

Academy of Visual Arts
Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Visual Arts Programme

VART3336 Material Cultures & Collections

No. of units: 3

Pre-requisite: VART2306 Art in the 20th Century II

Duration: 39 hours

Cluster: Visual & Material Culture

I.1. Course Rationale & Description:

Materials are significant elements in our understanding of culture both in terms of our own identities and within the wider global contexts. This course will explore concepts and theories of material culture in reflecting upon the elements of culture, which surround and influence our daily lives. Examining the everyday context of material life through a variety of methods and theories, students will develop their skills of textual and visual analysis and be equipped with theoretical frameworks in examining objects within wider context of culture.

From objects of personal significance to national treasure, and from consumer good circulated in global markets to connoisseur's curios, the analysis of material culture seeks to question meaning, value and intention. Through the discussions of what objects mean to us, the course will further pose crucial questions evaluating the historical, cultural and social significance of objects. Contextualising the entangled relationship between people and material objects, and studying things both within and external to, environmental and cultural contexts, this course will engage students into critical debates of material culture, and broaden their understanding of creating and creativity in contemporary society.

Drawing theories from Art History, Museology, and Anthropology, this course will include critical analysis of objects in a variety of forms and mediums, such as painting, textile, buildings, and heritage sites. Based within themes of context, the course will analyse issues of consumption, globalization, tourism, gender, tradition, value, belief, commerce and historical events. This course connects laterally across the disciplines of the AVA providing the theoretical context for practice and creativity.

I.2. Course Content:

No.		Hours	%
1.	Introduction: Defining terms, meanings and historical study of material culture	3	7.6
2.	Home: Identifying Material Culture · Expanding definitions to understanding through analysis of personal identity; · Built environments; · Socio-cultural arenas.	9	23
3.	Value and Belief: · Context and comparison of differing theories; · Social, historical and cultural issues of value (aesthetic and commercial); · Belief and tradition.	9	23
4.	Possession and Possessing: · Collections and collecting; · Display and exhibition; · Consumption and context.	9	23
5.	Identity and Society: · Tangible and intangible heritage; · Analysis of key theories role of museums; · Arts and cultural organizations (UNESCO etc.).	9	23
		39	100

I.3. Intended Course Learning Outcomes (CILOs):

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

No.	Intended Course Learning Outcomes (CILOs)
1.	Research theories and methods developed by various disciplines in examining everyday objects;
2.	Apply analytical skills and critical thinking in exploring the complexity of material culture within its own cultural context;
3.	Interpret the making of contemporary art through key issues and debates of material culture;
4.	Reflect upon mechanisms of cultural production that shape multi-layered meanings and values of material culture;
5.	Enhance artistic sensitivity toward visual and tactile elements of contemporary arts and culture; and
6.	Adhere to standards of professional practice and ethos.

I.4. Alignment of CILOs with PILOs:

Learning Outcomes	<i>Please indicate alignment by checking '✓' the appropriate box</i>					
	CILO1	CILO2	CILO3	CILO4	CILO5	CILO6
PILO1.1						
PILO1.2						
PILO2.1	✓					
PILO2.2						
PILO2.3		✓	✓	✓	✓	
PILO3.1						✓
PILO3.2						✓

I.5. Alignment of Teaching and Learning Activities with CILOs:

No.	Teaching and Learning Activities	CILOs	Hours
1.	<p>Formal lectures will outline how to apply the theoretical framework of material culture in analysing contemporary artworks, and encourage students to link theories with contemporary practices of art making.</p> <p>The instructor will present concepts and theories of visual and material culture and draw examples from daily life context to illustrate diverse interpretations and meanings of images and objects.</p>	3, 4, 5, 6	17
2.	<p>Class activities (including small group discussions) will be an integral aspect, arranged to help students familiarizing with and applying the concepts and theories to examine everyday objects and to discuss the relationship between images, objects and their cultural context. The instructor will guide students through the processes and consequently encourage them to evaluate images and objects with appropriate means and confidence and to encourage students to articulate their interpretations of a range of images and objects.</p>	1, 2, 6	9
3.	<p>Field trips to museums and art galleries will be arranged to cultivate students' appreciation and understanding of different forms of art. Students will submit field trip reports that require them to apply textual analysis to particular piece of art.</p>	3, 4, 5, 6	6
4.	<p>Group presentation requires students to research into specific objects or heritage and to analyse in terms of the themes and topics of the course. The instructor will give constructive feedback to help students examining images and objects from wider scope of cultural production.</p>	1, 2, 6	3

5.	The instructor will demonstrate how to appreciate visual and tactile elements of contemporary art and encourage students to evaluate their own works and practices accordingly. Creative sessions (such as taking digital photos, doing quick sketches of daily objects, and creative writing) will be arranged. These activities will enable students to have better appreciation of the visual and tactile experiences they would have encountered.	3, 4, 5, 6	4
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I.6. Assessment:

No.	Assessment Methods/Activities	Weighting	Alignment with CILOs
1.	Group Presentations: Group presentation asking students to apply visual and textual analysis of an everyday object. This helps students to draw upon theories and methods in associating images and objects with broader cultural issues.	30%	3, 4, 5
2.	Essay Students will be asked to write an essay examining a work of art and evaluating its cultural and aesthetic significance according to the visual and/or material culture theories discussed in the course. The essay will test the students' capacity in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Doing scholarly research on a work of art; · Applying analytical skills and theoretical means to explore the multi-layered meanings of an image or object; · Considering the cultural and aesthetic significance of an artwork and its relationship to contemporary society. 	40%	1, 2, 5
3.	Professional Attitude: Professional Attitude does not necessarily define its own learning outcomes, but takes a look at 'how' the other, non-attitudinal outcomes are achieved. Assessment will always be based on direct personal contact with the student. Assessment methods include personal conversations – formal and informal –, class observation, individual and group-tutorials or critiques, and such like. Assessment evidence is continuously produced through attendance and participation class-records,	30%	6

	<p>presentations, peer-reviews, evaluation of sketchbooks or visual diaries, personal notes of students and teachers, etc.</p> <p>For more information, please refer to the BA (Hons) in Visual Arts' Programme Document.</p>		
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I.7. References:

Attfield, Judy. *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life*. Oxford: Berg, 2000.

Dant, Tim. *Material Culture in the Social World: Values, Activities, Lifestyles*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002.

Drucker, Johanna. *Sweet dreams: Contemporary Art and Complicity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Hicks, Dan and Mary C. Beaudry (eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Knell, J. Simon. ed. *Museums in the Material World*. London: Routledge, 2007.

Kingery, W. David. *Learning from Things: Method and Theory of Material Cultural Studies*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1995.

Miller, Daniel. ed. *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter*. London: Routledge, 2003.

Myers, Fred R. *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 2001.

Pearce, Susan. *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study*. London: Leicester University Press, 1992.

Tilley, Chris, et al. *Handbook of Material Culture*. London: Sage Publications, 2006.

Woodward, Ian. *Understanding Material Culture*. London: Sage Publications, 2007.

I.8. Academic Integrity:

Students will endeavour to only claim work that they have actually produced themselves. Claiming the work of others is considered plagiarism, and will be dealt with under the academic policies of the university.

I.9. Health and Safety:

Every effort will be made to comply with the intent of Hong Kong's law or acts and the University's policies to maintain a safe and healthy working environment.

I.10. Final Note:

The instructor reserves the right to modify the class and the syllabus or the schedule to adjust to the dynamics of the particular group or to take advantage of opportunities that may arise.