

## HU130 Visual Language and Culture: Class Overview

*The media revolution communicates through images as much if not more than through words. Strategies of interpretation and theories of visual logic are introduced.*

Visual Language and Culture is a broad overview of the history, culture and interpretation of art in the wider world. To accommodate the dissemination of this information, and to allow students to participate in discussions surrounding it, I designed a worksheet with a series of questions divided into relevant discussion topics. Each artwork is discussed in terms of Formal Analysis, Sociopolitical Relevance, Gender Race and Social Class, Art Historical Implications and Scientific Innovation and Influence. The same questions are used in each analysis so students can see the patterns and developments of the same ideas over time. This format also forces students to see art in a larger context, influenced by history and non-art events as well as the structure of the art market in different time periods. For students who are much more visual thinkers than potential art historians, this structure allows a space for them to absorb a few examples in greater detail and to relate them to the art making practice as a job with struggles and rewards, similar to their personal experiences. The question/ answer approach also allows me to engage the class throughout the lecture, as the critical analysis progresses through the topics.

While the worksheet provides the backbone for the class, the students use their knowledge in context through essays and creative projects. The final project for the class asks students to design their own gallery exhibition. They select a time period or theme for the show, research the artworks they would like to use and create a gallery guide to help the viewer as they “walk” through the exhibition. Again, for a group of design students, this project has been successful in promoting research skills, understanding the continuity of art through time or subject matter and is also a chance for them to use their skills in an active way. Some students have even pushed the envelope to create artist books and three dimensional models of their galleries. Because the themes are not necessarily chronological, students determine formal and conceptual links between different genres and materials. The installation creates a visual link between scale and interaction and how one perceives art within a predetermined space.



# Sample Class Project Handout

HU 130: Visual Language and Culture  
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Week 7.3 Visual Logic Worksheet



artist  
title  
date  
medium  
size  
location

sketch

color or value

line and shape

movement

Reactions and Comments

(use at least one book)

Visual Resources

- Claude Monet *The Boulevard de Capucines* 1873
- Claude Monet *Rouen Cathedral* 1894
- Claude Monet *Waterlilies* 1899
- Eduard Manet *Woman with Fans* 1873
- E. Carolus Duran *Mademoiselle de Lancey* 1876
- Claude Monet *Women in the Garden* 1866
- Edgar Degas *Dancer with a Bouquet Bowing* 1877
- Edgar Degas *Dance Class* 1873
- Edgar Degas *Musicians in the Orchestra* 1870-71
- Edgar Degas *The Absinthe Drinker* 1876
- Mary Cassatt *Little Girl in a Blue Armchair* 1878
- Mary Cassatt *Morning Toilette* 1886
- Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec *At the Café la Mie* 1891
- Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec *At the Moulin Rouge* 1892-95
- Julia Margaret Cameron *untitled* 1866

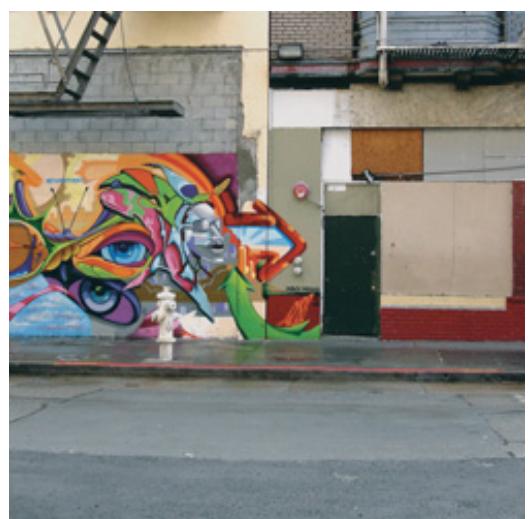
## HU333 Contemporary Art: Class Overview

*In this course, students will concentrate on contemporary art issues, as well as become aware of current trends and styles of art in their surrounding communities. Students will also explore the social, political and cultural environments of existing artistic expressions as they relate to current events.*

Contemporary Art is an elective in which we discuss the themes and topics of art made in the last 30 or so years. The success of this class lies in the combination of traditional slide lectures and experiential projects in which students have the opportunity to see the work of artists in the community. During the quarter we visit local museums and galleries, explore public sculptures and murals and have a class debate about censorship.

In developing the curriculum for this class, I emphasized the relationship between the students as burgeoning designers and the contemporary art world that surrounds them. While slide and video lectures are necessary to create the structure of understanding for the class, importance is placed on reading and discussion. At the initiation of each lecture, students answer a series of questions that are visited later in relation to specific artists. One lecture is even devoted to a student lead debate on censorship in the arts focusing on the work of Chris Ofili, Robert Mapplethorpe, Andres Serrano and Sally Mann.

