UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Phenomenology of Contemporary Arts

2627-1-F5702R010

Course title

Phenomenology of Contemporary Arts

Topics and course structure

The Phenomenology of Art studies the Arts as they manifest in contemporary reality and as they are constantly legitimized as 'art' by the critical act and active participation of the public.
The course begins with the conceptual revolution operated by Duchamp at the beginning of the 20th century, who, with the invention of the ready-made, swept away everything that generally, in the western tradition, constituted the artistic object: beauty, author, technique, feeling. The viewer is left alone in front of enigmatic, 'ugly', provocative objects, or else imperceptible and silent, locked in a form of ostentatious incommunicability. Conversely, the fading of the conventional features of the work of art leads to an increasing commitment on the part of the viewer to decode its meaning and to recognize its legitimacy as art.
The first part of the program, divided into 8 frontal lessons (didattica erogativa), is mainly based on the analysis of the works, in order to understand the creative process, the emergence of a new syntax of the art object and the commitment required from the audience, which becomes the protagonist in the construction of meaning. The constitutive feature of contemporary work is thus no longer admiration and 'beauty', but experience. The second part of the course is based on the essay Art as Experience (1934) by the American philosopher John Dewey, for whom aesthetic experience is not limited to the "high" moment of the artistic masterpiece, but is understood as central to
every moment of human life, in the very perception of the living being in nature, in the environment and in the social space of existence. The idea of the pervasiveness of aesthetic feeling characterizes many contemporary artistic practices and challenges some of the traditional canons of art history: the personality of the artist, the modernist notion of the museum as the privileged site of the work, the Eurocentric view of art history, the relationship with nature and the environment. Following the Dewey method, which is based on ‘learning by doing’, this part of the course is structured in 10 interactive lessons in which the students participate in exercises and presentations of authors, works and texts in the classroom.

In detail, the course will cover the following topics:

- introduction to the history of Modern and Contemporary art: artists, movements, new techniques and theories
- definitions of the concept of 'art' after the revolution of the artistic avant-gardes, in the heterogeneity of contemporary productions
- new forms of active relationship between art and 'publics'
- critical approaches of post-modernity: gender theories, postcolonial theories, social history of art and art activism, post-medial theories
- strategies and venues for dissemination of contemporary arts: museums, 'post museums', exhibitions, biennials, digital resources for art

Objectives

The Phenomenology of Contemporary Art course aims to stimulate in the students a critical, interpretive and participatory awareness of contemporary art practices, aimed at their pedagogical application as well as at the exercise of aesthetic intelligence in the understanding of reality in work contexts and in society at large.
Through this teaching, through participatory class attendance, the following objectives are promoted:
1. Knowledge and Skills:

- Understand and master languages in the art field.
- Acquire knowledge regarding expressive, performative, and participatory languages for the implementation of training activities.

2. Application of knowledge and understanding:

- Apply knowledge and skills in both concrete contexts and unexpected situations, demonstrating an understanding of the relationships between theory and practice.
- To know how apply acquired knowledge to design, implement and evaluate educational activities in formal and informal contexts.

3. Autonomy of judgment:

- Ability to analyze, synthesize, and think critically.
- Develop original thinking and planning in response to the needs of work contexts.
- Promote innovative research based on the synergy between training skills.
- Design, coordinate responses to needs, using and enhancing the potential of the arts in organizational contexts.

4. Communication skills:

- Development of the ability to relate and effectively communicate acquired knowledge to both professional partners in the educational, organizational and artistic-cultural sphere (colleagues, managers, principals, administrators, etc.) and non-professional partners (users, families, widespread society).
- Use of artistic-expressive languages as communication tools for the promotion of innovative critical thinking.

5. Learning skills:

- Ability to use personal methods of self-promotion and tools to support one's professional growth;
- Reflective and metacognitive skills to monitor the adequacy of one's knowledge and skills and identify any areas that need further study.
- Language skills in the field of the electronic arts.

