



Art History
Seminar in Contemporary Art: Artists as Historians

AH 4640G / VA 9582B – Winter 2022 course outline



David Hammons, *Day's End*, 2014-21

Professor Sarah Bassnett

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Office hours – Tuesdays 2 – 2:30 pm and by appointment on Zoom

Class time: Tuesdays 11:30 am – 1:20 pm

Format: This is a blended course with online content in addition to in-person classes

Location: VAC 247

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar is about contemporary art in dialogue with the past. It is based on the understanding that histories are interpretations of the past, and events are described and interpreted differently depending on who is telling the story. Over the last several decades, many contemporary artists have embraced historical research and have taken up the role of historian. While some have investigated lesser-known events to shed light on marginalized histories, others have created fictional histories that offer new perspectives on the past. Students will develop their own research projects in relation to the course theme.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton (Neutral) peoples on lands connected to several Treaties including Treaty 6 London Township, Treaty 7 Sombra Township, Treaty 21 Longwoods and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum.

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Analyze and evaluate works and exhibitions of contemporary art using appropriate terminology.
- Conduct research using library resources, such as books and journal articles in databases, and use the sources effectively in a research essay.
- Articulate an argument orally and in writing, support the argument using appropriate evidence, and address counter arguments.
- Apply knowledge of issues and debates in contemporary art to develop their own views, and articulate ideas clearly in oral and written form.
- Solve problems by participating constructively in group discussions and activities. This includes sharing ideas and listening respectfully to the views of others.

PREREQUISITE / ANTI-REQUISITE

Undergraduate prerequisite(s): Registration in years 3 or 4 of a Department of Visual Arts module, or permission of the Department.

You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that you have not taken an anti-requisite course. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as basis of appeal. If you are not eligible for a course, you may be removed from it at any time, and you will receive no adjustment to your fees. These decisions cannot be appealed.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Technical Requirements



Stable internet connection



Laptop or computer with microphone and speakers (camera optional)

For technical assistance, check the [OWL Help page](#) or contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#). Phone 519-661-3800.

[Google Chrome](#) or [Mozilla Firefox](#) are the preferred browsers to use for OWL.

Course material will be posted to OWL: <http://owl.uwo.ca>. Any changes will be announced on the OWL site.

The last day to drop this course without academic penalty is **March 7, 2022**.

Required readings are posted as PDFs on OWL.

ASSESSMENTS

DUE DATES & GRADING

Assignment	Due date	Grading
Participation	Weekly	10%
Quizzes	Weekly	10%
Proposal	Feb 12 @ 5 pm	10%
Written assignment	March 12 @ 5 pm	25%
Presentation	March 15-29 @ 11:30 am	10%
Research essay	March 31 @ 5 pm	35%

PARTICIPATION 10%

The participation portion of your grade will be based your contributions to online discussions and activities. Please note that even though some aspects of the course are asynchronous, there is a weekly schedule. You are expected to complete course work and participate on a weekly basis.

QUIZZES ON READINGS – 10% (weekly)

Quizzes on the assigned readings are in OWL. Each quiz has five questions. Use these quizzes to help guide your reading and for feedback on how well you are understanding the material. Any quiz that is not completed on time (within the week it is assigned) will receive a grade of 0. If a student has academic accommodation for more than one week, the missed quiz may be given the average grade of the completed quizzes.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT 25%

The written assignment is based on the weekly lectures and discussions and is based on the weekly learning outcomes. The assignment is comprised of short answer and essay questions. You will have approximately one week to complete it.

RESEARCH PROJECT – proposal 10%, presentation 10%, and final essay 35%

Your research essay should focus on a body of work by one contemporary artist who engages in historical research as the basis of their practice and / or whose work is in dialogue with the past.

Proposal and annotated bibliography: Your proposal should include a brief (approximately 300-word) outline identifying the issue, the artist, and the body of work you will write about, along with an annotated bibliography of at least six published sources you expect to use for your research. Your bibliography must include articles from journals, as well as books. (Reputable websites can be used, but these should be in addition to six published sources).

Presentations: You will deliver a fifteen-minute presentation on your research project to the class towards the end of term.

Research essay: Undergraduate final papers should be 8-10 pages and approximately 2500 words. Graduate papers should be approximately 3000-3500 words and are expected to demonstrate greater originality, more extensive research, and more sophisticated argumentation. Essays should be thesis-driven and should offer an interpretation of a body of work that is supported by suitable evidence derived from your research.