An even more effective method of introducing students to contemporary art is to just leave the classroom and experience it. While most of the students live in the Bay Area, they are woefully ignorant of the art that surrounds them. The content of each trip is reinforced with a written analysis of the artworks or venues visited. Students are particularly inspired by the murals in the Mission District of San Francisco and by the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, an experimental art venue emphasizing new media. The connection between the art they are seeing and the art they are making is reinforced through an extra credit presentation of their own work at the end of the quarter.



# Sample Class Project Handout

HU 333: Contemporary Art  
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[Essay 03]

Graffiti, murals and the work of emerging artists all have particular positions within the history and culture of art. Select two of the murals from the Mission to research. Find out as much as you can about the pieces through observation, sketching and secondary source research. Compare and contrast the two works with particular attention to the relationship between the works and the environments in which they were created.

Use the following maps to find the suggested murals.  
Sketch or photograph details from different murals that interest you.

Essay due next week. 4-6 pages plus endnotes. Typed and double spaced. [15%]

## Research Starting Points:

### Murals near 16th and Mission

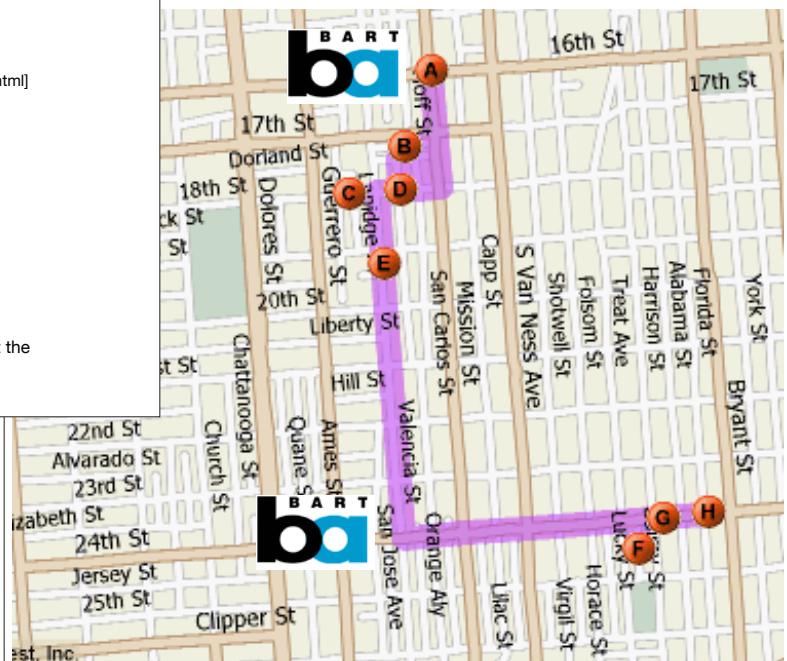
Clarion Alley Mural Project [<http://www.meganwilson.com/related/clarion.php>]  
Maestrapace [<http://www.maestrapace.com/index.shtml>]  
826 Valencia [<http://www.826valencia.org/about/facade/>]  
Generator [[http://www.samasama-yourewelcome.com/artists/Andrew\\_Schoultz/schoultz.html](http://www.samasama-yourewelcome.com/artists/Andrew_Schoultz/schoultz.html)]

### Murals near 24th and Mission

Balmy Alley Murals [[http://www.pbs.org/wnet/goingplaces2/san\\_francisco/hilite10.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/goingplaces2/san_francisco/hilite10.html)]  
Precita Eyes [<http://www.precitaeyes.org/>]  
500 Years of Resistance [<http://www.precitaeyes.org/examples.html>]  
Galeria de la Raza [<http://www.galeriadeleraza.org/>]

This is just a start- you should be doing specific research about the murals you select for the essay

## District Murals



[Start at 16th St. BART, finish at 24th St. BART]

- B. Clarion Alley [off 17th. between Mission and Valencia] Clarion Alley Mural Project 1993-present
- C. SF Women's Building [3543 18th. a block past Valencia] Maestrapace S. Cervantes, J. Alicia, others, 1994
- E. 826 Valencia/ The Pirate Store [Valencia between 19th and 20th] Our Facade Chris Ware, ~2000
- D. 18th and Lexington [right on Lexington going towards Mission] Generator/ 18th and Lexington Project Andrew Schoultz, Aaron Noble, 2002
- F. Balmy Alley [off 24th. before Harrison] Balmy Alley Murals various artists, 1971-present
- G. Precita Eyes Mural Arts and Visitors Center [2981 24th, @ Harrison]
- H. St. Peter's Church [24th @ Florida St.] 500 Years of Resistance I. Mata, 1993
- I. Cafe Vallarta [next to Balmy Alley] meet for burritos and to discuss the trip.