**Thursday, March 29**


**Week 12:**

**Tuesday, April 3**

Thursday, April 5


Friday, April 6: University Holiday

Week 13: [Posting 3 due date]***

Tuesday, April 10


Thursday, April 12


Week 14:

Tuesday, April 17


Thursday, April 19

Screening:

**Week 15:**

**Due date: Exhibition artwork review and analysis (4 pages: 1000 words). From:**


**Tuesday, April 24**


**Thursday, April 26:**

—Visit to relevant museum or gallery exhibition.

**Week 16:**

**Tuesday, May 1: In-Class Final Exam (Bluebooks required)**

**Guidelines for Writing Assignments**

All writing must be double-spaced with standard margins in a 12-point font (do not justify the right-hand margin). Any material or insights gleaned from another source should be cited in either a parenthetical citation with a Works Cited page or a footnote with a full citation. If you are confused about how to cite properly please consult a style manual (preferably Chicago Manual of Style or MLA). Please consult the University honor code.

**Writing Center:** You are strongly encouraged to use the university’s Writing Center.
Additional Reading and Resources


Web Resource:
