# Topics in contemporary art – 1940s to the present

## Prof.ssa Francesca Pola

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course is intended to provide students with knowledge and understanding of main topics in contemporary art, from 1940s to the present, in a global perspective. Students are challenged to understand contemporary art across cultures, to synthesize and articulate information about artists and genres as they apply to broader themes, to situate artists and movements in their social, cultural, or political contexts, to command a knowledge of theoretical frameworks that define art historical movements, to become more connected and familiar with the global art system.

Students learn to advance and apply this knowledge and understanding, to make judgments and acquire critical thinking, and to develop effective communication and learning skills, with a specific reference to the discipline: its methodologies and key issues, protagonists, movements, trends. At the end of the course, students will be able to identify, describe, analyse, contextualize and present works of contemporary art, in both written and visual form, and will be able to continue their studies in the field with a high degree of autonomy.

***COURSE CONTENT***

This course examines major contemporary art topics in the time period from the 1940s to the present. It is intended to offer an overview of key subjects and trends in contemporary art practices: methodological issues about the specificity of the discipline will be addressed (such as: terminology, chronology, features of the contemporary art system, etc.), and then used to learn about seminal artists, movements, events, themes who have shaped contemporary art. Students are invited to understand the threads of continuity as well as the circumstantial differences of art in the second half of the 20th and early 21st century, across time and place, in a global perspective, both to link and to differentiate the context of the artworks’ conception, production, and reception by the public, as the cultural and chronological context of their creation differs. Key features of this course:

- the chronological focus is exclusively devoted to the period from 1940s to the present, with a strong attention on last decades;

- an international perspective is adopted not only in the language but also in the methodology, through an art historical approach expanded into categories of visual culture, (new) media studies, time based and performance practices, etc.;

- an interdisciplinary, intercultural and inter-contextual approach

- importance of experiential learning, by direct exposure to artworks, museums, exhibitions, artists.

***READING LIST***

Readings, hand-outs, audio-visual materials from classes and field studies

Required for non-attending students: H. Foster, R. Krauss, Y.-A. Bois, B. Buchloh, D. Joselit, *Art Since 1900: Modernism Antimodernism Postmodernism*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2016 (3rd edition), pp. 12-63, 348-865.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Lectures, case studies, interactive meetings and workshops, field studies, reading and writing assignments, in-class activities such as individual and team presentations.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Active class participation (40%): Punctual reading / writing / making of assignments and presentations; participation in group discussions, activities, field studies

Final exam (60%): Final exam will be an in-class written exam in the format of 2 short-essay answers to 2 open questions concerning the identification, analysis, explanation and contextualization of 2 artworks studied during the course

For non-attending students: in-class written exam (100%) in the format of 4 short-essay answers to 4 open questions concerning the identification, analysis, explanation and contextualization of 4 artworks studied in the required reading listed above.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

In case the current Covid-19 health emergency does not allow frontal teaching, remote teaching will be carried out following procedures that will be promptly notified to students.