

## Course Content

Course Code: HR2002

Course Title: Issues in Art History and Theory

Pre-requisites: Nil

No. of Aus: 3

Contact Hours: 39

### Course Aims

Conducted through seminars and lectures, this course will introduce a range of issues concerning the interrelated realms of nature, the environment, and agency, both human and non-human. Focusing on creative strategies, ecological thinking, and art criticism, we will explore how artists and scholars, both historical and contemporary, have fostered a collective awareness of the land, nature, and local ecologies, and responded to environmental crises past and present. We will examine the cultural politics of the impending climate catastrophe, investigating how art is being increasingly mobilised, in social movements against neoliberal and postcolonial globalisation, as a means of protest against the commodification of nature and large-scale extraction of resources.

### Intended Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course, you will be able to:

1. Identify and discuss eco-critical issues in art history and theory from a range of historical, social and cultural perspectives.
2. Develop creative and critical strategies to analyse and solve problems through observation, interpretation, analysis, reflection and evaluation relating to eco-critical issues and questions raised in art history and theory.
3. Apply critical thinking skills in your writing and oral presentations relating to your eco-critical art history research projects.
4. Develop original and independent research outcomes and writing to propose new ideas and fresh insights to eco-criticism and the art history of ecology.
5. Participate respectfully in class discussion and provide constructive criticism and feedback to your peers for their oral presentations.

### Course Content

This course will examine a wide array of creative works and writings from different cultures and time periods to explore art's generative potential in fostering a collective ecological consciousness. Organised around a broad chronological framework, the course undertakes a case study approach investigating artistic strategies and writings that have grappled with the aftermath of past climate events and others that are anticipating the impending cataclysmic climate disaster. We will commence with 'thing theory' which provides the opportunity to prioritise ecological viewpoints of existence over limiting anthropocentric-focused analyses. Casting a long arc from historical conceptions of ecologically aware art such as the sixteenth-century Venetian painter Titian's Sylvan renditions of trees to the representation of the Little Ice Age in a sixteenth-century manuscript of the *Bhagavata Purana* from Mughal India to the present-day, we will investigate how Indigenous Australian curators and writers are mobilising First Nations Knowledges to decolonise and sustain country and creative strategies

from the Oceania artists Angela Tiatia and Salote Tawale that respond to the existential threat from rising ocean levels. Highlighting art's power to reveal societal inequities and seek environmental justice, we will analyse how Amy Balkin's and David Solnit's ecologically oriented artistic practices expand the field of media activism.

## **Weekly Schedule of Learning Activities**

### **Week 1: Course Introduction ILO 1, 2, 3, 5**

- Course Introduction: Introduction to the course contents. Outlining the various aspects of the course including the weekly schedule of learning activities and assessment exercises followed by Q&A with the students.

### **Week 2: Object Oriented Approaches in Art History: Thing Theory ILO 1, 2, 3, 5**

- Ittai Weinryb, "Beyond Representation: Things—Human and Non-Human", *Cultural Histories of the Material World*, Peter N Miller (ed.), (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 172-186.

### **Week 3: Renaissance Conceptions of a Verdant Earth ILO 1, 2, 3, 5**

- Leopoldine Prosperetti, "Titian: Sylvan Poet", *Green Worlds in Early Modern Italy: Art and a Verdant Earth*, Goodchild, K.H., A. Oettinger and L. Prosperetti et al (eds.), (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 155-176.

### **Week 4: Climate Change and the Indian Art of Krishna Devotion ILO 1, 2, 3, 5**

- Sugata Ray, "Water", *Climate Change and the Art of Devotion: Geoaesthetics in the Land of Krishna, 1550-1850* (Washington D.C.: University of Washington Press, 2019), 25-59.

### **Week 5: The Romantic Sublime and Environmental Crises: Exploring the Sublime in Historic and Contemporary Eco-Art ILO 1, 2, 3, 5**

- Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (London Routledge Classics, first published 1757), 44-45.
- Tess Somervell, "The Romantic Sublime and Environmental Crises", *The Cambridge Companion to the Romantic Sublime*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023): 251-261.

### **Week 6: Site Visit: Olafur Eliasson: Your Curious Journey, Singapore Art Museum ILO 1, 2, 3, 5** Tanjong Pagar Distripark, url: <https://www.singaporeartmuseum.sg/art-events/exhibitions/olafur-eliasson>

### **Week 7: Joseph Beuys: Fronting a Radical Ecology ILO 1, 2, 3, 5**

- David Adams, "Joseph Beuys: Pioneer of a Radical Ecology", *Art Journal* 51.2 Art and Ecology (Summer 1992), 26-34.

**Week 8: First Nations Knowledges: Songlines and the Generative Potential of Country ILO 1, 2, 3, 5**

- Margo Neale and Lynne Kelley, “Knowledge in Country and the Third Archive”, *First Knowledges Songlines: The Power and Promise* (Australia: Thames and Hudson, 2020), 31-43.

