GCIN2009 Art worlds: Aesthetics, money, and markets

Course Instructors:
Dr. Kam Bill Wong (wongkambill@126.com)
Ms. Karin L. F. Chau (karinclf@hku.hk)

Course email: gcin200920181stsem@gmail.com
(Please contact us via this email address for any course-related issues)

Lectures: Tuesdays, 4.30 – 6.20p.m. CPD-3.29

Course Content
The course looks at how art worlds function in Europe, Asia, and the United States, and focuses in particular on the socio-cultural relations linking beauty and aesthetics with business, organizations, people, and money. It is taught primarily by lectures and class work, and is attentive to art worlds in China, Korea, Hong Kong and Japan, comparing what we find there with standard readings on art worlds in Europe and the United States. It thus looks at how local/regional variations can be found in the organization and practices of different art worlds, and tries to explain why they exist.

The course is intended as an elective for students who wish to major or minor in Creative Industries, and/or who have already taken the Introduction to Creative Industries (GCIN 1001), as well as for students in the Department of Art history at HKU. In the long-term, the course serves as a foundation for those who wish to pursue a career in art by familiarising them with the special dynamics of art worlds, alerting them especially to the challenges of managing creative people, artworks, and their accompanying ideologies.

Learning Objectives
The aim of this course is to remind students of the concept of “art worlds” put forward by the sociologist, Howard Becker, and to examine and analyse how they are organized and function. By the end of the course students should have gained an understanding of:

1. The social processes surrounding the production, appreciation, sale and purchase of art works;

2. The composition of an art world, and the relationships between the main protagonists of artist, gallery owner, collector, auction house, and museum;

3. The confused and confusing relationship between artistic ideals, and the pricing and sale of art works in the art market;

4. How reputations are made and sustained in art worlds.

1 This course outline is adapted from the course syllabus developed by Professor Brian Moeran when he taught the course for the Global Creative Industries Programme at HKU.
**Teaching Methods**
Lectures, case studies, presentations, and class discussion.

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**Assessment**

A. **Short written assignments (30%)**:
You will be given regular written assignments (no more than 500 words) summarizing a theme in each week’s readings, and will be marked on how well you present the main arguments therein.

B. **Final essay (50%)**
At the end of the semester, you will write an essay of around 2000 words in length. You are asked to focus on at least two main protagonists in the art world in Hong Kong (e.g. artist/ art critics/ gallery owner/ collector/ auction house/ museum/ fair organizer etc). You should conduct fieldwork and interviews with the people concerned and incorporate your findings in a theoretical analysis which makes use of the course lectures and reading materials. You will be assessed on your fieldwork, understanding of the art world concerned, and theoretical issues applied in your analysis.

The essay should include a summary of your field notes (in English) as an Appendix. Everything should be handed in as a **hard copy** to the office of the School of Modern Languages and Cultures (5th Floor, Run Run Shaw Tower), and as a **soft copy** on Moodle by **5pm on 14 December 2018 (Friday)**.

C. **Class Participation (20%)**
You will be expected to participate actively in discussing points raised in the readings and accompanying lecture. You are expected to attend lectures regularly, and random attendance lists will be taken throughout the course. Failure to comply fully with these expectations will result in a percentage being deducted from your final assessment mark.

Further details of the assessment will be discussed in class.

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**Indicative literature**


Tentative Course Outline²

Week 1: Approaches to the Study of Art and Course Introduction (04/09/18)

Vera L. Zolberg 2015 “What is art? What is the sociology of art?” Chapter 1 in her *Constructing a Sociology of the Arts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-25 only.


Week 3: What is an Art World? (18/09/18)


² The tentative schedule is subject to change.


Other Readings


Week 4: Public Holiday (no class) (25/09/18)

Week 5: The Artwork as Social Process (02/10/18)


Homework: Summarize Howard Becker's theory of art worlds and discuss in what ways artworks are the result of social processes. (Write no more than 500 words and hand in at the beginning of class on October 9).

Week 6: Art Markets (09/10/18)


Other Readings

Week 7: Reading Week (no class) (16/10/18)

Week 8: Art Dealers (23/10/18)


Other Readings

Homework: What are the main features of art markets and what is the role of an art dealer in them? (Write no more than 500 words and hand in at the beginning of class on October 30).

Week 9: Aesthetics and Art Critics (30/10/18)


Other Readings


**Week 10: Pricing Art (06/11/18)**


**Homework:** What is the relationship between “art,” aesthetics and money in an art world? (Write no more than 500 words and hand in at the beginning of class on November 13).

**Week 11: Collectors (13/11/18)**


**Week 12: Artists (20/11/18)**


**Week 13: Guest Lecture: Art Managers (27/11/18)**

**Additional: Reputations**


L.E.A. Braden 2016 “Collectors and collections: Critical recognition of the world’s top art collectors.” *Social Forces* 94 (4): 1483-1492 **only**.