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 as .pdf):

Daniel Clowes, “Art School Confidential” (.pdf—4pg)

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

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, 1h18min)

Chris Marker, *The Case of the Grinning Cat* (2004) (59min)

Julien Schabel, *Basquiat* (1996, 1h48min)

Agnès Varda, *The Gleaners and I* (2001, 1h22min)

Optional Texts

Optional viewing and reading. Response questions will be posted for these works and may be done for extra credit or make-up credit (to replace missing assignments in other weeks, unexcused absences, etc.)
Jem Cohen, *Museum Hours* (2012, 1h47min)

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

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)

Visits to local museums/institution(s) of your choice from this list: Wexner Center, Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum (NB, these are located on the Oval). If you want, you may also choose the Columbus Museum of Art, the Thurber Museum even or a museum in another city (prior permission required if you want to substitute one of these—you also may carry out an additional local visit for extra/make-up credit if you wish). Student admission is free to campus galleries, discounted off campus.

One film screening: either at the Wexner Center or at Gateway Film Center (NB: both venues offer OSU student discount on tickets and Wex has an additional discount for classes assigned to view specific films) [choice of films to be specified pending semester’s programming] A second film (at the other venue) may be attended as extra/make-up credit.

NB: Questions will be distributed in advance to help guide these experiences.

**Group:**

(dates specified in weekly program below)

1 session at Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum Reading Room for guided exploration and discussion of archival material

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): 50%

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

posted to website 36 hours prior to class meeting: 50%

-All students will be expected to meet with the professor during office hours at least once during the course of the semester, to discuss your work in the class or anything else related to your studies, career plans, etc. This is considered an element of your participation grade. Generally, OSU faculty office hours are radically underutilized—this requirement will encourage you to begin to experience the ways connecting with faculty members outside of class can positively impact your education and help you set a positive pattern for such interactions for the rest of your college career.

-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 (300-500 words should take approximately 30 minutes to think about and compose, carefully). Reflection questions will either focus on a single element of visual analysis in that week’s text/film (e.g. Comment on the repetition of X formal element on p. 34 of Y text) or on a broader thematic/framing issue for the week’s discussion (Characterize X character’s position on the role of art in her life.). Reflection responses are relatively informal writing and even if a question is posed, there is not one “right” answer. However, “S” responses must concisely demonstrate serious, coherent, logical engagement of the question, and coherent, complete sentences, and correct grammar are expected (responses that are incomplete, fragmentary, or incoherent, contain multiple basic spelling/grammar errors, do not address the week’s question, etc, are “U” work).

**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 (4pg) 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**:** mid-semester reflections

Optional Comic, *The Initiates*

Post optional response for EC or make-up

**Week 9:** Libraries and Research Resources

Group Visit to Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum reading room (Sullivant Hall, ground floor) DURING CLASS TIME for guided exploratory activities of archival materials.

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

Optional Film, *Museum Hours* ( Post optional response on *Museum Hours* for EC or make-up)

Post response 7: Response on Wexner Center gallery or Billy Ireland gallery space 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 to ask panelists

**Week 14:** Conclusions: end of semester reflections/review

Post optional response for EC or make-up

**Professor Bio:**

I have been teaching in the Big 10 since Fall of 2004. 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.