



Art History  
**Seminar in Contemporary Art: Artists as Historians**

AH 4640G / VA 9582B – Winter 2024 course syllabus



Yto Barrada, *Agadir*, 2018, collage

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar focuses on contemporary art in dialogue with the past. In the popular imagination, history is often thought of as what you get when a historian uncovers the truth about the past. But if instead we approach histories as interpretations of the past, then we can consider how events are described and interpreted differently depending on who is telling the story. This seminar explores how contemporary artists have embraced the role of historian by working against conventional frameworks to tell stories at the limits of the archive. Drawing on concepts of counter history from Black studies and decolonial theory, we consider how some artists have investigated well-known and lesser-known events to shed light on marginalized histories, while others have created fictional and speculative histories that offer new perspectives on the past and the future. Students will develop their own research projects in relation to the course theme.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Analyze and evaluate works and exhibitions of contemporary art using appropriate terminology.
- Conduct research using library resources, such as books and journal articles in databases, evaluate sources, and use them effectively in a research essay.

Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton (Neutral) peoples on lands connected to several Treaties including Treaty 6 London Township, Treaty 7 Sombra Township, Treaty 21 Longwoods and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous peoples, whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors of our society.

- Articulate an argument orally and in writing, support the argument using appropriate evidence, and address counter arguments.
- Apply knowledge of issues and debates in contemporary art to develop their own views, and articulate ideas clearly in oral and written form.
- Solve problems by participating constructively in group discussions and activities. This includes sharing ideas and listening respectfully to the views of others.

### PREREQUISITE / ANTI-REQUISITE

Undergraduate prerequisite(s): Registration in years 3 or 4 of a Department of Visual Arts module, or permission of the Department.

You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that you have not taken an anti-requisite course. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as basis of appeal. If you are not eligible for a course, you may be removed from it at any time, and you will receive no adjustment to your fees. These decisions cannot be appealed.

Graduate enrollment is restricted to graduate students in the Department of Visual Arts.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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Technical Requirements



Stable internet connection



Laptop or computer with microphone and speakers (camera optional)

For technical assistance, check the [OWL Help page](#) or contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#). Phone 519-661-3800.

[Google Chrome](#) or [Mozilla Firefox](#) are the preferred browsers to use for OWL.

Course material will be posted to OWL: <http://owl.uwo.ca>. Any changes will be announced on the OWL site. The last day to drop this course without academic penalty is **March 7, 2024**.

**Required readings are posted as PDFs on OWL.**

### ASSESSMENTS

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#### DUE DATES & GRADING

Assignment	Due date	Grading
Participation	Weekly	10%
Quizzes	Weekly	10%
Proposal	Feb 11 @ 11pm	10%
Written assignment	March 16 @ 11 pm	25%
Presentation	March 19 – April 2	10%
Research essay	April 5 @ 11 pm	35%

### PARTICIPATION

The participation portion of your grade will be based your contributions to discussions and activities. Please note that even though some aspects of the course are asynchronous, there is a weekly schedule. You are expected to attend class, complete course work, and participate on a weekly basis.

## **QUIZZES ON READINGS**

Quizzes on the assigned readings are in OWL. Each quiz has five questions. Use these quizzes to help guide your reading and for feedback on how well you are understanding the material. Any quiz that is not completed on time (within the week it is assigned) will receive a grade of 0. If a student has academic accommodation for more than one week, the missed quiz may be given the average grade of the completed quizzes.

## **WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT**

The written assignment is based on the weekly learning outcomes, including lessons, discussions, and readings,. The assignment is comprised of short answer and essay questions. You will have approximately one week to complete it.

## **RESEARCH PROJECT – proposal, presentation, and final essay**

Your research essay should focus on a body of work by one contemporary artist with a research-based practice whose work is in dialogue with the past.

Proposal and annotated bibliography: Your proposal should include a brief (approximately 300-word) outline identifying the issue, the artist, and the body of work you will write about, along with an annotated bibliography of at least six published academic sources you expect to use for your research. Your bibliography should include journal articles, as well as books and exhibition catalogues. (Reputable websites can be used, but these should be in addition to six published sources).

Presentations: You will present the results of your research project to the class at the end of term. Presentations should be approximately fifteen minutes.

Research essay: Undergraduate final papers should be 8-10 pages and approximately 2500 words. Graduate papers should be approximately 3000-3500 words and are expected to demonstrate greater originality, more extensive research, and more sophisticated argumentation. Essays should be thesis-driven and should offer an interpretation of a body of artwork that is supported by suitable evidence derived from your research. Include images (with captions) that are important for your argument. Submit the research essay as a Word document or PDF in the Assignments section of OWL.

