**Term Paper Assignment:**

Paper synopsis and annotated bibliography due:
Tuesday March 12, 2019

Paper rough draft due:
April 4th, 2019

Paper final draft due:
April 25th, 2019

Your term assignment will be a 7-9-page research paper (excluding bibliography), focusing on a painting, photograph(-montage), sculpture, performance, film, building, or other relevant artwork created between 1945 and 2018. The paper should discuss your selected artwork using a central critical point generated from the prompt below this paragraph. Students will develop this central question or main point by carefully considering four (4) readings from scholarly sources, which will be found through library-based research (see our material covered on February 12th and consult the librarians in the Library). Our class discussion and assigned readings should also be considered, although they will not count among the four required sources.

**PROMPT:** How does your artwork typify the Modern and Contemporary trends we have discussed in class? If it demonstrates a different trend, explain how. Use your answer to this question as the central point of your paper.

You can select your artwork, which must have been made between 1945 and 2018, by working through our textbook or one of the following texts (see last page for list of potential topics):


Once you’ve selected your artwork, you must perform an initial search to see if there are sufficient published sources to support your research. Use our time in the library to search for sources. Remember, you need to pick an artwork, not just an artist, phenomenon or institution. You will not have to find sources on that specific image but instead you should look for scholarship on the artist and context that can help you discuss your specific picture. Try to pick an artwork that seems to suggest an interesting dialogue with the discussions we are having in class and the content of your assigned readings, including those at the end of the semester. In making your decision, consider artworks/artists that immediately strike you as interesting and that, upon some quick research, have published sources in the form of journal or art magazine articles, book chapters, and whole books. Then, bring a primary question to your subject. You can consider such things as the content, style, and the use of your artwork, its technology, its distinct character, the context of its creator, where it first appeared, if it has been exhibited and mass-produced and if it is part of a series.

**Structure of paper:**

1.) Your 7-9-page discussion should open with a description of your artwork and a thesis statement declaring your primary question and suggesting a hypothesis that can answer this question. For example: Why does Martha Rosler make her video, *Semiotics of the Kitchen* and why is the medium important? Proposed answer: she is using the same medium as cooking
shows on broadcast television to highlight the ways the mass media reinforces gender roles in contemporary society.

2.) As you begin the body of your investigation, make a concise visual analysis of the artwork, focusing on aspects that allow you to define the substance of your primary question. Consider how the authors of your sources have written about this or similar images. In other people’s scholarship, you can often find useful approaches to writing about your artwork.

3.) As you compose your visual analysis, consider using the terms we have already been employing in class.

4.) As you analyze your artwork, pull from your observations to help begin establishing the main point you made at the paper’s outset.

5.) As you do this, begin quoting from your sources either to have the authors you have read confirm your observations or disagree (should you be reaching a different conclusion). If possible, see if you can quote from primary sources as well, such as statements by the artist, by the person who is depicted in the picture, or by someone who talked about your image at the time it was made. In many cases, these primary sources are republished in secondary sources, that is: the scholarly and critical work that you are most likely to find in research.

6.) As you write into the body of your paper, try to hammer away at the answer to your main question, making this answer seem logical and irrefutable, and fully based on the image itself (visual analysis) and the evidence you have found.

7.) Provide a conclusion that recaps your thesis in light of the preceding discussion.

Step-by-step suggestions for structuring your paper
- In the first paragraph, introduce your artwork. By using a quick visual analysis, allow the image to pose its own question. Make this the main question of your paper and suggest an answer, your hypothesis.
- In the second paragraph, introduce the background information, but only as much as the reader needs to understand the context in which your work and analysis fit. Too much background and context may not serve your analysis and may even distract from the answer to your main question. For example, only provide as much biography about your artist as is relevant to your question.
- With the third paragraph, you may want to spend more time taking apart your artwork visually. Allow this to sharpen and direct the question for which you have now provided some context. Let the image guide your analysis.
- In the fourth paragraph, begin answering your question based on the problems you pulled out in the third paragraph.
- As you work through your paper, be sure that you are working toward answering your primary question or confirming your main point? Does each part of the paper serve this function? If not, remove it.
- Are your published sources helping guide your argument or do they remain peripheral? Have you made it clear how your sources have helped you develop your argument?

