UCL SUMMER SCHOOL

Modern and Contemporary Art in London

Key Information

Module code: ISSU0086
Taught during: Session One: Monday 1st July - Friday 19th July 2019
Module workload: 45 teaching hours plus approximately 100 study hours
Module leaders: Dr Tom Snow
Department: History of Art
Credit: 15 UCL credits, 7.5 ECTS, 4 US
Level: Level 1, first year undergraduate
Pre-requisites: Standard entry requirements
Assessment: Presentation (25%), Essay (75%)

Module Overview
This course focuses on art works exhibited in London collections and temporary exhibitions, discussing and theorising the evolution of the modern art object from the nineteenth-century to present. Through a series of seminar- and gallery-based classes, the module will closely scrutinise a broad range of art objects, including painting, sculpture, photography, and video, to consider how the development of visual technologies, materials and techniques are negotiated by artists and have impacted on the critical methodologies developed by art historians. Each week will take a different thematic category to foreground discussion, helping to address changing cultural, social, and historical contexts in the making of visual art and its relationship to current sites of exhibition and mechanism of display.

Week One: Object
- Introduction to key concepts and syllabus
- Landscape painting and abstraction
- The painting of modern life and the city
- Cultures of collecting

Week Two: Medium
- Introducing the avant-garde(s)
- Dada and the new century
- Early-mid-century photography
- Contemporary British art in context
- Institutional critique

Week Three: Narrative
- Filmic memory and affect

Please note that this module description is indicative and may be subject to change.
Module Aims
The module aims to introduce students to debates in critical art history, and provide the skills and knowledge to discuss modern and contemporary art in changing historical and material contexts. In thinking about well-known works of art, such as British and French painting in the National Gallery, to more recent experimental practices exhibited in independent and temporary spaces, the way art works contribute to social and political discourses they visually address is a major focus. The class will take full advantage of the range of art works, different institutions, and spaces that London has to offer, and therefore take the opportunity to further examine how the function of exhibitions is directly impacting on the ways art history is both thought and written about.

Teaching Methods
Seminar-based teaching will involve discussion around a series of art works and theoretical issues that will have been addressed in preparatory readings. Visits to gallery spaces will allow us to engage directly with art works, and therefore discuss the materiality of objects in depth. Preparation for class presentation in groups of two or three will encourage students to conduct preliminary research independent from class and provide the basis to further their reflections in open discussion towards the writing of essays. Further material, including key readings, discussion forums and online quizzes will be available on UCL’s virtual learning environment Moodle.

Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of this module, students will have:

- Developed a good understanding of London’s major collections and cultural institutions.
- Acquired knowledge regarding art’s relationship to the moment of its making and current site of exhibition.
- Obtained a good understanding of historical shifts in materials and the materiality of modern to contemporary art.
- Gained skills in comparative and alternative ways of seeing and critique.
- Discussed and put into practice a number of art historical methodologies and vocabularies of critical debate.
- Obtained a good introductory understanding to theoretical notions of production and consumption, and systems of social and cultural valuation.

Assessment Methods
- 10-minute presentation (25%)
- 1,500-2,000 word essay (75%)

Key Texts

Please note that this module description is indicative and may be subject to change.


Module Leader
Tom Snow has taught in the History of Art Department at UCL for the past five years. His research focuses on contemporary art and the politics of activism in the context of neoliberal globalisation.