

## **ART 6933 - Photography and Sculpture Graduate Seminar "The Order of Things"**

Fall 2017

3 credits

Instructor: Sergio Vega <veryvega@ufl.edu>

Hours: Tuesday, periods 11 to E2 (6:15 to 9:10 PM)

Classroom FAC (basement)

Office Hours: Tuesday 5 to 6 PM

Office FAD 229 / phone 352-281-7283

### **Course Goals and Objectives**

The objective is for students to develop the standards of research, conceptualization and production expected from professional artists. In order to achieve this goal, it is crucial that students strive for developing an effective visual and critical vocabulary to substantiate their practice. Students will be required to produce a new body of work and to talk and write about it in relation to art history and contemporary art theories. Emphasis will be on the integration of studio practice and critical thought. It is expected that the theoretical investigations conducted in the context of the class will be employed by students to further develop their own artistic approach.

### **Methods of the Course**

This course will consist on lectures, readings, class discussions of the readings, the assignment of written reports, critiques of student work and individual consultations. In our weekly class critique sessions students will have the opportunity to receive feedback from classmates and instructors. Students will show their work in progress throughout the semester in this forum. For the final presentation it is expected that the work will be displayed in a finished condition as if it were installed in an exhibition open to the public. The strategies and forms of presentation are crucial for the appropriate reception of the projects. Students should set up studio visits with the instructor individually. Everyone needs to meet with the instructor of record for this course at least once this semester.

### **Topical Outline**

In the preface to the book "The Order of Things" Michel Foucault states: *This book first arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered... This passage quotes a 'certain Chinese encyclopedia' in which it is written that 'animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies'.*

The topics covered in this course will explore the theory of the archive, the origin of natural science, its methodologies and forms of classification. Our inquiry will revolve around the question of how visual meaning is made intelligible, arranged and organized in culture at large and in the context of contemporary art production. In addition, by focusing on some case studies (Marcel Broodthaers, Bern and Hilla Becher, Lothar Baumgarten, Christian Boltanski, Mark Dion, etc.) we will learn how artists have developed their own artistic strategies based on those theories.

In current discourses of contemporary art, *the archive* plays a role that can be described as paradigmatic. This current condition, which could be interpreted as the "proliferation of the archive" (or what Jacques Derrida would call "archive fever") engages an array of practices and reignites the debates that sparked in the nineteenth century around the notion of the archive as a foundational apparatus of western knowledge.

*"As the Backdrop to all scholarly research stands the archive. Appeals to ultimate truth, adequacy and plausibility in the work of the humanities; and social sciences rest on archival presuppositions. "One of the main guiding forces behind the changing role of the archivist is the dialectic between objectivity and subjectivity in archival theory. As cultural and social expectations of archives change over time, so too does the role archivists play in creating and maintaining the adaptable archives"*

Ridener sees a major shift in the most recent manifestation of archival theory and its application, especially in how records and their keepers are viewed:

*"Archival paradigms of the past have dictated that archivists assume records were created as impartial products of a business or organization's work. The contemporary appraisal paradigm questions the infallibility of not only records, but also the records' creators" (pp. 133-134). And in that, we have much more theorizing to do."* (John Ridener, *From Polders to Postmodernism: A Concise History of Archival Theory* (Duluth, MN: Litwin Books, LLC, 2009).)

Creative and compelling theoretical formulations of the archive have emerged from a host of disciplines in the last decade. Foucault and later Derrida, as well as many other humanists and social scientists, have initiated a broadly interdisciplinary conversation about the nature of the archive. A vast array of contemporary artists, have employed the structure of the archive to realize their work, not only by using archival methodologies, but also by conceiving of their work as a model to represent and understand the archive. These artists wish to think of the object or image not in isolation, but in relation to the larger context that grants them meaning. Many of them do it to interrogate the rationale by which institutions administer knowledge; others just want to organize the world in an alternative way. This course will focus on the multiple functions of the archive in artistic practice and will examine current critical discourses that formulate theories of the archive.

Topics covered are:

- 1) The archive in Literature (Walt Whitman, Jorge Luis Borges, Umberto Eco)
- 2) Atlas Mnemosyne (Aby Warburg)
- 3) New Objectivity: the archive in German photographic traditions (August Sander, Bernd and Hilla Becher)
- 4) The making of archives, case study:
  - a) Marcel Broodthaer's "Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles"
  - b) Christian Boltanski's work overview
  - c) Gerard Richter's "Atlas"

## Books

*The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault, Vintage (Random House), ISBN 0-679-75335-4

## Grading Criteria

A) *Outstanding*: thoughtful and intelligent ideas presented in a clear, organized, and engaging manner, the final product has fine art exhibition quality, among the very best. B) *Above average - good*: the ideas are interesting and successfully presented; shows potential, but not necessarily distinctive; roughly equal in quality to the majority of work completed by other students, the final results can be improved. C) *Average - mediocre*: achieves the minimum requirements, but not particularly clear, successful or ambitious. Quality of the work is below that of most other projects submitted. D) *Unsatisfactory*: does not satisfy the minimum; generally unsatisfactory in terms of quality and clarity. F) *Failed*: The student did not complete a project.