EXPLICIT CONTENT WARNING

Contemporary artists are known for breaking rules and challenging social norms. In this course, we will look at and discuss a broad range of contemporary art, including some work that addresses controversial subject matter.

POLICIES ON LATE OR MISSED ASSESSMENTS

Extensions, granted for valid reasons, must be negotiated before assignments are due. Late assignments will be penalized by 5% each day. Exceptions to the late penalties are outlined below under academic consideration.

Academic Consideration:

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by extenuating circumstances, including short-term illness or injury. Reasonable academic consideration is a cooperative process between the University, the student, and academic staff. All participants in the process must act in good faith, and fulfil their respective obligations, if it is to succeed.

Students who experience an extenuating circumstance (illness, injury, or other extenuating circumstance) sufficiently significant as to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements, may submit a request for academic consideration through the following routes:

- a. Submitting a Self-Reported Absence form, provided that the conditions for submission are met;
- b. For medical absences, submitting a Student Medical Certificate (SMC) signed by a licensed medical or mental health practitioner, in order to be eligible for Academic Consideration; or
- c. For non-medical absences, submitting appropriate documentation (e.g., obituary, police report, accident report, court order, etc.) to Academic Counselling in their Faculty of registration, in order to be eligible for academic consideration.

Students seeking academic consideration:

- Are advised to consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying handing in work;
- Are encouraged to make appropriate decisions, based on their specific circumstances, recognizing that minor ailments (e.g., upset stomach) or upsets (e.g., argument with a friend) are not normally an appropriate basis for a self-reported absence;
- **Must communicate with their instructors no later than 24 hours** after the end of the period covered by either the self-reported absence or SMC, or immediately upon their return following a documented absence;
- **Are advised that all necessary documentation, forms, etc. are to be submitted to academic counselling within two business days after the date specified for resuming responsibilities**
- Late assessments without a self-reported absence or appropriate documentation will be subject to a late penalty of 5% per day

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is sufficiently severe as to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using the online Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less. The following conditions are in place for self-reporting of medical or extenuating circumstances:

- a. Students will be allowed a maximum of two self-reported absences between September and April, and one self-reported absence between May and August;
- b. The duration of the excused absence will be for a maximum of 48 hours from the time the Self-Reported Absence form is completed through the online portal, or from 8:30am the following morning if the form is submitted after 4:30pm;
- c. The duration of the excused absence will terminate prior to the end of the 48 hour period, should the student undertake significant academic responsibilities (e.g., write a test, submit a paper) during that time;
- d. The duration of an excused absence will terminate at 8:30am on the day following the last day of classes each semester, regardless of how many days of absence have elapsed;
- e. Self-reported absences will not be allowed for scheduled final examinations; for midterm examinations scheduled during the December examination period; or for final lab examinations

- f. Self-reporting may not be used for assessments (e.g., midterm exams, tests, reports, presentations, or essays) worth more than 30% of any given course;
- g. Students must be in touch with their instructors no later than 24 hours after the end of the period covered by the Self-Reported Absence form, to clarify how they will be expected to fulfil the academic expectations they may have missed.
- h. Late assessments with a self-reported absence should be submitted within 24 hours of submission of the last absence

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All work for the course MUST be entirely your own. All sources that you use for your assignments must be accurately cited. If you have doubts about how and when to cite sources, it is better to err on the side of caution. Consult the academic integrity lesson on OWL and / or consult with me before assignment due dates. All course work must be completed specifically for this course. Submitting the same work for credit in more than one course is considered cheating. Plagiarism and cheating are very serious academic offences and they will be dealt with strictly. Plagiarism includes:

1. Quoting verbatim or almost verbatim from any source, including all electronic sources, without acknowledgement;
2. Adopting someone else's line of thought, argument, or supporting evidence without acknowledgement;
3. Submitting someone else's work, in any form, without acknowledgement;
4. Knowingly representing another person's idea as one's own.

For information concerning Western's Plagiarism and Academic Offences (Scholastic Offences) policies see: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

All assignments are subject to review through plagiarism detection software. The University uses Turnitin.com for this purpose. Turnitin is an anti-plagiarism tool that screens assignments against a database of the Internet, e-journals, e-books, and a range of other scanned material, including other assignments for this course. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system.