## **EXPLICIT CONTENT WARNING**

Contemporary artists are known for breaking rules and challenging social norms. In this course, we will look at and discuss a broad range of contemporary art, including some work that addresses controversial and difficult subject matter.

## **POLICIES ON LATE OR MISSED ASSESSMENTS**

### **Academic Consideration**

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Illness may be acute (short term), or it may be chronic (long term), or chronic with acute episodes. Academic Consideration provides students with consistent, fair, and pedagogically appropriate consideration, without compromising the academic integrity of the course or program, when they have been unable to complete some component of a course due to short-term extenuating circumstances. Students who have long-term or chronic medical conditions (physical or mental) that may impede their ability to complete academic responsibilities are directed to seek Academic Accommodation through Accessible Education ([Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#)).

The University further recognizes that medical situations are deeply personal and respects the need for privacy and confidentiality in these matters. However, in order to ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course shall be granted only in

those cases where there is documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet their academic responsibilities.

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the end of the period of absence covered, to the Academic Counselling unit or Dean's Office of the student's Home Faculty together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the academic consideration being requested. These documents will be retained in the student's file, and will be held in confidence in accordance with the University's [Official Student Record Information Privacy Policy](#). Once the petition and supporting documents have been received and assessed, appropriate academic consideration shall be determined by the Dean's Office in consultation with the student's instructor(s). Academic consideration may include extension of deadlines, waiver of attendance requirements for classes/labs/tutorials, arranging Special Exams or Incompletes, re-weighting course requirements, or granting late withdrawals without academic penalty. Academic consideration shall be granted only where the documentation indicates that the onset, duration, and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete their academic responsibilities. (Note – it will not be sufficient to provide documentation indicating simply that the student “was seen for a medical reason” or “was ill.”)

Whenever possible, students who require academic accommodation should provide notification and documentation in advance of due dates, examinations, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and their Academic Counselling office in a timely manner.

**Documentation from Family Physicians/Nurse Practitioners and Walk-In Clinics:** A Western Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is required where a student is seeking academic accommodation. This documentation should be obtained at the time of the initial consultation with the physician/nurse practitioner or walk-in clinic. An SMC can be downloaded at [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

**Documentation from Student Health Services:** At the time of illness, students should make an appointment with a physician/nurse practitioner at Student Health Services. During this appointment, request a Student Medical Certificate from the Physician/Nurse Practitioner.

**Documentation from Hospital Urgent Care Centres or Emergency Departments:** Students should request that an SMC be filled out. Students may bring this form with them or request alternative Emergency Department documentation. Documentation should be secured at the time of the initial visit to the Emergency Department. Where it is not possible for a student to have an SMC completed by the attending physician, the student must request documentation sufficient to demonstrate that their ability to meet their academic responsibilities was seriously affected.

### **Late Assignments & Grace Days**

A student seeking academic accommodation for any work worth less than 10% must contact the instructor, but to minimize requests for extensions, each of you will have two grace days to use on the written assignment or the research essay. In other words, no late penalties will be applied to these assignments until **after** you've used these two days. You can use them all at once (i.e., hand in an assignment two days late and still get full marks), or you can use them for different assignments. You cannot use the grace days for any other assignments. **Please note that the last opportunity to submit coursework is April 8, 2024, at 11:59 pm.**

Once you've used up your grace days, the grade penalty is 5% for each calendar day, **including weekends**, that it is late. All late assignments, whether covered by the grace days or not, will be subject to the following conditions:

1. Late papers may be graded and returned later than those submitted by the deadline
2. Minimal comments will be provided

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

All work for the course MUST be entirely your own. All sources that you use for your assignments must be accurately cited. If you have doubts about how and when to cite sources, it is better to err on the side of caution. Consult the academic integrity lesson on OWL and / or consult with me before assignment due dates. All course work must be completed specifically for this course. Submitting the same work for credit in more than one course is considered cheating. Plagiarism and cheating are very serious academic offences, and they will be dealt with strictly. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to: quoting verbatim or almost verbatim from any source, including all electronic sources, without acknowledgement; adopting someone else's line of thought, argument, or supporting evidence without

acknowledgement; submitting someone else's work, in any form, without acknowledgement; knowingly representing another person's idea as one's own.

For information concerning Western's Plagiarism and Academic Offences (Scholastic Offences) policies see: [www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2016/pg113.html#](http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2016/pg113.html#)

All assignments are subject to review through plagiarism detection software. The University uses Turnitin.com for this purpose. Turnitin is an anti-plagiarism tool that screens assignments against a database of the Internet, e-journals, e-books, and a range of other scanned material, including other assignments for this course. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system.

