



Visual Arts History 9566A/9666A

Fall 2018

Painted Skies/Cosmic Sightings

Mondays, 8:30-11:30

Visual Arts Building, room 249

Professor John G. Hatch

Office: VAC 200C

Hours: Monday and Wednesdays. 13:30-14:30, or by appointment

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Description: Our understanding and representation of the heavens dates back to the beginning of human history with the depiction of the Pleiades at Lascaux and persists to the present day. The nature of this interest has obviously changed over time, as has our interpretation of it in art and architecture. This course examines the representation of the celestial, looking as far back as the Neolithic period, but with the bulk of its attention focused on Western Art from the 19th century to the present. Artists of particular interest will include Vincent van Gogh, Joseph Cornell, Nancy Holt, Max Ernst, James Turrell, Paterson Ewen, Anselm Kiefer, Shi Zhiying, Katie Paterson, Thomas Ruff, Ai Weiwei, and Olafur Eliasson. Each provides a unique vision that moves beyond simple representations of the celestial objects that populate the universe. Adopting a variety of approaches that include alchemy, Christian science, mythology, Jewish mysticism, psychology, music, information theory, let alone a simple interest in astronomy, most of the works produced map on the night sky some of our greatest fears and aspirations, saying much more about us than the celestial bodies they depict.

Learning Outcomes:

The point of this course, beyond the obvious acquisition of knowledge of the topic we will be addressing over the term, is to have you engage in an open and active discussion of key historical and contemporary issues from the various perspectives offered by the authors we read, as well the thoughts of your peers on the topics addressed in class discussions. You should be able to critically engage with the readings both verbally and in writing, and both in a summary form and more expansively. By the end of this course you will have further developed and/or refined the tools needed to identify and grasp the salient points of an argument whether presented in oral, written or visual form, be able to reiterate them, while drawing connections between sources from different disciplines, genres, and media. Lastly, you will be exposed to a variety of methodological and aesthetic approaches that will encourage creative handling of the topics discussed, while respecting the disciplinary norms of the fields of study addressed in this course.

Warning: you do not require any knowledge of astrophysics, calculus, quantum cosmology, etc., to understand the material presented in this course.

Evaluation: marks will be based on the following:

- a) 25% -- A class lecture. You will pick a week and conduct the class for that week. I will provide most of the images and your research will be based solely on the readings for that week, although you can certainly bring in some background material. You will conduct the first half of the class and then I will provide my version of the lecture as the second part of the class.
- b) 25% -- Adopt a contemporary artist. There are a number of orphaned works in this course that will be looked at briefly or not at all. I will spend the first half of the first lecture providing you with a survey of some of these orphans. You'll need to adopt one and present on that work or group of works during the last three weeks of class.
- c) 25% -- A week in review. A 2500-word essay on one of the sets of weekly readings, Essentially, you are writing a summary and analysis of a week's readings (you cannot choose the one you are lecturing on). Due Dec. 10.
- d) 25% -- A 2500-word alt-article. You'll select one of the articles assigned for this course and attempt to re-write it, either by better presenting the material in the original article, incorporating new facts that have emerged since the article first appeared, or things that you felt may have been overlooked but you believe are relevant. Due Dec. 10.
- c/d) 50% -- An alternative reality. You can drop the last two assignments in favour of an essay on a topic of your choice, or an exhibition proposal and mock catalogue, or an art work/series of works, or a mini documentary, or an app, etc. (subject to my approval). Due Dec. 10.

Course Materials: All of the materials for this course are available either on-line, through the Weldon Library website, or will be posted on the course site at <https://owl.uwo.ca/portal>.

Warnings:*Student Responsibilities and Preparations:*

Students are expected to attend all classes punctually and participate in all class discussions and critiques. Students are required to come to all classes with the necessary materials to participate that day.

Attendance:

Attendance and punctuality are mandatory.

Extensions and Late Penalties:

Extensions will be granted in exceptional circumstances and typically only in cases of illness, bereavement or for other compassionate reasons. Late assignments not accompanied by official documentation will receive a penalty of 2% per day. If you suspect that you will be unable to meet a deadline, please contact the instructor as soon as possible.

Submission of Work:

Only electronic copies of written assignments will be accepted.

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism:

All forms of plagiarism are serious academic offenses and are subject to strict penalties. All work must be your own, and when you rely on the research of others you must cite the provenance of the material in notes and bibliographies. When citing sources you must use the Chicago Manual of Style, Humanities format. Submitting the same work for credit in more than one course is plagiarism. When in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, consult with your professors and/or the Writing Centre AHEAD of the submission date. Plagiarism, which may be defined as "The act or an instance of copying or stealing another's words or ideas and attributing them as one's own," will not be tolerated. (Citation excerpted from Black's Law Dictionary, 1999, 7th ed., p. 1170). (Refer to <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2013/pg113.html> or the 2013/2014 Western Academic.

Respect:

Any contravention of the UWO Code of Student Conduct or Non-Discrimination and Harassment Policy will not be tolerated. Every effort will be made to foster and maintain a respectful environment.

OWL – Sakai:

Resources including most course readings will be posted to OWL - Sakai. For copyright reasons these postings might be of short duration. If you wish to share resources with the

class, consult with me and I will make arrangements so that the documents can be posted to Sakai, or distributed by other means.

Writing Centre: 217 UCC:

The Writing Centre is part of the Effective Writing program at western and is open to both undergraduate and graduate students. It offers instruction on all aspects of writing and is not merely for students who have difficulty with writing. The one-on-one tutoring sessions can be very helpful in improving writing and editorial skills.

Evaluation:

The following grading standards are quoted from the department webpage:
http://www.uwo.ca/visarts/grad/downloads/Graduate_Grading_Standards.pdf

90-100% Work of **excellent** quality

Approaching if not already at professional standards. Thoroughly and creatively engaged at a high level of artistic and/or written production; very high standards and sophistication evidenced in all areas of production

86-89% Work of **very good** quality

Demonstrably evolved beyond expected standards of critical, theoretical and creative engagement in artistic and/or written production

80-85% Work of **good** quality

Shows competence in artistic and/or written production but could be improved in one or more ways

78-79% Work of **acceptable** quality

Needs substantial improvement in one or more areas

70-77% Work of **passable** quality (*a warning regarding removal of funding*)

Shows sufficient ability and effort to allow the student to pass the course, but is seriously deficient with respect to critical, theoretical or practical engagement in artistic and/or written production

<69% Work of **unacceptable** quality

Removal from program