CITATION STYLE

The Chicago Manual of Style, Humanities format, is the standard style for art history. Use this style to cite your sources for your research paper and other assignments. Please refer to the guide in OWL and the Library website for examples: <http://www.lib.uwo.ca/services/styleguides.html>.

POLICIES & CONDUCT

Student Conduct

Students will conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the maturity and academic integrity expected of university students. Student conduct shall be consistent with the general laws of the community and with University regulations. Students shall show regard and respect for the rights, safety, and property of all members of the University community and are expected to act in a responsible manner within the University and the community at large.

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/code_of_conduct.pdf

I am committed to fostering a class environment that is comfortable for all students, especially those from marginalized or underrepresented backgrounds. These core values include using preferred gender pronouns and human-centred language, which convey respect for people's diverse experiences. We do not always have to agree with one another; however, everyone is expected to show respect for the views of other people. Behaviour that is disruptive or discriminatory will not be tolerated.

Academic Sanctions

In instances of non-payment of prescribed tuition and other fees, the University shall seal the academic record. When an academic record is sealed, the student will not be able to: a) view grades; b) register in future courses; c) receive transcripts or a degree diploma; d) obtain admission or readmission. The above prohibitions shall be in force until such time as indebtedness to the University, including payment of fee for removal of the seal, has been cleared to the satisfaction of the University. [Academic Sanctions](#)

Additional Course Material Request Policy

For online courses the material may be presented in a variety of ways at the instructor's discretion. Requests for additional material can only be made in cases necessitating academic accommodation. If a student requires Academic Accommodation for the course material, they can contact Western's Academic Support & Engagement department. <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>

Academic Accommodation

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

Professionalism & Privacy

In addition to following the [Student Code of Conduct](#) Western students are expected to adhere to the following expectations of professional conduct:



- Students are expected to follow online etiquette expectations provided on OWL
- All course materials created by the instructor(s) are copyrighted and cannot be sold/shared
- Recordings are not permitted (audio or video) without explicit permission
- Permitted recordings are not to be distributed
- Students will be expected to uphold academic integrity standards
- All recorded sessions will remain within the course site or unlisted if streamed

Copyright and Audio/Video Recording Statement

Course material is copyrighted and using this material for any purposes other than your own education contravenes Canadian Copyright Laws. You must always ask permission to record another individual and you should never share or distribute recordings. Do not post course material on any websites or platforms.

RESOURCES

Office Hours / Email

Office hours will be held on Zoom. Please see me during my office hours if you are having difficulty with any aspect of the course, including readings or assignments. If you cannot make it during office hours, arrange an appointment or contact me by email. I will make every effort to reply to email within one to two business days. As I have other professional and personal responsibilities, I typically respond to email Monday through Friday during normal business hours.

Support Services

There are numerous support services designed to assist students with the challenges of university. Please see [Academic Support and Engagement](#) web site for a description of the full array of services. [Learning Skills Services](#)

offers one-on-one assistance with academic issues. Other services include the [Registrar's Office](#) and the [Ombuds Office](#).

Health and Wellness

Western offers a variety of counselling services and several mental health resources for students. If you or a friend are feeling overwhelmed, confused, or unsure of your mental health state, please don't ignore it. There are steps you can take to help yourself or help others. Western provides several on-campus health-related services to help engage in healthy living while pursuing your degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre. See [Health and Wellness](#) for further information.

If you are in emotional or mental distress should refer to [Mental Health Support](#) at Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. For immediate help in the event of a crisis call 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.

Gender Neutral Bathrooms:

There are two gender neutral bathrooms in the JLVAC. One is located in the Artlab and is open only during Artlab hours. A second single stall gender neutral bathroom can be found on the third floor of the JLVAC. Here is the full list of inclusive washrooms at UWO: http://www.uwo.ca/equity/doc/inclusive_washrooms.pdf. Please contact the Media Lab Technician, Jennifer Slauenwhite (jslauen@uwo.ca), for card access to the elevator and stairs if you need the 3rd floor gender neutral/accessible washroom for the academic year.

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UNDERGRADUATE VISUAL ARTS ART HISTORY/MUSEUM AND CURATORIAL STUDIES GRADE DESCRIPTORS

90-100 (Outstanding, A+) The writing shows significant originality and exhibits a high degree of critical engagement. Sophisticated synthesis and analysis of the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the topic are demonstrated. Mastery of complex material and ideas is immediately evident. The topic is treated with sensitivity and subtlety of thought. The quality of the background research is exemplary. Regarding research, all major secondary sources pertaining to the topic have been consulted and proper citation has been used.