Final grade is obtained by evaluations added in percentage: Artwork 60% Attendance and participation 20% Assigned presentations and critical papers 20%

## Attendance policy

Classes like this are designed to give students the maximum personal attention, however they only succeed when students understand that each person is important to the community. Each student's unique voice is needed in discussions and critiques. Attending class is a vital part of learning the skills and concepts students need to enhance their expressive potential and artistic abilities.

Policy regarding make-up of late work, and missed critiques

It is the student's responsibility to make up missed class sessions or late work. Group critiques and class discussions cannot be repeated. Critique due dates demand the student's attendance.

## Counseling

University Counseling Services/ Counseling Center 301 Peabody Hall P.O. Box 114100, University of Florida Gainesville, FL 32611-4100

Phone: 352-392-1575 Web: [www.counsel.ufl.edu](http://www.counsel.ufl.edu) If you are experiencing problems or difficulties with the academic requirements of this course you may also contact the Departmental Advisor in Fine Arts: +1 (352) 392-0207. Further, the Dean of Students Office can assist you with a range of support services. <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/supportservices/>

### **Students with Disabilities**

If you require accommodations because of a disability, please make an appointment during office hours so that we may discuss your needs in accordance with the UF official policy: "Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students office. The Dean of Students office will provide documentation to the student who must then present this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation."

### **Academic Honesty**

The university's policies regarding academic honesty, the honor code, and student conduct related to the honor code will be strictly enforced. Full information regarding these policies is available at the following links: - Academic Honesty: <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html#honesty>  
- Honor Code: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php> - Student Conduct: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/conductcode.php>

### **Health and Safety**

1) The link below includes information and policies regarding health and safety in the School of Art and Art History at UF. <http://www.arts.ufl.edu/art/healthandsafety>

### **Schedule**

#### **August 22**

Class introduction, Topics outlined, assignments, calendar.

Assigned reading due 8/29: Jorge Luis Borges "Funes the Memorious"  
<<http://www4.ncsu.edu/~jjsakon/FunestheMemorious.pdf>>

#### **August 29**

Student presentations of previous work.

Class presentation and discussion of "Funes the Memorious" (2 students present)  
Readings from Walt Whitman and Umberto Eco.

Assigned study of interactive Atlas Mnemosyne guided panels (2 students present) due 9/5  
<<https://live-warburglibrarycornelledu.pantheon.io/>>

#### **September 5**

Atlas Mnemosyne interactive presentation.

Reading: Philippe Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, Appendix Two, Crossing the Frontiers, Zone Books, ISBN 1-890951-39-0 pp 277-291

Critique of student work

#### **September 12**

Lecture: New Objectivity: the archive in German photographic traditions (August Sander, Bernd and Hilla Becher)

Critique of student work

Assigned reading: Preface and Chapter 1, Las Meninas, *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault, due 9/19

### **September 19**

Student presentation of assigned reading, Preface and Chapter 1, Las Meninas, *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault.

Critique of student work

Assigned reading: Chapter 2, The Prose of the World, *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault, due 9/26

### **September 26**

Student presentation: Chapter 2, The Prose of the World, *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault.

Critique of student work

Assigned reading: Chapter 3, Representing, *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault, due 10/3

### **October 3**

Student presentation: Chapter 3, Representing, *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault

Critique of student work

Assigned presentation: Marcel Broodthaer's "Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles" due 10/10

### **October 10**

Student presentation: Marcel Broodthaer's "Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles"

Critique of student work

Assigned reading: Chapter 5, Classifying, *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault, due 10/17

### **October 17**

Student presentation: Chapter 5, Classifying, *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault

Critique of student work

Assigned reading: Chapter 7, The Limits of Representation, *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault, due

### **October 24**

Student presentation: Chapter 7, The Limits of Representation, *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault

Critique of student work

Assigned presentation: Christian Boltanski's work overview, due 11/14

**October 31**

Lecture: the 2015 Venice Biennale

**November 7**

Lecture: the 2017 Venice Biennale

**November 14**

Student presentation: Christian Boltanski's work overview.

Critique of student work

Assigned presentation: Gerard Richter's "Atlas", due 11/21

**November 21**

Student presentation: Gerard Richter's "Atlas", due 11/21

Critique of student work

**November 28**

Critique of student work

**December 5**

Final Critique