Methodologies

The course is in Italian and it is structured in a part of face-to-face lectures (1/3 of the total) with the support of ppt, and in a part of interactive didactics (2/3 of the total) with the active participation of the students. The frontal lectures, especially in the first part of the course, will be devoted to a description of the main developments in Modern and Contemporary art; in the second part of the course, the students will be involved in discussions and seminars, organized in small groups, on the topics addressed in the proposed bibliography and in the comparison of ideas on the case studies studied.
There will be at least three visits to contemporary art collections in Milan, with on-site meetings with curators.
Students will also be encouraged to visit current exhibitions and events accessible in the area, with the aim of testing their critical knowledge as an active part of the art public, even outside the classroom context.

Online and offline teaching materials

Lecture slides and teaching materials will be uploaded to the e-learning platform.
The introductory lecture for the course will be posted on the e-learning platform. Useful websites for reference related to the topics covered will also be indicated.

Programme and references

The course will be held in 18 biweekly meetings, 17 of which will be 3 hours and 1 concluding 2 hours. At least 3 meetings will be held at selected exhibition venues in Milan.

Bibliography will be indicated later, before the beginning of the course.

Assessment methods

The final oral examination may be conducted in Italian or English and will consist of an interview on the bibliography assigned and discussed in the classroom. The exam will assess:

- the knowledge and understanding of the texts in the bibliography
- critical spirit and appropriateness of arguments
- the use of correct terminology
- for those attending: active participation in lectures, tutorials, and personal contribution in group activities will be taken into account.

The Dublin Descriptors will be used for assessment: below are the level bands

Low Level: Not Sufficient
Knowledge and Understanding: The student demonstrates limited and fragmentary knowledge of the texts and topics covered, with misunderstandings of the proposed texts.
Ability to Apply Knowledge: unable to verify general considerations on embodied cognition, creativity and principles of expressive techniques on the texts; very partially able to synthesize the contents of the texts presented, unable

to contextualize and compare them.
Autonomy of Judgment: lacks critical ability and autonomy of evaluation; depends solely on information provided by the lecturer or critical bibliography.
Communication Skills: has stunted, approximate, stereotyped written expression; shows poor command of discipline-specific language.
Learning Skills: has a limited ability to rework knowledge and connect it to his own experience in the educational field; manifests little awareness of the educational value of the topics covered, and little ability to reflect on their pliability in the face of different educational situations.

Medium Level (18-24/30): Sufficient - Good
Knowledge and Comprehension: The student shows general knowledge of the texts and topics covered, although with some gaps, imprecision on specific but not essential aspects, or some misunderstanding in the analysis of the texts.
Ability to Apply Knowledge: is able, albeit with some difficulty, to verify on texts the general considerations on the topics covered; is able to summarize the texts presented in a discrete way, to interpret, contextualize and compare them correctly.
Autonomy of Judgment: shows partial autonomy in formulating critical evaluations, often confined to the reiteration of others' judgments.
Communication skills: has clear and sufficiently precise written expression, a fair command of the specific language of the discipline.
Learning Skills: has a fair ability to rework knowledge and connect it to his own experience in the educational field; manifests a fair/good awareness of the educational value of the topics covered, reflecting on their pliability in the face of different educational situations.

High Level (25-30/30): Distinguished - Excellent
Knowledge and Understanding: The student demonstrates thorough and solid knowledge of the texts and topics covered; understands and analyzes the proposed texts without uncertainty.
Ability to Apply Knowledge: He/she can find in the texts, with confidence and effective personal observations, the general considerations on the topics covered; with adequate argumentative property he/she can analyze, synthesize, interpret, contextualize and compare the texts presented, also making use of interdisciplinary connections.
Autonomy of Judgment: demonstrates excellent critical ability, autonomy of judgment, originality in the analysis and interpretation of texts.
Communicative Skills: has clear, rigorous, fluent and appropriate written expression, an excellent command of the specific language of the discipline.
Learning Skills: shows excellent/excellent independent learning skills, can effectively rework knowledge and connect it to his or her own experience in the educational field; manifests a full awareness of the educational value of the topics covered, with a view to a more articulate pliability in the face of different educational situations.

NB: Students with PUOI must email the document to the lecturer before the exam. In addition to accommodating PUOI-certified requests, the lecturer is available for any clarification of lecture topics with in-person or remote appointment interviews.

Office hours

By appointment: lorella.scacco@unimib.it

Programme validity

Two academic years

Course tutors and assistants

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS