High and low? Art and Popular Culture

Arts & Sciences \*\*\*.\*\*, Freshman Seminar

Semester TBA, 1 credit hour, S/U

Day/Time TBA, Room TBA

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Program in Film Studies

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Hagerty 224, hours TBA

**Course Description:**

How are the popular media, comics and film, art? How do museums relate to pop culture? How do works of popular media position themselves in relationship to “high” art and its place in society? In this class we will read books and watch films that deal with the ways in which the spaces of street, printed page, Internet, and museum are interconnected. Attention will be paid as to how the question “what is art” is a culturally and historically determined question. Accompanying our consideration of representations of art and art institutions in popular culture sources, students will (individually and as a group) attend film screenings and visit local museums (with on campus and off campus options). Late in the semester we will have a visit with programmers/curators of several local institutions. This experiential component of the course will serve two purposes. First, it will formally introduce students to local institutions that specifically address the relationships between arts and popular culture. Second of all, it will ensure a common/shared experience of museum and movie theater spaces that will inform our consideration of how such institutions are represented within film and comics.

**Course Objectives:**

-Introduce students to the study of the visual popular culture media of film and comics as art

(includes introduction to critical vocabulary needed for close reading/visual analysis).

-Development of written analytical skills pertinent for dealing with popular visual culture.

-Introduce students to local institutions and research resources.

-Demonstrate intersections between academic research/study and local institutions

-Interrogate how comics and film operate as objects of “serious” study, consider how visual

popular culture can be a powerful force for thinking about art and society.

**When and how to read and view films**:

* Readings or film viewing must be completed BEFORE the class meeting on the day listed.
* Books have been ordered via Barnes and Noble, but all books and DVDs required for this course are also on reserve at Thompson Library.
* Films can be viewed on the OSU streaming service, the Secure Media Library (<https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/secured-media-library>). For best results with the Secured Media Library always choose the “High” quality version of the film if available or the mobile version appropriate for your device.
* Most of the films are also available through the Columbus Metropolitan Library and some can be found on commercial streaming services like Netflix, Hulu Plus or Amazon Prime. If you prefer to use a commercial service or the public library, it is still your responsibility to view films prior to the day they are to be discussed in class.

**Texts**:

Comics (To purchase or available on Thompson reserve, unless indicated .pdf):

Daniel Clowes, “Art School Confidential” (.pdf)

Nicolas de Crécy, *The Glacial Period* (2007)--pbk

Etienne Davodeau, *The Initiates: A Comic Artist and a Wine Artisan Exchange Jobs* (2013)--hbk

Eric Liberge, *On the Odd Hours* (2010)--pbk

David Mazzucchelli, *Asterios Polyp* (2009)--hbk

Films (available here: <https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/secured-media-library> and Thompson reserve):

Henri-Georges Clouzot, *The Picasso Mystery* (1956)

Jem Cohen, *Museum Hours* (2012)

Chris Marker, *The Case of the Grinning Cat* (2004)

Julien Schabel, *Basquiat* (1996)

Agnès Varda, *The Gleaners and I* (2001)

Suggested Reference:

Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (1993)--.pdf

Yale Film Analysis Website: http://filmanalysis.yctl.org

**Special Events/Visits:**

**Individual:**

(to be carried out at date/time of your convenience, *prior* to the date specified for reports/discussion in class)

Two visits to local museums/institutions of your choice from this list: Wexner Center, BICLM, Columbus Museum of Art, the Thurber Museum. If you will be traveling to a major city elsewhere, you may substitute one visit to a museum in that city, with permission arranged in advance. (NB Student admission is free or discounted; public transportation can be used to reach all off campus institutions, should you choose to visit one of those; also note ride sharing info area of course website)

Two film screenings: 1 at Wexner Center, 1 at Gateway Film Center (NB: both venues offer OSU student discount on tickets and Wex has additional discount for class assignments) [choice of films to be specified pending semester’s programming]

Brief written reports will be submitted in response to a set of questions distributed in advance to help guide these experiences.

**Group:**

(dates specified in weekly program below)

1 session at Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum

1 in class round table discussion about the pragmatics of Art and Popular Culture with local professionals

**Grading** (S/U):

Presence and Participation (includes utilization of office hours): 30%

Ten 1-2 paragraph-long (300-500 words) responses,

posted to website 12 hours prior to class meeting: 40%

One 5 page analytical paper (draft and revision) 30%

-All students will be expected to meet with the professor during office hours at least once during the course of the semester. This is considered an element of your participation grade.

-Students will prepare for class and practice less formal writing in brief on-line responses to reflection questions pertaining to the week’s assigned reading/viewing posted on the course website.

-One formal analysis paper (including draft and proposal) will introduce students to textual analysis of visual material. Although the class is offered S/U, analytical papers will be assigned a grade of A-E so that students can evaluate the quality of their writing against disciplinary standards for introductory classes. Revision will not be required for any draft paper that would earn an A- or higher.

**Academic Integrity**:

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University’s *Code of Student Conduct*, and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University’s *Code of Student Conduct* and this syllabus may constitute “Academic Misconduct.”

The Ohio State University’s *Code of Student Conduct* (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: “Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process.” Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University’s *Code of Student Conduct* is never considered an “excuse” for academic misconduct, so I recommend that you review the *Code of Student Conduct* and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the University’s *Code of Student Conduct* (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University.

**Reproducing words, images, or ideas that you find in a book, a DVD, or on a website (etc.) without indication through the use of quotation marks (in the event of direct citation) and crediting the source with full bibliographical information in a foot- or endnote is plagiarism.**

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me. Citation style is your choice (I recommend Chicago or MLA manuals of style, as the most standard for this discipline), but what is ESSENTIAL is that references be complete and consistent.

Other sources of information on academic misconduct (and integrity) to which you can refer include:

1. The Committee on Academic Misconduct web pages (<http://oaa.osu.edu/coam.html>)
2. *Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity (*[*http://oaa.osu.edu/coamtensuggestions.html*](http://oaa.osu.edu/coamtensuggestions.html)*)*
3. Indiana University plagiarism test <https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/test.html>.

**Disability Services**: The Office of Disability Services (150 Pomerene Hall; x2-3307) offers support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Their policies and procedures can be viewed online ([**http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu**](http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu)). If you are entitled to accommodations under these policies that require action on my part, you are encouraged to make me aware of your situation *in a timely fashion*.

**Weekly Program**:

**Week 1:** What is High and Low and what does it mean to “read”?

(introduction to visual analysis)

**Week 2:** “Capturing” art process and art culture in narrative media

Film, *The Picasso Mystery &* short comic, “Art School Confidential”

Post response 1

**Week 3:** The Artist Biopic

Film, *Basquiat*

Post response 2

**Week 4:** Filming Art in the Streets and on the Net

Short film, *The Case of the Grinning Cat*

Post response 3

**Week 5:** Films Beyond the Multiplex

Post response 4: Film screening reports

**Week 6:** The Future Museum Lost: interpreting an unknown object

Comic, *The Glacial Period*

Post response 5

**Week 7:** Hidden Art, Hidden Museum, or, disability as revelation

Comic, *On the Odd Hours*

Post response 6

**Week 8:** Art and Artisanry

Comic, *The Initiates*

Analytical paper draft due

**Week 9:** Libraries and Research Resources

Group Visit to Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum

**Week 10:** The Experience of an Art Museum

Film, *Museum Hours*

Post response 7: Report on Local Museum visits

**Week 11:** Portrait of the Artist as a Failure?

Comic, *Asterios Polyp*

Post response 8

**Week 12:** “Recuperating” Art

Film, *The Gleaners and I*

Post response 9

**Week 13:** Art and Popular Culture on the Ground in Columbus

Round table discussion with:

Tyler Cann (Curator of Contemporary Art, Columbus Museum of Art), Chris Hamel (Chief Programmer, Gateway Film Center), Caitlin McGurk (Outreach coordinator, Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum).

Post response 10: preparatory questions for panelists

**Week 14:** Conclusions

Final version of analytical paper due.

**Professor Bio:**

I have been teaching in the Big 10 since 2005. A specialist of French cinema and visual culture, I wrote my first book about the “social architecture” of 1930s French cinema. I’m currently writing two books on contemporary film—one on cosmopolitanism in the films of Olivier Assayas and the other on the rising value of documentary film/media and of commodified heritage as indices of French national cinema in transition. I have published several articles that are directly related to the material we will study in this class: on a comics series commissioned by the Louvre museum, on the Louvre in documentary, and on Chris Marker filming Parisian street art. My regular undergraduate teaching at OSU includes classes on the history of documentary cinema, French animation and comics, Interwar French film, and survey courses of French cinema. Special undergraduate courses have included a second level writing class on “The American Auteur: Martin Scorsese” and the film studies senior capstone class on international art cinema, which also produced an issue of the undergraduate film studies journal *Film Matters*. I have advised many honors theses in French, Global Studies and Film Studies both at OSU and the University of Illinois, where I also taught a Freshman Discovery Course on Classic French Cinema. High evaluations in my classes at the University of Illinois placed me on the List of Excellent Teachers every semester that the courses were eligible.