

ART/IDIS 292, ARTISTS AS ACTIVISTS Spring 2009

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*office hours:* Tues 11:00am to 1:00pm; Weds 2:00 to 4:00pm; or by appointment

*The format of the course is seminar, image-lectures, and guided discussion.*

DESCRIPTION: "Artists as Activists" examines how work by artists, writers and graphic designers raises ethical questions and advocate social change. A wide range of visual and material culture will be presented, including propaganda, posters, advertising, the graphic novel, film, and theater. Content will include propaganda, patriotism, and resistance during World War II and the Holocaust; the Vietnam War; the war in Iraq; the anti-war and ecology movements in 1960s; the Pro-Democracy movement; AIDS activism; and current issues of human rights. Graphic design and artwork will include selections from Central and Eastern Europe, USSR/Russia, China, Latin America, Japan, and the USA. Students will view both documentary and feature films, including the film version of Tony Kushner's epic play, *Angels in America*.

We will consider relationships between art, images, mass media, propaganda, and individual/collective acts of conscience. Students will evaluate artwork in this course are using a combination of ethical/philosophical frameworks, and formal and contextual analysis. Discussion will include the historical, social, and political context of the artwork, its method of production and distribution, and the privileges/risks inherent in producing political art.

OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES:

*Understand* relationships between art, propaganda, and protest, primarily in 20th-century and contemporary art.

*Explore* how art can reveal the complexity of moral decision-making and actions.

*Analyze* art, its subject matter, and the context of its production and distribution in terms of aesthetics and ethics.

*Evaluate* the impact of the visual arts on social, civic, and individual responsibility.

ASSESSMENT:

*Grades* are determined primarily through your research and writing.

Assignments will include papers, short essays, reviews, and creative writing.

*Your papers are graded according to how well you:*

1. CHOOSE a significant and relevant purpose
2. STATE OR DEFINE your purpose  
(Your task as a thinker and writer is to ask and answer a question, or describe and solve a problem.)
3. IDENTIFY key concepts and explain them clearly
4. USE evidence (examples) to draw consistent conclusions
5. IDENTIFY your assumptions ("What am I taking for granted?")

What are my prejudices; how have my attitudes been previously influenced and by what?")

6. KNOW the difference between “believing/feeling” and “thinking/showing”

7. THINK, SPEAK, AND WRITE CLEARLY AND WELL

*Your writing is evaluated in terms of:*

ACCURACY; PRECISION; RELEVANCE; DEPTH; BREADTH;  
LOGIC; FLOW; SIGNIFICANCE; FAIRNESS; SINCERITY; VOICE

If writing is especially difficult for you, make an appointment at the Writing Center when you have completed your first draft of the *Design of Dissent* assignment. Allow time to have your draft reviewed by one of the Writing Center Student Tutors so you have time to revise it before you turn it in. The Student Tutors will help you learn how to write better, and to enjoy the process of writing and revision. *Good writing evolves from revisions.* If you want to earn an “A,” revisions must become part of your regular writing process. Do not expect to write a good paper if you do it the night before it’s due.

Recommended tools: *The Bedford Manual*. Use it every time you write.

*On Writing Well* by William Zinsser.

Read more of just about anything.

#### REQUIREMENTS:

1. Textbooks for class: *Design of Dissent*, by Milton Glaser and Mirko Ilic; New York, 2005, and *Interpreting Art: Reflecting, Wondering, and Responding*, by Terry Barrett; New York, 2003.

2. Satisfactory, on-time completion of all assignments on the syllabus.

3. Reading the assigned materials, talking, and thinking about the subject matter of this class both during and outside of class. This class requires active, engaged, consistent involvement.

4. Participating in class, contributing to class, being engaged with the material.

*Class participation: 5% OF GRADE*

5. Attendance. You can’t participate if you aren’t in class. Absences affect your engagement, and the quality and content of your work; absences affect your grade. Attendance at special events and lectures listed on the syllabus is especially important. *See important notes about Art Department Attendance Policy on page 3.*

Call the Art Office (x1680) if you are going to miss class. (*Please do not come to class if you are sick! Keep your communicable disease to yourself!*) Or e-mail me ahead of time at dutlinger@moravian.edu.

Please do not bring your breakfast, lunch, or dinner to eat during class.

Your phone must be off or on silent. No no nnnnoh text-messaging in class.

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ART DEPARTMENT ATTENDANCE POLICY:

*After the first unexcused absence, final grade will be dropped by one full letter.*

*After the third unexcused absence, student will receive a failing final grade.*

Documentation is required for absences related to sports. Your coach should e-mail a note to me confirming matches, meets, departure time for away games, or anything that would require your absence from class. Practice is not an excused absence.

Do not schedule interviews or doctor's/dentist's appointments during class time. (These qualify as unexcused absences.)

*Missing portions of class count as an unexcused absence.*

*examples:*

Failure to bring assignment to class; being late more than three times. "Late" is late. Really, truly, rudely late is 10–15 minutes after class begins.