### **Multiple choice quizzes**

Computer-marked multiple-choice quizzes may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

### **AI & ChatGBT**

In this course, students are only permitted to use AI tools for preliminary research and information gathering. It is imperative that students critically evaluate any information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives. The use of AI tools can only serve as a starting point for exploration, and students must follow the principles of academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources and avoiding plagiarism. Assignments should demonstrate students' own thoughts and independent work.

### **Statement on Academic Offences**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

### **CITATION STYLE**

The Chicago Manual of Style, Humanities format, is the standard style for art history. Use this style to cite your sources for your research paper and other assignments. Please refer to the guide in OWL and the Library website for examples:

<http://www.lib.uwo.ca/services/styleguides.html>.

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## **POLICIES & CONDUCT**

### **Student Conduct**

Students will conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the maturity and academic integrity expected of university students. Student conduct shall be consistent with the general laws of the community and with University regulations. Students shall show regard and respect for the rights, safety, and property of all members of the University community and are expected to act in a responsible manner within the University and the community at large.

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/code\\_of\\_conduct.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/code_of_conduct.pdf)

I am committed to fostering a class environment that is comfortable for all students, especially those from historically marginalized or underrepresented backgrounds. These core values include using preferred gender pronouns and human-centred language, which convey respect for people's diverse experiences. We do not always have to agree with one another; however, everyone is expected to show respect for diverse perspectives.

### **Academic Sanctions**

In instances of non-payment of prescribed tuition and other fees, the University shall seal the academic record. When an academic record is sealed, the student will not be able to: a) view grades; b) register in future courses; c) receive transcripts or a degree diploma; d) obtain admission or readmission.

### **Additional Course Material Request Policy**

For online courses the material may be presented in a variety of ways at the instructor's discretion. Requests for additional material can only be made in cases necessitating academic accommodation. If a student requires Academic Accommodation for the course material, they can contact Western's Academic Support & Engagement department. <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>

### **Normal Building Access (September 1st to April 30th) (Subject to change):**

The John Labatt Visual Arts Centre will be closed at 10:00pm each night Monday to Friday. There will be no after-hour access for undergraduate students. The Centre is open weekends 12:00pm-5:00pm unless otherwise posted; access by side entrances only. Students should be prepared to vacate the building promptly at 10:00pm and 5:00pm. You must also sign-in with the building monitors when working in the workshop areas outside of regular office hours.

### **Academic Accommodation**

For Western's complete Policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities see [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic\\_policies/rights\\_responsibilities.html](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/rights_responsibilities.html). Please visit the Accessible Education for assistance with a academic accommodation. Students who want to request academic accommodation must register with the Centre, meet with a counselor, and provide appropriate documentation. See [http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible\\_education/index.html](http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html) for more information.

### **Accessible Education Western (AEW)**

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program. Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

### **Religious Accommodation**

For purposes of this policy "the University has approved a list of dates which are recognized religious holidays which require members of those religions to be absent from the University; this list is updated annually and is available at departmental, Deans' and Faculty advising Offices." For Western's Policy on Religious Holidays see [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic\\_policies/rights\\_responsibilities.html](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/rights_responsibilities.html).

### **Professionalism & Privacy**

In addition to following the [Student Code of Conduct](#) Western students are expected to adhere to the following expectations of professional conduct:



- Students are expected to follow online etiquette expectations
- All course materials created by the instructor(s) are copyrighted and cannot be sold/shared
- Recordings are not permitted (audio or video) without explicit permission
- Permitted recordings are not to be distributed
- Students will be expected to uphold academic integrity standards
- All recorded sessions will remain within the course site or unlisted if streamed

### **Copyright and Audio/Video Recording Statement**

Course material is copyrighted and using this material for any purposes other than your own education contravenes Canadian Copyright Laws. You must always ask permission to record another individual and you should never share or distribute recordings. Do not post course material on any websites or platforms.

## RESOURCES

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### Office Hours / Email

Office hours will be held on Zoom. Please see me during my office hours if you are having difficulty with any aspect of the course, including readings or assignments. If you cannot make it during office hours, arrange an appointment or contact me by email. I will make every effort to reply to email within one to two business days. As I have other professional and personal responsibilities, I typically respond to email Monday through Friday during normal business hours.

### Support Services

There are various support services around campus and these include, but are not limited to:

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support and Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Health and Wellness

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.

### Health and Wellness

Western offers a variety of counselling services and several mental health resources for students. If you or a friend are feeling overwhelmed, confused or unsure of your mental health state, please don't ignore it. There are steps you can take to help yourself or help others. Western provides several on-campus health-related services to help engage in healthy living while pursuing your degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre. Further information regarding health and wellness-related services available to students may be found at <http://www.health.uwo.ca/>.

