

Lingnan University
Department of Visual Studies

Course Title	: Avant-garde Art
Course Code	: VIS4252
Recommended Study Year	: 3 rd and 4 th years
No. of Credits/Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Lecture and tutorial
Class Contact Hours	: 2 hours lecture per week 1 hour tutorial per week
Category in Major Programme	: Programme Elective
Prerequisite(s)	: N/A
Co-requisite(s)	: N/A
Exclusion(s)	: N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	: N/A

Brief Course Description

What is the avant-garde? What qualifies a work of art or an artistic movement as avant-garde? What is the meaning of this concept and what is its significance? More than just a historical marker, the avant-garde is a philosophical concept that puts into question the norms and presuppositions of traditional aesthetics. It encourages one to rethink and redefine art's role in society, politics, and culture. This course studies some of the important theories of the avant-garde as providing the theoretical background and framework for the understanding of avant-garde art. It also examines some of the representative avant-garde artworks in order to extract from them theoretical issues and considerations that pose a challenge to contemporary aesthetics.

Aims

1. To acquaint students with the works and movements of the avant-garde in the 20th century.
2. To enable students to acquire an understanding of the theoretical issues involved in the production and interpretation of avant-garde art.
3. To enable students to reexamine critically their own accepted notions of art and to provide them with the theoretical tools and perspectives for grasping the novelty of today's art.

Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to enhance students' knowledge of 20th century avant-garde art and the discourses surrounding it.

Completion of the course should grant students:

1. A formal, philosophical and sociological understanding of the notion of the avant-garde.
2. A basic understanding of the scope of 20th century avant-garde art: key movements, artists and works.
3. Knowledge of important texts on 20th century avant-garde art, written by critics and scholars as well as artists.

This knowledge enables students to:

1. Discuss the notion of the avant-garde with reference to the forms that avant-garde art took in the 20th century.
2. Assess claims made about the role of avant-garde art in relation to society, politics and culture.

3. Engage in further, independent reflection on the significance of particular styles and instances of 20th-century avant-garde art.

Indicative Content

1. Tradition, modernism and the avant-garde.
2. The *Entkünstung* of art in the modern technological age.
3. Art and experimentation.
4. The aesthetic categories of the ugly, the new and the ephemeral in Adorno's aesthetics.
5. The problem of the autonomy of art and its political implications.
6. Studies of selected avant-garde works: Duchamp, Picasso, Malevich, Fontana, Pollock, Warhol, Tinguely, Beuys, Johns, Buren, Christo, etc.

Teaching Method

Lectures and tutorial discussions.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Students' progress towards the learning outcomes outlined above will be measured by continuous assessment of the students' successful engagement with the lectures, tutorial discussions, and readings, and by presentations and written assignments. In addition, students' knowledge of the subject will be assessed by a final examination at the end of the term.

Assessment

60% Continuous Assessment

40% Final Examination

Required Readings

Edwards, Steve, & Paul Wood, eds. *Art of the Avant-garde*. New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2004.

Supplementary Readings

Adorno, Theodor. *Aesthetic Theory*. Trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor. London: Athlone, 1997.

Benjamin, Andrew. *Art, Mimesis and the Avant-Garde*. London: Routledge, 1991.

Bürger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Trans. M. Shaw. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Dawtry, Liz... [et al.]. *Investigating Modern Art*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.

Kostelanetz, Richard. *Esthetics Contemporary*, rev. ed. Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1989.

Kraus, Rosalind E. *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985.

Kuspit, Donald B. *The Cult of the Avant-Garde Artist*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Murphy, Richard. *Theorizing the Avant-Garde: Modernism, Expressionism and the Problem of Postmodernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Poggioli, Renato. *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Trans. Gerald Fitzgerald. Cambridge, Mass.: The

Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968.

Wood, Paul ed. *The Challenge of the Avant-Garde*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.

Important Notes:

- (1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3* hours of class contact and 6* hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students’ understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course “Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness” is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>.

* Numbers of hours are subject to adjustment for individual courses.