



**ARTH 3399: Special Topics in Art History**  
**Art and Identity**  
**University of Texas at El Paso**  
**Spring 2024**

**CRN:** 24290

**Class meeting times:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:30 am to 11:50 pm

**Classroom:** Fox Fine Arts A458 (fourth floor, Art wing)

**Professor:** Dr. Melissa Warak (she/her; please call me Dr. or Professor)

**Email:** mcwarak@utep.edu

**Office:** Fox Fine Arts A454

**Office phone number** (during office hours): (915) 747-7849

**Student/office hours:** Wednesdays from 2:00-3:00 pm and Thursdays from 2:00-4:00 pm. These will be held via Zoom, in person, or by telephone. Sign up for office hour meetings [here](#).

**COURSE MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGY**

All materials for the course, including PowerPoints and PDFs of course texts, will be uploaded to the course Blackboard page. Students will need a strong internet connection and a computer (either a laptop or a desktop) in order to study the images on a larger screen. Google Chrome is the recommended browser for Blackboard. UTEP students may check out laptops and wifi hot spots from the UTEP library. See [here](#) for more information.

**ABOUT YOUR PROFESSOR** Dr. Warak specializes in the relationship of music and sound to art of the twentieth century. Dr. Warak is a proud Texan and a native of Houston. She earned a B.A. in English literature and art history from Vanderbilt University, and her M.A. and Ph.D. in art history from the University of Texas at Austin. Her current research focuses on the ways that visual artists from the mid-fifties to late sixties employed musical models in their work and she is writing a book about contemporary sound art with Routledge. Other research interests include the history of abstraction, spirituality in modern and contemporary art, science and technology in modern and contemporary art, and disability representation in art. Her research has been supported by grants and fellowships from the National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution, the Getty Research Institute, the Royal Music Association of the United Kingdom, The Menil Collection in Houston, the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, the Yale University Art Galleries, the Tate Modern, the Grand Palais in Paris, the Kress Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, and the National Science Foundation, among others.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines the concept of artistic identity from the late nineteenth through the twenty-first centuries. We will explore how an artist's identity plays a role in the way that their art looks and

discuss the representation of others' identities through art of these time periods. The course is not a general history of identity-based art, but will consider it theoretically, thematically, and through case studies. This course uses theory and politics of feminism, neurodiversity and disability, gender and queer studies, colonialism and postcolonialism, border studies, and critical race studies as frameworks for the art historical study of identity.

We will seriously consider art that deals frankly with bodies, sexuality, race, religion, and violence. Further, some of the art we will study was created with the intention of challenging the comfort levels of the viewer. In that sense, we should all strive to create a discussion environment that is open to ideas and respectful to difference of opinion. It is not expected that you should enjoy – in a conventional sense – or agree with the ideological premises of all of the art explored in this course. Please contact Dr. Warak in the first week of class if you would like to discuss any concerns about this.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

During this course, students will develop their understanding of identity positions in art after 1880 and acquire skills essential to the professional art historian. These include the following:

1. Conducting visual analysis, scholarly writing, research in primary and secondary texts, understanding multidisciplinary research methodologies, and writing formal analysis and interpretive texts.
2. Analyzing and critically evaluating ideas and arguments.
3. Learning how to analyze case studies within a broader social history framework.
4. Applying course material in terms of improving aesthetic appreciation, problem solving, broader cultural literacy, and facilitating further coursework in the arts and humanities.

### **COURSE STRUCTURE**

- 1) LECTURE AND DISCUSSION.** The class will meet in person in Fox Fine Arts A458. Expect to use the full class time. Discussion is critical in this course, so expect to take part in the class discussions. Students will be graded on **discussion participation** in class. Discussion points will be assigned for both the first and second halves of the semester. Participation may mean different things for different students; speak to Dr. Warak if traditional in-class participation causes you anxiety. Otherwise, a good rule of thumb is to try to contribute *at least* once per class (via ideas, questions, or responses to other students).
- 2) QUIZZES.** We will have one online syllabus quiz and seven in-class reading quizzes throughout the semester. See the Quizzes policy below for details.
- 3) WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS.** Students will complete an introductory questionnaire and a visual analysis worksheet early in the course. We will have one on-campus field trip for which students will fill out a worksheet. Students will write one research paper, which will be due toward the end of the semester. This includes a research prospectus (proposal) and participation in a peer review exercise. The assignment prompt and other materials related to the project are compiled in a Blackboard tab labeled "Research Paper."
- 4) PRESENTATIONS.** Each student will be responsible for **teaching the class** about a scientific concept or technological invention in a ten-minute in-class presentation. The assignment prompt and list of presentations are compiled in a Blackboard tab labeled "Presentations."
- 5) EXAMS.** This course will have two exams. See the Exams policy below for details.
- 6) EMAIL.** Dr. Warak will email the class regularly using the UTEP email addresses on file and will try to respond to student emails within 24 hours. Please remember to treat emails as professional

correspondence. Any course announcements on Blackboard will also be emailed to students.

**7) GRADEBOOK.** All course grades will be updated on the Gradebook on Blackboard. Students should keep track of their progress through the semester.

**8) STUDENT HOURS.** Student hours (also called **office hours**) are a time for students to get to know their professor, talk about the course content in further depth, discuss concerns or grades, or to learn more about their field of study or graduate study. Office hours are for you, so take advantage whenever you need these kinds of interactions. Dr. Warak will hold office hours from 2:00 to 3:00 pm on Wednesdays and 2:00 to 4:00 pm on Thursdays via Zoom conferencing or in person. To make a Zoom appointment for office hours, go [here](#). Sign up for as many fifteen-minute time slots as you need. This will send an email to both of us to confirm, as well as a Zoom meeting link. Indicate in the notes if you would like to meet in my office or talk on the telephone. Email me if you would like to create an appointment outside of my office hours due to class timing conflicts.

### **GRADING POLICY**

This course will be graded on a **scale of 500 points**.

Syllabus Quiz:	5 points
Visual Analysis Worksheet:	20 points
Quizzes (7):	60 points (lowest quiz free bonus points)
Exam 1:	100 points
Exam 2:	100 points
Presentation:	35 points
EPMA Worksheet:	15 points
Research Project:	140 points (10 + 30 + 100)
Participation 1:	10 points
Participation 2:	15 points

There will be extra credit opportunities available during the semester.

Note: You will see that the Blackboard page allows for 510+ points, but this accounts for the free quiz grade and any extra credit. You are graded only out of 500 points. Thus, this is the point breakdown for grades:

448 – 500 points:	A
397 – 447 points:	B
347 – 396 points:	C
297 – 346 points:	D
000 – 296 points:	F

### **TEXTS / READINGS**

We do not have a textbook for this course. Readings will be posted as PDFs to Blackboard by the author's last name. All readings are eligible for the exams, regardless of whether or not they appear on a quiz.

### **TAKING NOTES IN CLASS**

Exam material will come from ideas discussed in class; use the readings as supplements to the lectures

and discussions. Completing the readings will not take the place of attendance and participation in class. It is critical that students take notes in class. I recommend bringing a notebook designated just for this course if you hand-write your notes, but you may use a laptop to type them if you wish. Taking notes by hand is still the recommended format; many studies show that the act of writing by hand helps one retain information and ideas. However, this is your choice. It is important that students focus their attention on the lectures and projected images without distractions and that they take careful and detailed notes. Using bullet points will help you write down more information. Vocabulary and important terms will be written on the PowerPoint presentation slides and you should pay special attention to these terms and the works of art where they may be applicable. Basic identifying information for each work will also be provided on the PowerPoints (artist name, title, date). It is a good idea to write each class date on your notes so you know what we covered each day. PowerPoints will be uploaded to Blackboard after each class day.

Students are responsible for acquiring notes and announcements made during missed classes, so make a friend and exchange contact information. Dr. Warak will not provide class notes to students.

### **EXAM POLICY AND STRUCTURE**

Exams will consist of a single essay question (you will have a choice among three or four topics) and will be taken online during a twenty-four-hour period. Think of the exam as a way to show off what you have learned in the class. Students will have two hours to write the exam. We will not have specific image lists for each exam. Instead, students will decide on appropriate examples from class for their essay exams (choose examples that you feel confident that you understand). Exams are OPEN NOTE, so make sure to take notes extensively. Students may use any course material during the exams. The exams are not cumulative. See me during office hours for help improving your note-taking skills. Exams made by made up only in extreme circumstances documented with the Dean of Students and approved by Dr. Warak. Plan your semester accordingly.

### **QUIZZES**

Our reading quizzes are worth 10 points each and are **not open note**. Quizzes are timed at ten minutes each and will be taken at the beginning of the class period, so make sure you are on time to class. Quizzes will cover only the reading(s) listed for the specific quiz day. See the schedule for quiz days and the guide to the readings (located in Blackboard at the top of the Readings tab) for help in thinking through what you should study from each reading. The quizzes will likely include a combination of short answer, fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, and true/false questions. To prepare for these, you should make sure to read the texts carefully and take notes on them (this will also help with the exams). You may find it useful to skim the readings once for the larger issues at stake and then take notes during a second and more careful reading. Be sure that you can identify the author's arguments and the primary evidence used to support them. As you read, think critically about what might be useful about the texts for that day's topics. There are no makeup quizzes, but every student will get one free quiz grade (no points removed).

### **\*\*\*COURSE POLICIES\*\*\***

#### **ATTENDANCE POLICY (MANDATORY ATTENDANCE)**

**Policy in short:**

**DO NOT COME TO CLASS IF YOU ARE SICK. Wear a mask if you are recovering from an illness.**

Allowed absences without penalty (no documentation needed) = **3 absences**

Tardies =  $\frac{1}{2}$  **absence**

Automatic drop = **6 absences or 2 absences before the course census date (Jan. 31)**

**Absences due to COVID-19 illness will be excused, but this will require official documentation from the university.**

#### **Policy in detail:**

Class attendance is a requirement and use of the full class period is expected unless otherwise stated. We will take a brief break in the middle of class. An attendance sheet will be passed around at the beginning of each lecture; make sure you (and only you) sign it every day. Students should not sign the attendance sheet for anyone else or ask anyone to sign for them.

Because we meet only once weekly, you are allowed **three absences** for *any reason* without grading consequences. It is up to your discretion how you use these, including for illness; you do not need to show documentation (except in the case of COVID-19 absences) and you do not need to notify Dr. Warak in advance except in the case of a religious holy day (see below). **More than three absences from class will result in a lowering of your overall grade by fifteen points per absence** (remember that this class is graded on a scale of 500 points). In the case of an illness or emergency that causes you to miss more than three consecutive class days, email Dr. Warak ASAP. Students who are more than **ten minutes late** without permission will be given half credit for attendance. **Tardies (half credits)** will figure into the absence count. Dr. Warak will keep a running tally of absences in a column on the Gradebook section of Blackboard. You will be able to access the attendance record on Blackboard to see which days you have missed or were late/left early.

#### **COURSE DROP POLICY**

**Six absences will result in an automatic drop from the course;** this includes tardies and excused absences from COVID. Students with two absences by the census date (January 31) will be dropped.

#### **COPYRIGHT OF THIS COURSE**

All materials used in this course are protected by copyright law. The course materials are only for the use of students currently enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further disseminated or shared with other students or websites.

#### **FERPA AND EMAIL POLICY**

This course adheres to Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act ([FERPA](#)) regulations. All course correspondence from Dr. Warak will take place via Blackboard's email function. I will never post identifiable information about students, and I will not discuss specifics of your student performance with anyone without your permission as documented by FERPA standards. Please note that, due to FERPA regulations, I cannot email with students about grade numbers specifically. This is because email is considered an insecure medium and may be hacked. If you have a question or concern about letter grades or numbers, please make an office hours appointment. However, you may email more generally about improving in the course.

**LAPTOPS, TABLETS, AND PHONES** Students may use computers and tablets to take notes during class, but please keep phones out of sight. Please use electronics professionally. If you need to use your phone during class (even to text), please step out of the classroom briefly. Lectures may not be recorded without permission from Dr. Warak and/or CASS accommodations.

**CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE** Please be respectful of other students in the classroom. The classroom door will be open for five minutes after class begins; after ten minutes, tardies will be given. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom may result in a directive to leave class or being reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with UTEP policy. **You may NOT bring food and drinks into the classroom**, except for water with a sealable lid. Please make sure your bag is small enough to fit fully under your chair. If not, you will be asked to put it to the side of the classroom.

### **SAFEASSIGN**

Written documents will be submitted through SafeAssign links on Blackboard. Students should submit the file type indicated in the assignments (.docx or .pdf). Keep in mind that uploading a document to SafeAssign sometimes takes several minutes, so do not wait until the minute the document is due to begin the upload. Give yourself a little buffer time in case there is an upload error. Be aware that SafeAssign is also a plagiarism detection tool, but you can use this to your advantage by pulling an Originality Report for work that you upload. This may help you find research that you have forgotten to cite with a footnote. SafeAssign provides me with a time stamp for each submission, as well as an Originality Report.

### **PAPER FORMATTING AND WRITING HELP**

Papers in this course will use the formats of the [Chicago Manual of Style](#). Students may want to reach out to a librarian at the UTEP library for research help. Ms. Joy Urbina, Information Literacy Librarian, specializes in helping students navigate appropriate resources for research. Her email is [jurbina4@utep.edu](mailto:jurbina4@utep.edu) and you may schedule an appointment with her [here](#). Students who are concerned about the quality of their writing should contact the [University Writing Center](#) and make an appointment well before the paper's deadline.

### **AI POLICY**

UTEP officially considers the use of AI (artificial intelligence) as a form of plagiarism unless otherwise directed by the professor. The use of AI programs for any assignment is prohibited in this class. All written work, including exams, will be run through AI detection software; any assignment suspected to have used AI will be sent to the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](#) (OSCCR) and assessed for academic dishonesty at the university level. At the minimum, this would result in a zero for any assignment on which UTEP has determined that AI was used.

### **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND PLAGIARISM**

Academic dishonesty – including the use of AI on assignments – or cheating will result in referral to OSCCR and will incur harsh penalties, including failure of the assignment, of the course, or further disciplinary action determined by the university. Please do not waste your time trying it; expend your energy on doing the work instead. Any student who must cheat in order to pass a class does not deserve a degree from UTEP because it has not been earned honestly. All students are expected to engage in their academic pursuits in a professional manner and to maintain honesty and integrity.

Sometimes, students commit academic dishonesty without knowing it, but ignorance is not an excuse. All students are responsible for knowing the requirements of academic honesty set forth by UTEP. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty. See the UTEP [policy](#) on academic integrity and scholastic dishonesty.

### **POLICY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, PREGNANT STUDENTS, AND STUDENT-PARENTS**

Accommodations will be made for students with limitations due to disabilities if they are registered with the [Center for Accommodations and Support Services \(CASS\)](#) and procure the proper documentation: (telephone: (915) 747-5148). Students with documented disabilities should make sure that the professor receives the appropriate paperwork from CASS within the first week of class. Please note that CASS is available to help students with any disabilities, documented illness (including anxiety, depression, and PTS), and in the case of short-term disability (broken bones, etc.). UTEP has a [Student Pregnancy and Parenting Nondiscrimination Policy](#), which may allow for some accommodations through CASS. Please note that I use the Atkinson Hyperlegible or Calibri fonts on course documents because these are the most accessible for students with learning and vision disabilities.

**POLICY FOR STUDENT ABSENCES ON RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS** Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911(a)(2) defines a religious holy day as “a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20 ...”. See your professor at least a week in advance if you intend to miss class in observance of a religious holy day.

### **COVID-19 PRECAUTION STATEMENT**

Please stay home if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we can work on appropriate accommodations. If you have tested positive for COVID-19, please report your results to [covidaction@utep.edu](mailto:covidaction@utep.edu), so that the Dean of Students Office can provide you with support and help with communication with your professors. See [here](#) for the latest information about testing for COVID-19 on campus.