

Syllabus

<p>Course title: Tendencies in Contemporary Art Language of instruction: Lili Rebeka Tóth Study year and semester: 2026 winter</p>				
<p>Course coordinator(s) / lecturer(s): Contact details:</p>				
<p>Level and Code: M-AE-E-201-C</p>	<p>Position in the Curriculum: ES MA</p>	<p>Recommended semester: 1-3, Spring</p>	<p>Credits: 5</p>	<p>Teaching hours: 3/week Student workload: 114</p>
<p>Related codes: M-AE-201 (2 stud), ER-THEO-MA-252602-06 (4stud)</p>	<p>Type: (lecture/ seminar/practice /consultation etc.)</p>	<p>Is it open to sign-up as an elective? -</p>	<p>Specific pre-conditions to sign-up as an elective: -</p>	
<p>Interlinkages: (prerequisites, parallel units)</p>				
<p>Aims and Principles:</p> <p>This course aims to explore the theoretical, historical, social, and political contexts that shaped the parallel tendencies we now refer to as contemporary art. Readings from art history, critical theory, philosophy, curatorial studies, and cultural studies will help contextualize artworks, exhibitions, artists, and art-related events around the globe.</p> <p>The class strives for a global perspective while acknowledging the hegemony of Western discourse. It will also place special emphasis on incorporating local and regional (Hungarian/Central-Eastern Europe) examples of the contemporary. Another cornerstone of the semester is understanding that, in discussions of contemporary art, there are no absolute facts or truths—only interpretations and positions. Critical examination and respectful debate are strongly encouraged.</p>				
<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop art historical, political, and theoretical knowledge of 21st-century art, spanning from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the present day. Gain familiarity with contemporary art tendencies, key events in exhibition history, and major figures in curatorial, institutional, and critical practices. <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze and interpret artworks, exhibitions, and texts within their historical, political, and theoretical contexts. Conduct independent research and synthesize information from diverse sources. Apply critical thinking to evaluate multiple perspectives and construct nuanced interpretations of contemporary art. <p>Attitudes / Attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage critically and actively with course materials and discussions. Demonstrate intellectual curiosity, openness, and receptivity to diverse perspectives. Maintain respectful and constructive interaction in collaborative learning environments. <p>Autonomy and Responsibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete readings and engage with course materials proactively. Ask questions for clarification and pursue additional resources when interested in specific topics. Reflect on course content and personal responses to develop independent critical judgment. 				

Course Content (Topics and Themes)

- Dissolution of the Soviet Union, modernist utopies, uneven landscape of modernization.
- CIA, Documenta, Documenta 15 and the “end of Documenta”.
- Introducing contemporary art in Hungary, post-social condition and “Soros realism.”
- Identity politics, feminism, queer activism, indigenous rights and the AIDS crisis.
- Decolonialism, ethnofuturisms, Black studies, Roma studies.
- New materialisms, design, art + crafts, the role of museums and the art market.
- The Anthropocene, ecological crises, posthuman tendencies.
- Hauntology, the neo-gothic, new-hermeneutics, neo-inertia.
- Post-internet, radicalization, cyberfeminism, anarchism, new fascisms.
- Creating atmospheres: world-building, total-installation, performance, sound art.
- Entropy: dissolution of systems, new paradigms. The crisis of the global art: the 60th Venice Biennale, the 2024 Whitney Biennial. Search for a new definition of art. The notion of transgression.

Specificity of the learning process:

Teaching method: The course will draw on art and literary sources, with opportunities for in-class tasks and short movie screenings to support discussion and analysis.

Schedule: Seminars will be held on Thursday mornings. Each class begins with a the discussion of the assigned text and continues with an introduction and a discourse on the class' topic

Tasks and Assignments (with Student Notional Workload):

- Assigned readings (plus recommended readings) will be provided for each class (max 25 pages).
- Students are expected to come prepared, having read the assigned materials.
 - Students are expected to submit a short, handwritten reflection (maximum 10–15 sentences) on each assigned reading. Reflections should demonstrate engagement with the text. Handwritten reflections must be turned in at the beginning of each class.

Learning environment: Classes will take place primarily in the classroom. Occasional visits to exhibitions may be arranged, depending on availability and relevance to course topics.

Assignments

- Each week, students are assigned to reflect on a text or short texts related to the class topic.
- The course will conclude with an in-person test covering knowledge of course material, including artists, artworks, theories, tendencies, and relevant historical events. The test will include multiple-choice (ABC) questions and short essay questions.
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Assessment method: reflection papers + test

Assessment Criteria

- Active engagement with course materials (completing readings, asking questions, participating in critical discussions).
- Demonstrating engagement with the text in reading responses: identify a key idea, question, point of confusion, or connection to previous discussions.
- Consistent presence and participation in class. (in case of absency, please send me an email.)
- Creative and thoughtful execution of class assignments and reading responses

Calculation of grade: (weights of the achievements, assignments; ranges of rates or points)

Regular class participation and attendance (33% of grade)

Reading responses (33% of grade)

Final Test (33% of grade)

Class readings:

Bishop, Claire. „The Social Turn Collaboration and Its Discontents.” *Artforum International* 44(6):178-183, 2006.

