

ART/IDIS 292, ARTISTS AS ACTIVISTS Spring 2010

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office hours: Tues 12:30am to 3:00pm; Weds 1:30 to 3:00pm; or by appointment

The format for this 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 my evaluation of your writing and research. 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

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 turn in a first draft or 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;
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.

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.

19 JANUARY

Introduction to course: my expectations and yours.

Thinking, talking, and writing about art.

Looking at: *Design of Dissent; B is for Bomb*.

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

Assignment:

Read syllabus and “Rubric for Thesis-driven Writing Assignments” (by Prof. John Black, English Dept.) 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 February 2:

Choose three images, related by subject, but not similar in style, from *Design of Dissent*. One of the artists should be from a non-Western culture. (“Western culture” usually includes USA, Europe [including Eastern Europe], Canada, Latin America.)

Apply what you have read, and write a contextual and formal analysis of these three images. You must refer specifically to the three readings in your paper. To analyze art, you must use the language of art criticism; that’s why you are asked to thoroughly understand the readings.

You must include the images in your paper, with captions. (artist, title, date) I will show you how to do this in MSWord. (pls remind me... ;) Footnote all citations, and include any additional sources that you have used.

20% OF GRADE

26 JANUARY

Image-lecture; a close reading of several images that will include formal & contextual analysis.

EXTRA CREDIT, 10 POINTS 7:30PM PROSSER

Dr. Martin Luther King’s vision of the “Beloved Community”

Moving Toward Environmental Justice

Keynote Speaker: Veronica Eady, Esq.

Veronica Eady Famira is a lawyer, policy consultant, and writer based in Berlin, Germany. She specializes in environmental justice and human rights on global, national, and local levels. Veronica is currently working with Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, a Washington, DC civil rights organization on a comprehensive report on the status of environmental justice in America.

2 FEBRUARY BRING & TURN IN FIRST ESSAY

Guest speaker: Roger Cook

Roger Cook (born Rajie Cook, 1930) is an internationally known American graphic designer, photographer and artist. Cook was president of Cook and Shanosky Associates, a graphic design firm he founded in 1967. The firm produced all forms of corporate communications including: corporate identity, advertising, signage, annual reports and brochures. Clients included IBM, Container Corporation of America, Black & Decker, Volvo, Subaru, AT&T, New York Times, Bell Atlantic, and many other major international corporations.

Roger Cook received the Presidential Award for Design Excellence from president Ronald Reagan and Elizabeth Dole on January 30, 1984. In 2003, *Symbols Signs*, a project designed by his firm for the US Department of Transportation was accepted by the Acquisitions Committee to the collections of Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, and The Smithsonian Institution.

Cook is a graduate of the Pratt Institute; in 1997 was selected as Alumni of the year. He has also served on the Pratt Advisory Board.

Inspired in part by the work of Joseph Cornell, Roger Cook creates sculptural assemblages. “In 1999, after 46 years as a graphic designer, I found time to explore. . .sculptural “assemblage”. The inspiration and opportunity to explore this mode of artistic expression came at a time when my commercial career has sufficiently matured so that I [could] apply my skills, experiences, and a lifetime of artistic perspective to create “statements” with these assemblages.

Most of my materials come from private collections, my own photography, flea markets, and antique shops, where I spend hours searching for items that inspire use in my boxes. My process, using these “found” materials, feels to me much like theater. As in the legitimate stage, I work within a three-dimensional form to portray the comedy or tragedy of life. I create these miniature, silent, “theaters” to express my feelings about a range of subjects. The three-dimensional objects I construct, using the found and fabricated objects (my “Thespians”), are a series of “performances” that share my deepest feelings with my audience.”

Many of the assemblages that Roger Cook has created are an expression of his deeply felt concern for human rights and for the tragic conditions in the Middle East. They were created to articulate the circumstances and experiences he encountered during the ten years he has served on the Task Force for the Middle East, a group sponsored by the Presbyterian Church, USA. With this group he has traveled on fact-finding trips to Israel, Jordan, the West Bank, and Gaza.

9 FEBRUARY

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

Assignment:

Read Chapter 6, *Interpretation and Medium: Photography* in *Interpreting Art: Reflecting, Wondering, and Responding* by Terry Barrett, pp 139–161

16 FEBRUARY

Documentary: *War Photographer*

Assignment:

Read *Looking at War* by Susan Sontag, pp 82–98, THE NEW YORKER, Dec 9, 2002 (handout)
Read handout: “The Role & Uses of War Photography” by Thomas Barfield.