### Gender Neutral Bathrooms:

There are two gender neutral bathrooms in the JLVAC. One is located in the Artlab and is open only during Artlab hours. A second single stall gender neutral bathroom can be found on the third floor of the JLVAC. Here is the full list of inclusive washrooms at UWO: [http://www.uwo.ca/equity/doc/inclusive\\_washrooms.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/equity/doc/inclusive_washrooms.pdf). Please contact the Administrative Officer, Meghan Edmiston ([meghan.edmiston@uwo.ca](mailto:meghan.edmiston@uwo.ca)) for card access to the elevator and stairs to access the 3rd floor gender neutral/accessible washroom for the academic year.

### Gender-based and Sexual Violence:

Western [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced gender-based or sexual violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts, [here](#). To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).

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**90-100 (Outstanding, A+)** The writing shows significant originality and exhibits a high degree of critical engagement. Sophisticated synthesis and analysis of the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the topic are demonstrated. Mastery of complex material and ideas is immediately evident. The topic is treated with sensitivity and subtlety of thought. The quality of the background research is exemplary. Regarding research, all major secondary sources pertaining to the topic have been consulted and proper citation has been used.

**80-89 (Excellent, A)** The writing shows originality and exhibits a high degree of critical engagement. Writing is probing through the use of comments and/or questions, and is clearly focused and logically organized. The quality of writing immediately engages the reader. Mastery of complex materials and ideas is demonstrated. The writing is of appropriate length, and demonstrates mastery of techniques so that results are meaningful and not simplistic. Regarding research, a majority of the secondary sources pertaining to the topic have been consulted and proper citation has been used.

**75-79 (Very Good, B+)** The writing shows above average analysis, critical thinking and independent thought. Written claims are supported by ample evidence and the components of the topic are well-researched and presented. The work is addressed in reasonable depth and/or breadth and covers material appropriate to the course. Written analysis is organized around focal points and the development of the argument is easily followed. The writer demonstrates an above average ability to write in an intelligible style and to condense material meaningfully and with a concern for priorities of that material. Regarding research, a representative selection of secondary sources pertaining to the topic has been consulted and proper citation has been used.

**70-74 (Good, B)** The writing shows a satisfactory attempt at analysis and critical thinking. Written claims are supported by reasonable evidence. The work is addressed in some depth and/or breadth, with references to the appropriate literature and course material. Written analysis is organized around focal points. The text is generally well written and well argued. Regarding research, a somewhat limited selection of secondary sources pertaining to the topic has been consulted and proper citation has been used.

**60-69 (Competent, C)** The writing demonstrates adequate engagement with the topic. The writing is on topic and is a reasonable response to material covered in the course, but goes no further. Written facts are stated accurately; the quality of writing is sufficiently intelligible with enough elaboration and enough connections made between ideas to permit a reader to understand the point of the text. Regarding research, an insufficient number of secondary sources pertaining to the topic has been consulted but proper citation has been used.

**50-59 (Marginal, D)** The writing shows less than adequate engagement with the topic and with the material covered by the course. The writing is a less than adequate summary of sources and/or is considerably off-topic. Written facts are stated inaccurately or ambiguously; the writing style is difficult to follow; there is insufficient elaboration to permit reader's comprehension of relations among ideas; little judgment is shown in selecting detail for inclusion in the text. Regarding research, few secondary sources pertaining to the topic have been consulted; proper citation may or may not have been used.

**Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)** The writing demonstrates a failure to comprehend the topic. Written material is disorganized and unintelligible. The work clearly does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment. Regarding research, secondary sources pertaining to the topic have not been consulted and proper citation has not been used.

**Department of Visual Arts  
GRADUATE GRADING STANDARDS**

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**90 – 100 Work of excellent quality**

(PhD / MA) Approaching if not already at professional standards.

Thoroughly and creatively engaged at high level of research, possibly with primary sources; very high standards in writing and evidence of sophistication in all aspects of the work



(PhD studio / MFA) 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

(PhD / MA) Demonstrably better than expected with respect to research effort, mastery of critical and analytical tools, and involves polished presentation style

(PhD studio / MFA) Demonstrably evolved beyond expected standards of critical, theoretical and creative engagement in artistic and/or written production

80 – 85 Work of **good** quality

(PhD / MA) Shows competence in research and writing but could be improved in one or more ways

(PhD studio / MFA) Shows competence in artistic and/or written production but could be improved in one or more ways

78 – 79 Work of **acceptable** quality

(PhD / MA) Needs substantial improvement in one or more areas

(PhD studio / MFA) Needs substantial improvement in one or more areas

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

(PhD / MA) Shows sufficient ability and effort to allow the student to pass the course, but is seriously deficient with respect to research approach, or critical or analytical skills, or writing ability

(PhD studio / MFA) 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

(PhD/MA/MFA) Removal from program