**Week 9: Feminism and Environmental Art: Water as Agent of Decolonisation ILO 1, 2, 3, 5**

- Jamie-Hamilton Fairey, “Gestures of Survivance: Angela Tiatia’s *Lick* and Feminist Environmental Performance Art in Oceania”, *Pacific Arts*, 20.1 (2020-2021): 6-22.

**Week 10: Environmentalism and Decolonising Art Practice ILO 1, 2, 3, 5**

- Nicole M. Nepomuceno, “Yuki Kihara: Trouble in Paradise”, *Art Asia Pacific*, 129 (Jul-Aug 2022): 42-47.

**Week 11: Arts of Migration, Diaspora, Refugees and Nomads: Salote Tawale’s *No Location* ILO 1, 2, 3, 5**

- T. J. Demos, “Charting a Course: Exile, Diaspora, Nomads, Refugees”, *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary During Global Crises* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 2-20.

**Week 12: Amy Balkin: Climate Change, Environmental Justice and Exploratory Drilling ILO 1, 2, 3, 5**

- Lisa E Bloom, “Viewers as Citizen Scientists: Disappearance in Amy Balkin’s *A People’s Archive of Sinking and Melting*”, *Climate Change and the New Polar Aesthetics: Artists Reimagine the Arctic and Antarctic* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022), 130-152.

**Week 13: David Solnit: Art, Social Movements and Climate Justice ILO 1, 2, 3, 5**

- Sven Eberlein, “David Solnit, Activism’s Creative Renaissance Man”, *The Art of the Green New Deal*, October 22<sup>nd</sup> 2019, np. URL: <https://artofthegreennewdeal.net/david-solnit-activisms-creative-renaissance-man/>
- Jen Angel, “David Solnit and The Arts of Change: An Interview,” (2008), np. URL: [https://www.joaap.org/webonly/solnit\\_angel.htm#angel](https://www.joaap.org/webonly/solnit_angel.htm#angel)

**Recommended Resources**

Alan C. Braddock, *Implication: An Ecocritical Dictionary for Art History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023).

T. J. Demos, “Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology: An Introduction”, *Third Text* 27.1 (January 2013): 1-9.

Alan C. Braddock and Christoph Irmscher (eds.), *A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History* (Alabama, 2009).

Brian Tokar, "Movements for Climate Justice in the US and Worldwide," in *Handbook of the Climate Change Movement*, ed. Matthias Dietz and Heiko Garrelts (London: Routledge, 2013), 131-147.

Eyal Weizman and Fazal Sheikh, *The Conflict Shoreline: Colonialism as Climate Change in the Negev Desert* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2015).

Mike Davis, "The Coming Desert: Kropotkin, Mars and the Pulse of Asia," *New Left Review* 97 (Jan/Feb 2016): 23-43, URL: <https://newleftreview.org/II/97/mike-davis-the-coming-desert>.

Rajesh Makwana, "A New Era of Global Protest Begins," *Truthout* (06 February 2016), <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/34686-a-new-era-of-global-protest-begins>

T.J. Demos, "Playful Protesters Use Art to Draw Attention to Inadequacy of Paris Climate Talks," *Truthout*, 13 December 2015, url: <https://truthout.org/articles/playful-protesters-use-art-to-draw-attention-to-inadequacy-of-paris-climate-talks/>.

### **Assessment (including continuous and summative assessment)**

#### **Class Participation Weighting 20% ILO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 [Continuous Assessment]**

Weekly attendance and participation in class discussion on the works of art and prescribed readings will count towards your final grade. Please read the prescribed readings and come to class with prepared comments and questions to contribute to the discussion on a weekly basis.

#### **Class Presentations (between Weeks 2 to 12) Weighting 20% ILO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 [Continuous Assessment]**

Fifteen-to-twenty-minute group presentations which include a visual analyses of works of relevant to the week's topic and theme and situate the selected works of art within the concepts, ideas, and theories from the prescribed weekly readings. Please submit any notes, handouts and powerpoint slides 48 hours prior to the class.

#### **Mid-Semester Short Essay focused around Visual Analysis and Argument - 1000 Words – due \_\_\_\_\_ Weighting 20% ILO 1, 2, 3, 4**

Students will select one work of art from our site visit to the Singapore Art Museum and construct an argument based on its visual analysis addressing: i) its formal characteristics ii) artistic strategy iii) how the work articulates the threat of climate change and / or expresses a creative strategy asking for climate justice. Some relevant biographical research on the artist / context will be necessary to complete this exercise

#### **Final Assessment Research Essay – 2500 words – due \_\_\_\_\_ Weighting 40% ILO 1, 2, 3, 4**

Students will be required to write a formal research essay responding to one question from a set of several questions distributed in class and posted on the course website. Alongside the visual analysis of work(s) selected for your essay, you will need to provide the context, argument, and theoretical or critical framework. Your essay should demonstrate your ability to undertake original research in addition to the prescribed course readings and recommended resources. Please attach a separate Bibliography in Chicago Style. The word count of 2500 does not include footnotes and bibliography.