ADDENDUM: PROPOSAL, ARTH-161 “The Art of the Anecdote: Cultural frameworks and Making Meaning”

Course Description:

What can you get from a performance piece if you weren’t there to see it? From an ephemeral piece that disappears as it is made? From work that involves hidden, eased, or destroyed elements? From a symbolic action the artist took alone? As the world of art continues to expand into conceptual, ephemeral, and relational works, it can be hard to understand what has been created and how we can continue to assign it value. In this class, we are going to look at the history of conceptual art and the emergence of meaning as a new medium and as a means of understanding artwork by such artists as Marina Abramović, Adrian Piper, James Luna, Andy Goldsworthy, Rirkrit Tiaravanija, Ai Weiwei, and many others. Because conceptual art is deeply tied to context, we will delve into the historical, geographical, and political background of each artist we discuss. Understanding the work of artist James Luna will bring us to readings about Native American genocide and the politics surrounding the display—or return—of human remains. The work of Stacy Tyrell will bring us to the politics and history of Hypodescent, or the one-drop-rule in the formation of American ideas about race. Looking at Marcel Duchamp’s infamous piece “Fountain” will bring us to the emergence of DADA in relation to the cultural shifts following WW1, and Discussing Cleve Jones’ famous “Names Project” will evoke the history of the AIDS crisis and early LGBTQ Rights movement.

IV. CRITERIA

BRIEFLY EXPLAIN HOW THIS COURSE MEETS THE CRITERIA FOR THE GROUP.

1. Present ideas and information with a view to understanding the causes, development, and consequences of historical events.

In addition to placing the emergence of conceptualism within the timeline of art history, this class will be built around a strong emphasis on context, calling student attention to the way that art develops meaning against the backdrop of common knowledge, culture, and world events. Our introductory reading By Ellen Dissanayake will frame the notion of art itself in a global historical context, setting the tone for the rest of the course. From there, each artist we cover will be framed by supplemental readings and discussions regarding the historical, geographical, and political place from which they emerge. For example: Understanding the work of Artist James Luna will bring us to readings about Native American genocide and the politics surrounding the display—or return—of human remains. The work of Stacy Tyrell will bring us to the politics and history of Hypodescent, or the one-drop-rule in American Racial politics. Looking at Marcel Duchamp’s infamous piece “Fountain” will bring us to the emergence of DADA in relation to the cultural shifts following WW1, and Discussing Cleve Jones’ famous “Names Project” will evoke the history of the AIDS crisis and early LGBTQ Rights movement.

4. A methodological component (e.g. historiography or ethnography) must be apparent.

After introducing the emergence of conceptual art within a linear history of art practices, the methodology of the class will take a more “constellation” approach: Delving deeply into an assortment of specified moments and perspectives, as introduced my each artist we cover. Weekly writing assignments will then ask students to make connections between these,
observe relationships and influences, and develop a sense of the larger patterns within which these specific examples fit.

VI. ASSESSMENT

A. How are the learning goals for the General Education Group measured?
Describe how you will determine that students have met each of the General Education Learning Goals. This should include specific examples of assignments, rubrics or test questions that directly measure the General Education learning goals. (See Example) Please attach or provide a web link to relevant assessment materials.

1. Synthesize ideas and information with a view to understanding the causes and consequences of historical developments and events.

   Evaluating weekly assignments according their ability to reflect on artwork as an extension of international issues, patters, and systems will give me a clear record of student's ability to understand the causes and consequences of relevant. Long-form written evaluations will allow me to encourage further growth and create a closer, case-by case awareness of student growth as well.


2. Evaluate texts or artifacts within their historical and/or cultural contexts.

   The very structure of the class rests on placing art within its historical and cultural context and drawing meaning from this relationship of artifact and context. Evaluating weekly assignments with prompts such as the one below according their proximity to the goals of synthesis and understanding will give me a clear record of student progress. Long-form written evaluations will allow me to encourage further growth and create a closer, case-by case awareness of student growth as well.

   Weekly writing prompt example: “Explain the significance of the Urn Ai Weiwei dropped in his performance: *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn.* What might the urn symbolize in the piece? What might the act of breaking it symbolize for Ai Weiwei and his audience?

3. Analyze human behavior, ideas, and institutions within their respective historical and/or cultural contexts.

   Looking at these various historical and cultural moments through the lens of individual artists' creative synthesis and the dialogue they create with their audiences brings a particular focus to human understanding and communication of historical and cultural information. Additionally, a strong emphasis on social systems throughout the course will keep us returning to the question of human ideas, institutions, and behaviors. Evaluating weekly assignments with prompts such
as the one below according their proximity to the goals of synthesis and understanding will give me a clear record of student progress. Long-form written evaluations will allow me to encourage further growth and create a closer, case-by case awareness of student growth as well.

Weekly writing prompt example: “Compare Stacy Tyrell's *Bakra Bluid* series and Adrian Piper's *Calling Card* project. What racial system gives their work meaning? How do they respond to that social system differently? How might their work be interpreted outside of the U.S and Canada?”