THINK about Sontag’s and Barrett’s ideas. PREPARE TO WRITE an essay on a photographer whose subject matter is war. (A number of books are on reserve at Reeves for you to use. Or you can choose a photographer of your own.)

INCLUDE formal and contextual analysis of the images in your paper. Include all images in your paper, with captions. *You must refer explicitly to the assigned readings in your paper, and apply those readings to the images you are discussing, or the grade on your paper will be lowered. (You don’t learn something until you apply it/use it.)*

Assignment for week of February 15–19:

Write first draft of essay, 5–6 pages. Make an appointment at Writing Center for the week of February 15–19. Take your first draft of your essay and work with a tutor to improve it.

YOUR FIRST DRAFT OF PHOTOGRAPHY ESSAY IS REQUIRED! *I must see a report from the Writing Center tutor that you worked with before you may turn in your final version of your War Photography paper, or your paper grade will be lowered by 50%.*

Save any drafts and turn these in with your final paper. You will earn points for your revisions!

You must refer specifically to the three readings about war photography in your paper. You must include the images in your paper, with captions. (artist, title, date) Footnote all citations, and include any additional sources that you have used.

FINAL VERSION OF ESSAY IS DUE ON FRI, FEBRUARY 26 BY NOON. 30% OF GRADE
Please drop it off at art dept, south campus. lobby level, around the corner from Payne Gallery.

23 FEBRUARY

No class in morning! Class will be held in Prosser Auditorium at 7:30pm to view the documentary film, *Woven Ways*. Filmed in the dramatic landscapes of the Navajo reservation lands in eastern Arizona and western New Mexico, *Woven Ways* explores the profound relationships between the Navajo people, their land, and their livestock, and illustrates how their environment sustains their traditional culture and lives. The film also examines how environmental issues, including uranium mining and coal power plants, now threaten the Navajo's health, culture, and well-being.

2 MARCH

Documentary film: "Degenerate Art"

Assignment: Research the topic of censorship and the arts. Find four artists, two from the past, two contemporary (alive & working now). Write a 4-pp essay comparing the art, artists, and their historical and political context. One of your contemporary artists must be from a non-Western culture. 20% OF GRADE

9 MARCH

No class. Spring Break. Mid-term.

16 MARCH

Image-lecture: *Picasso's Guernica*

18 MARCH

EXTRA CREDIT, 10 POINTS:

Documentary film, *Crude: The Real Price of Oil* 7:30pm, Prosser Auditorium

Nominated for the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival, *Crude: The Real Price of Oil* has won five other awards. Produced by filmmaker Joe Berlinger (*Brother's Keeper, Paradise Lost*), this film takes place in the Amazon jungle of Ecuador, where the indigenous peoples claim that Texaco/Chevron systematically contaminated one of the most bio-diverse regions on Earth.

6

23 MARCH

Angels in America, Parts 1 & 2 by Tony Kushner

26 MARCH

Art Department field trip to New York City. Depart promptly at 8:00am from the front of the HUB. Return around 6:30 pm. Attendance is optional. You will look at and for activist art at several museums. Your student account has already been billed (\$45) for the field trip.

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

30 MARCH

Angels in America Parts 3 & 4

READ handout: "Identity and Conversion in *Angels in America*" by Steven F. Kruger.

6 APRIL

Angels in America Parts 5 & 6

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

Write first draft of paper or story during the week of April 12-16.

Make an appointment at Writing Center for the same week.

Take your first draft of your essay/story and work with a tutor to improve it.

Save any drafts and turn these in with your final paper. You will earn points for your revisions!

FINAL PROJECT/PAPER DUE ON FRIDAY APRIL 23, BY NOON, DELIVERED TO MY OFFICE.

25% OF GRADE *Length of paper: "as long as necessary & as short as possible."*

13 APRIL

Image-lecture on Art of the Holocaust

Assignment: Write first draft of paper or story

20 APRIL

Image-lecture on Eco-activism

27 APRIL

Last class: wrap up & discussion. Location tba.

There is no final exam. Your last paper is your capstone project.