*If you are late or absent, it is your responsibility (not mine) to find out what you missed from a classmate & catch up asap.*

REGARDING LEARNING DISABILITIES: *"If you believe you need accommodations in this class, you are encouraged to contact the Learning Services Office as soon as possible to enhance the likelihood that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion."* (from the Moravian College Handbook)

REGARDING ACADEMIC HONESTY:

*Search your soul. If you need clarification, see the Moravian College policy in the Student Handbook. Plagiarism is cheating is stealing.*

GETTING THE GRADE:

*A: Exceptional work; thorough and outstanding achievement; work reflects thorough research, revision, and an engaged, critical process.*

*B: Good, above-average work, but it needs refinement or revision. "B" work often lacks cohesive structure or needs more attention to detail; it usually shows little or no investigation of primary research.*

*C: Adequate but undistinguished; lacks in focus, commitment, critical thinking, substantial content, and rhetorical skills.*

*D: Does not satisfy requirements of assignment. Inadequate amount of time and thought invested in project or paper. Work is often rushed, contrived or clichéd, and usually lacks formal or contextual analysis.*

*F: Failed in all aspects to satisfy requirements of assignment, or work was never turned in; plagiarism may be evident. No credit. If plagiarism is suspected, it will be investigated and reported to Academic Affairs.*

*I: Incomplete. You must have a medical excuse to qualify for an Incomplete.*

## 2009 SCHEDULE *Artists as Activists*

20/21 January

Introduction to course: my expectations and yours.

Thinking, talking, and writing about art.

Looking at *Design of Dissent*.

*schedule is subject to change; art/activist events  
may be added as part of course requirements*

*Assignment:*

*Read handouts: "Contextual Analysis" and "Formal Analysis"*

*Read Chapter 8, "Principles for Interpreting Art," pp 197–228 in Barrett, *Interpreting Art**

*Essay, 3.5–4 pages, due in two weeks, on Tues, Feb 3 / Weds Feb 4:*

Choose two images, related by subject, from pp 86–129 in *Design of Dissent*.

Applying what you have read, write a contextual and formal analysis of these two images.

15% OF GRADE

MAKE AN APPOINTMENT AT THE WRITING CENTER FOR THE WEEK OF JAN 26–30.

TAKE YOUR FIRST DRAFT OF YOUR ESSAY AND GET ADVICE ON HOW TO IMPROVE IT.

27/28 January

Documentary film: "*Degenerate Art*"

What happens when art threatens the status quo?

3/4 February *First essay due*

Image-lecture: *Art against War, Art for War*

*Assignment:*

1. Read *Looking at War* by Susan Sontag, pp 82–98, THE NEW YORKER, Dec 9, 2002 (handout)

2. Read Chapter 6, *Interpretation and Medium: Photography* in Barrett, pp 139–161

*Write essay, 2.5–3 pages: THINK about Sontag's and Barrett's ideas. WRITE a review of a photographer whose subject matter is war. DUE ON WEDS, FEB 24/25;*

10% OF GRADE

10/11 February Image-lecture: *Picasso's Guernica*

*Assignment:*

*Essay (5–6 pages) due in three weeks, right after spring break, Tues/Weds Mar 10/11:*

Choose two artists from *Design of Dissent*, one of whom is non-Western, whose work deals with war.

Using ideas from all of your assigned readings, write an essay on your artists and their subjects. In your essay, include biographical information about each artist, and develop a contextual and formal analysis of two examples of each artist's work.

Be sure to include images of the artwork (with captions) that you discuss in your paper.

25% OF GRADE

17/18 February Image-lecture: *As Seen by Both Sides*

24/25 February 2.5–3 pps *Review due* Image-lecture: *Give Peace a Chance; AIDS activism*

March 2–6 *Spring Break*

10/11 March *Essay, 5–6 pages, due* *Angels in America*, Parts 1 & 2 by Tony Kushner

17/18 March 19 *Angels in America* Parts 3 & 4 by Tony Kushner

24/25 March *Angels in America* Parts 5 & 6

*Think about your research paper topic; do some research.*

During the last hour of class we can discuss possible topics. Have some ideas.

Find examples of Abstracts and draft one on your topic. (About three–four paragraphs.)

31 March/April 1: *Abstract due*

5% OF GRADE (YOUR PAPER IS DUE ON APRIL 14/15)

At the beginning of class, turn in *Abstract*. It must include your title, and a concise description (3–4 paragraphs) or an outline of points that you plan to make and how you will achieve them. You must include a bibliography; include in bibliography at least five titles of articles or books.

The topic of your research paper or story may focus on *Angels in America*, human rights, social justice, “intolerance of difference,” or any subject related to art and activism. You may choose to do creative writing instead of writing a research paper. Talk to me about your project, especially if you plan on doing creative writing instead of the research paper.

*special event: Art Department field trip to New York City*

TBA (It’s always on a Friday.)

*Field trip assignment:* WRITE 2.5–3 page review of two artworks that have subject matter of social justice, intolerance, or human rights.

DUE DATE TBA; 10% OF GRADE

*Attendance on one field trip per semester is required for students in all art classes.*

Your student account has already been billed (\$45) for the field trip.

Contact jciganick@moravian.edu (x1680) if you can not attend the NYC trip.

April 9 Holocaust Art; Art after the Holocaust; *image-lecture*

6–7 PP RESEARCH PAPER (include formal and contextual analysis) on *Angels in America* or a story on “intolerance of difference.” 30% OF GRADE

14/15 April RESEARCH PAPER DUE Image-lecture, *Holocaust Art*

21/22 April Image-lecture, *Art after the Holocaust*

28/29 April *wrap-up class*, subject matter TBA

*There is no final exam. Your research paper is your capstone project.*