Demos, T. J. “Welcome to the Anthropocene” In *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017, pp. 7-22.

Fisher, Mark. “What Is Hauntology?” *Film Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (2012): 16–24.

Groys, Boris. “On Art Activism.” *e-flux Journal* 56 (2014). <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/56/60343/on-art-activism/>.

Haraway, Donna. “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century.” In *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, 149–182. London: Routledge, 1991.

Hornyik, Sándor. “A Weird New World – New (Vital) Materialism and Weird (Dark) Ecology in Hungarian Contemporary Art.” *Mezosfera.Org*, September 4, 2025. <https://mezosfera.org/a-weird-new-worldnew-vital-materialism-and-weird-dark-ecology-in-hungarian-contemporary-art/>.

Kissick, Dean. "The Painted Protest." Accessed November 21, 2025.
<https://harpers.org/archive/2024/12/the-painted-protest-dean-kissick-contemporary-art/>.

Miklós-völgyi, Zsolt, Nemes Z., Márió. *Hungarofuturist Manifesto*, 2018.
<https://idea.ro/revista/en/article/XOgqGhIAACEAfKtT/manifesto>

Mohebbi, Sohrab. "Drifting in the Atmospheric." *Mousse Magazine*, June 11, 2025.

Muskovics, Gyula. "To Find a World, Maybe You Have to Have Lost One. Maybe You Have to Be Lost." Online article, April 2023.

Salemy, Mohammad. "Why dOCUMENTA Must Be Abolished?" *TripleAmpersand Journal* (&&&), August 24, 2025. <https://tripleampersand.org/why-documenta-must-be-abolished/>.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, edited by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, 24–28. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Svetlana Boym, "History Out-of-Sync," in *The Off-Modern* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), pp. 3-8.

Recommended readings:

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994.

Berardi, Franco "Bifo." *After the Future*. Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2011.

Bey, Hakim. *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*. 1985. Online edition. <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/>.

Bishop, Claire. "Déjà Vu: Invoking Modernist Architecture and Design." In *Disordered Attention: How We Look at Art and Performance Today*, 155–195. London: Verso, 2024.

Braidotti, Rosi. "Meta(l)morphoses: Women, Aliens, and Machines." In *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti*, 55–80. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

Buck-Morss, Susan. *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.

Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone Books, 1994. (Originally published 1967.)

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977.

Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Enwezor, Okwui. "The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition." *Research in African Literatures* 34, no. 4 (2003): 57–82.

Fanon, Frantz. "On Violence." In *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1–21. New York: Grove Press, 2004.

Fisher, Mark. *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* Winchester and Washington, DC: Zero Books, 2009.

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Jameson, Fredric. "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." In *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 1–54. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991.

Kornbluh, Anna. *Immediacy: Or, The Style of Too Late Capitalism*. Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2024.

Le Guin, Ursula K. *Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places*. New York: Grove Press, 1989.

Loomba, Ania. "Situating Colonial and Postcolonial Studies" [excerpt]. In *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 6–62. New York, NY: Routledge, 2005.

McKenzie Wark. *Raving*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2023.

Parikka, Jussi. *What Is Media Archaeology?* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012.

Preciado, Paul B. *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*. New York: Feminist Press, 2013.

Said, Edward W. "Introduction." In *Orientalism*, 1–28. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

Seu, Mindy, ed. *Cyberfeminism Index*. Inventory Press, 2022.

Tiqqun. *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*. New York: Semiotext(e), 2020. (Originally published 2001.)

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Further readings, documents, sources:

Films

Curtis, Adam. *HyperNormalisation*. Documentary film. BBC, 2016.

———. *TraumaZone*. Documentary series. BBC, 2022.

Playlist available

at: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?app=desktop&list=PL9eKQjNu1CogsfzC8DvZM0SgpujW2hVUD&cbrd=1>

Podcast

Citarella, Joshua. *Doomscroll*. Spotify podcast series, 2025.

Archive

Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW). *Anthropocene Curriculum*. Project website. Accessed November 15, 2025.

<https://www.anthropocene-curriculum.org/>

Additional information:

It is also important to note that the class materials may contain potentially triggering content, including explicit depictions of violence and sexuality.

Prior learning recognition (based on application):

recognition is not applicable

Schedule and venue for personal consultation: after class