Tips for preparation as you think and write:
1.) Look at your artwork very carefully. What makes it unique and interesting? What sort of problem does it seem to suggest?
2.) You must use at least 4 published resources for your paper. Again, these must be published articles in academic journals or art magazines (such as Artforum or Art in America), book
chapters, or books. Encyclopedia entries, newspaper articles from now or the recent past, webpages, blogs, etc., can be supplemental, but not one of your 4 sources. Ideally you will want two sources from books and two from journals, and while the sources you find will be determined by your topic, try to look for a mix of journals and books. The class readings can also be supplemental but will not count as one of these 4 required sources. If you do find an article that appears in an online academic journal, it must be a piece of scholarship that also appeared in print or was reviewed by peers. A useful example of one of these online peer-reviewed cites is: http://www.caareviews.org/

3.) Walk into the library and pull a book related to your topic off the shelf!!! Read it.
4.) Once you’ve looked carefully at your image and made a first reading of your published sources, try to reconsider the central question you’ve already begun devising. Think about how and why your artwork was made, its subject matter, artist, content, etc. Remember, you’re sharpening the question as you build your paper’s argument paragraph by paragraph. A quick way to think about this is that any image poses a problem of some sort (see above). This could be an aesthetic, practical, technological, critical, or political issue. What is the problem posed by your image?
5.) Now go back to the 4 or more published resources on your artwork (or artist) and read them again with your question in mind. See if you can determine if other writers have a similar question about your image/artist, or if they think differently about either. Allow this to influence how you think about your artwork, artist and question. Adjust your query as you do this. Here is a shorthand for this process: Any significant artist, artwork, or photographic institution has sparked a debate. What is that debate and how will you intervene in it?

Components of the assignment (see the exact dates listed above)
1.) Synopsis and annotated bibliography
   On this date in class, give me
   a. The title of your artwork and its artist (where appropriate), the year it was made, and a printed reproduction of your image.
   b. A rundown of your primary question and how you propose to answer it. This is your synopsis. Be sure that you discuss your actual artwork in the process. This should be between 1-2 paragraphs in length.
   c. Your current bibliography with a one or two sentence description of each source. This description should explain the content’s relevance to your argument.
   d. Note that this portion of your assignment will be graded and represents 10% of your final course grade.
   e. Be sure to keep your synopsis and bibliography when I return it to you. You’ll have to give it back to me with each new step in your assignment.
   g. NOTE: you’re welcome to submit a proposal before this date if you would like my feedback on your choice of artwork.
2. Rough Draft

1.) On this day, bring the current draft of your paper to class. This should be as complete a work as possible. The closer you are to having finished your writing assignment, the more help you will receive. This is a valuable exercise that may assure a good grade on the final work. Be sure to turn in your original synopsis/bibliography with your rough draft.

2.) Cite your sources using footnotes and not parenthetical notations!
   b. Be sure to provide a full citation or, if repeating a source in an earlier footnote, name the author, a shortened version of the article or book title, and the page number from which you’ve taken your material. For example: 3. White, “Cut and Paste,” 211. DO NOT USE PARENTHEtical notations such as (Hubert, “The Gulch,” 2009, p. 15).

3. Final Draft

   Be sure to turn in your original synopsis/bibliography and rough draft (with review sheet) when submitting your final draft. I cannot grade your paper without all these components of the assignment.

Submitting your work

Please hand in your final draft both on paper and as an electronic copy (deposited on the announced plagiarism detection software). There is no excuse other than family emergency or an illness (with doctor's note) for handing in the components of this assignment late. The synopsis/bibliography or final draft will be marked down for each 24 hours of tardiness. Make a photocopy of your paper, and/or keep a copy on disk. Email it to yourself. Save your work often and print out a rough draft--computer problems are not acceptable excuses for late work.

The objectives of this assignment are:

1.) To demonstrate your ability to produce a solid visual analysis of an artwork and a critical account of its content and context;
2.) To make a proper investigation and interpretation of evidence. Basically: to be able to think critically about your subject and bring this way of thinking to your artwork and sources.
3.) To produce cogent expository writing;
4.) To offer an analysis that remains in dialogue with our discussions in class.

Keep in mind that your paper should read as a synthetic analysis rather than a checklist of points. This means that most of your writing should be oriented toward answering your primary question. Do not produce an outline or list of bullet points.

Grades and Expectations:

What follows is a general description of my expectations for your writing assignment in this class. Please read it carefully and ask me any questions you have about its terms. Your writing assignment this semester will be evaluated according to a traditional scale of A through F. The general expectations for each grade are outlined below.