80-89 (Excellent, A) The writing shows originality and exhibits a high degree of critical engagement. Writing is probing through the use of comments and/or questions, and is clearly focused and logically organized. The quality of writing immediately engages the reader. Mastery of complex materials and ideas is demonstrated. The writing is of appropriate length, and demonstrates mastery of techniques so that results are meaningful and not simplistic. Regarding research, a majority of the secondary sources pertaining to the topic have been consulted and proper citation has been used.

75-79 (Very Good, B+) The writing shows above average analysis, critical thinking and independent thought. Written claims are supported by ample evidence and the components of the topic are well-researched and presented. The work is addressed in reasonable depth and/or breadth and covers material appropriate to the course. Written analysis is organized around focal points and the development of the argument is easily followed. The writer demonstrates an above average ability to write in an intelligible style and to condense material meaningfully and with a concern for priorities of that material. Regarding research, a representative selection of secondary sources pertaining to the topic has been consulted and proper citation has been used.

70-74 (Good, B) The writing shows a satisfactory attempt at analysis and critical thinking. Written claims are supported by reasonable evidence. The work is addressed in some depth and/or breadth, with references to the appropriate literature and course material. Written analysis is organized around focal

points. The text is generally well written and well argued. Regarding research, a somewhat limited selection of secondary sources pertaining to the topic has been consulted and proper citation has been used.

60-69 (Competent, C) The writing demonstrates adequate engagement with the topic. The writing is on topic and is a reasonable response to material covered in the course, but goes no further. Written facts are stated accurately; the quality of writing is sufficiently intelligible with enough elaboration and enough connections made between ideas to permit a reader to understand the point of the text. Regarding research, an insufficient number of secondary sources pertaining to the topic has been consulted but proper citation has been used.

50-59 (Marginal, D) The writing shows less than adequate engagement with the topic and with the material covered by the course. The writing is a less than adequate summary of sources and/or is considerably off-topic. Written facts are stated inaccurately or ambiguously; the writing style is difficult to follow; there is insufficient elaboration to permit reader's comprehension of relations among ideas; little judgment is shown in selecting detail for inclusion in the text. Regarding research, few secondary sources pertaining to the topic have been consulted; proper citation may or may not have been used.

Below 50 (Unacceptable, F) The writing demonstrates a failure to comprehend the topic. Written material is disorganized and unintelligible. The work clearly does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment. Regarding research, secondary sources pertaining to the topic have not been consulted and proper citation has not been used.

Department of Visual Arts GRADUATE GRADING STANDARDS

90 – 100 Work of **excellent** quality

(PhD / MA) Approaching if not already at professional standards.

Thoroughly and creatively engaged at high level of research, possibly with primary sources; very high standards in writing and evidence of sophistication in all aspects of the work

(PhD studio / MFA) Approaching if not already at professional standards.

Thoroughly and creatively engaged at a high level of artistic and/or written production; very high standards and sophistication evidenced in all areas of production

86 – 89 Work of **very good** quality

(PhD / MA) Demonstrably better than expected with respect to research effort, mastery of critical and analytical tools, and involves polished presentation style

(PhD studio / MFA) Demonstrably evolved beyond expected standards of critical, theoretical and creative engagement in artistic and/or written production

80 – 85 Work of **good** quality

(PhD / MA) Shows competence in research and writing but could be improved in one or more ways

(PhD studio / MFA) Shows competence in artistic and/or written production but could be improved in one or more ways

78 – 79 Work of **acceptable** quality

(PhD / MA) Needs substantial improvement in one or more areas

(PhD studio / MFA) Needs substantial improvement in one or more areas

70 – 77 Work of **passable** quality (a warning regarding removal of funding)

(PhD / MA) Shows sufficient ability and effort to allow the student to pass the course, but is seriously deficient with respect to research approach, or critical or analytical skills, or writing ability

(PhD studio / MFA) Shows sufficient ability and effort to allow the student to pass the course, but is seriously deficient with respect to critical, theoretical or practical engagement in artistic and/or written production

– 69 Work of **unacceptable** quality

(PhD/MA/MFA) Removal from program