A: This grade is reserved for outstanding written work that masters the assignment and adheres to the principles of good art-historical/photo-historical writing. It responsibly challenges its terms/assumptions, and raises questions that build upon and extend well beyond the issues discussed in seminar. You can earn an A by teaching me something about the readings and/or images discussed in a mature, thoughtful, and intellectually rigorous way. This grade is the result of sophisticated thinking, careful observation, and hard work, pure and simple. This can also be excellent work, fueled
by insightful critical questions about a reading and/or image. The writing will argue its main idea in a clear, focused, persuasive, and engaging manner. The logical development of this idea will be reflected in the structure of the paper, both on the paragraph and sentence levels. Importantly, this writing will accurately represent the issues raised by your sources or image as well as make a strong and original claim of its own, which will be well-supported by specific textual evidence (visual or otherwise). (Brief) descriptions of artworks or summaries of the reading, in other words, will be explicitly motivated by argument. The discussion of your artwork, moreover, will make copious and proper use of the visual vocabulary presented in seminar and in our readings. This work simply stands out.

**B+/B:** Written work in the “B” range is good. It will often argue its main idea but will not always be as fully developed, consistently explained, or sufficiently supported as “A” work. While it develops ideas that are relevant to the seminar, it doesn’t always do so with consistent care, focus, or insight. It will have moments of critical insight and sophistication, although typically the analysis of readings or artworks could be taken much further. While it generally makes use of our visual vocabulary to discuss artworks, this vocabulary will not be employed to its best effect, or a term may be used incorrectly. “B” work is therefore often remarkable for its potential as well as its accomplishments.

**C+/C:** Work in the “C” range is average. It may vaguely address the assignment and sometimes make its point but it will often have an unclear or otherwise weak argument. Its ideas are workable but typically not specific enough, complex, or critically insightful. A “C” does not seek to represent carefully or accurately the issues raised by a given text (visual or otherwise); it may, as a result, make unsupportable claims based on misreadings of texts or uncritically dismiss others’ ideas. In addition, there will often be lapses in the development of ideas. Some points will be well thought out but simply not explained or supported effectively; others are explained but not thought out well enough. This writing generally lacks a proper use of our visual vocabulary. This work tends not to stand out.

**D:** Written work that earns a “D” is poor. It will have a weak or no main idea and a general lack of critical engagement with the readings or artworks under discussion. Several elements of good writing are either poorly executed or missing altogether. There may be frequent lapses in the argument and/or its development as well as a generally poor use of evidence (visual or otherwise) and few transitions between ideas. In most cases, these essays will demonstrate a lack of effort, a fundamental misunderstanding or overlooking of our visual vocabulary, and an unwillingness to engage with the critical terms of the assignment and/or the seminar itself.

**F:** Failure. This grade is generally reserved for late work, incomplete work (e.g., 2 pages for a ten-page assignment), or assignments completed with few if any signs of effort. An “F” can also apply to writing which lacks any sense of direction or has multiple thoughts jumbled together, largely lacking in critical insight and with no apparent connection between them. These essays are simply ineffective in communicating their meaning to the reader.

**Potential Topics:**
- Willem De Kooning’s representation of women in *Woman I*
- Alice Aycock’s Public Installations and *The Machine That Makes the World*
- Art about AIDS: David Wojnarowicz’s personal vocabulary in *Water*
- Ann Hamilton’s Biennale Pavilion, Venice, 1999
• The role of biography in Arshile Gorky’s *The Liver is the Cock’s Comb*
• Krasner’s sense of structure in *Untitled* (1949)
• Louise Bourgeois’ personal narrative in biomorphic abstraction in her *Femme Maison* series
• Louise Nevelson’s reconfiguring of sculpture and installation in *Dawn’s Wedding Feast*
• Performance and gender in Yoko Ono’s *Cut Piece*
• Capitalism and consumption in Andy Warhol’s *210 Coca-Cola Bottles*
• Performativity and minimalism in Robert Morris’ *L-Beams*
• Language and art in Joseph Kosuth’s *One and Three Chairs*
• Body, performance, and identity in Ana Mendieta’s *Silueta* series
• Earth art, cosmic rotation, and installation in Nancy Spero’s *Sun Tunnels*
• Memory and monument in Rachel Whiteread’s *House*
• Bad painting in Susan Rothenberg’s *Pontiac*
• Social Accountability in Jenny Holzer’s *Truisms*

Choosing your topic is an important part of the term paper: you need to choose something which interests you, which will allow you to do more than just summarize something you’ve read, and for which you can find non-internet resources.