

Department: Art & Art History

Course number: 3375

Course title: Indian Art and Popular Culture: Independence to the Present

Credits: 3

Contact Person: Kathryn Myers

Content Area: CA 4 International

Catalog Copy: ART 244/3375: Indian Art and Popular Culture: Independence to the Present, 3 credits. Either semester. Instructor: Myers. An interdisciplinary studio art course introducing modern, contemporary, folk and popular art from Indian and the South Asian Diaspora

Justification and Course Information: -

1a) Course goals & objectives.

This course introduces Indian art in a unique interdisciplinary studio art context. It explores the forms, as well as the social, political and cultural functions of Indian visual culture, from the Vedic period to the present, with a special focus on contemporary art in India, Pakistan and the South Asian Diaspora .

1b) Course requirements 200 level/3000 level undergraduate course.

Designed for approximately 15 students in studio art and art history as well as any other academic disciplines including students with a minor in India studies. The 3-credit course is taught in one section of three hours per week. Response papers to readings and required films are due weekly. Studio assignments or presentations are based on the student's response and additional research on the material presented in class. Grading is based on written responses to readings and studio assignments and class presentations.

Because the class attracts both studio art and academic majors, students are given the choice to complete the projects either by a studio piece in any media, by a paper on a suggested research topic or by a visual presentation.

1c) major topics to be covered:

WEEK 1 : Introduction: Overview of Indian History

WEEK 2: Overview of Indian Religion and Philosophy and related forms of art

WEEK 3: The Hindu Pantheon illustrated through forms of Art

WEEK 4: Miniature Painting and Folk Art

WEEK 5: Modern Indian Art

WEEK 6: Critique of studio projects or presentations

WEEK 7, 8, 9 Contemporary Art

WEEK 10: Contemporary Art in Pakistan

WEEK 11: Critique of studio projects or presentations

WEEK 12: The South Asian Diaspora

WEEK 13: Critique of Studio Art projects or presentations

Finals week: Critique of Studio art projects or presentations

[How Meets Goals of Gen Ed .](#)

This course introduces diverse forms and processes of art-making both specific to Indian culture, history and identity and those that are of global relevance. Students are exposed to an enormous range of contemporary art that is gaining an increasingly prominent place on the world stage. They learn about specific historic contexts that this work has grown out of, and how it both grapples with tradition and modernity. They become aware of how ancient processes are renewed and interrogated through contemporary practices. Through the studio project/critique process they articulate the ways in which they have understood and then integrated these concepts and forms into their own experiences and artistic processes with increased cultural sensitivity and awareness for both the culture they are studying and their own place in an increasingly complex and rich global culture.

[CA4 Criteria:](#)

1. Emphasize that there are varieties of human experiences, perceptions, thoughts, values, and or modes of creativity:

This course introduces students to diverse forms of Indian art in the “great and little traditions” made by different religious groups, castes, by both the “urban art-educated” as well as rural or tribal artist. Some forms respond to global trends in art and challenge any cohesive ability to define Indian “identity” while others have extremely specific ritual functions passed down through generations.

2. Emphasize that interpretive systems and/or social structures are cultural creations

The art of post independence India was defined by contradictory and often contentious differences in outlook. Some artists were interested in a search for an “authentic” Indian art

largely found in rural areas while others embraced international forms of western art. The diverse geography of India as well as the coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups challenges and often provokes a conscious or constructed sense of difference/unity both within India and in the world. This is highlighted by contemporary artists who may be from regions or castes who because of the traditional limitations of their background, less than a decade earlier would never have achieved the national or international recognition they now have.

3. Consider the similarities that may exist among diverse groups

Part of the class deals with both shared and disrupted cultural unity of India and Pakistan before and after independence. Other aspects focus on common mythology and imagery among various religious groups, particularly Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

4. Develop and understanding of and sensitivity to issues involving human rights and migration

Many modern and contemporary artists introduced in this course specifically deal with powerful imagery describing human rights abuses by the British, as well as by Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs during and after the partition of India. Communal tension between Hindus and Muslims remains a pervading subject in much contemporary art from India and Pakistan.

5. Develop an awareness of the dynamics of social, political, and/or economic power in the context of any of the above four items

One important aspect of the course is to demonstrate how the recent rise of the contemporary art market within India is based on the rising affluence of the Indian middle class since economic liberalization since the 90's. Prior to this, contemporary Indian art was more popular in the west than in India, Indian artists had greater international than national reputations. Collectors in India favored western art or traditional or modernist Indian art. This has radically changed within the past few years.

International requirement

1. The course focuses on issues of diversity/multiculturalism outside the United States

The course introduces diverse types of Indian art and artistic practices, including traditional, folk, tribal, popular, modern and contemporary. This is particularly significant as the University of Connecticut has recently introduced a new India studies minor and this is the only course that focuses specifically on Indian art.

2. The course focuses on cultural continuities and transformations over time and place

Among the most exciting aspects of this course is how art education was transformed after independence in 1947 from a British western model to one that combined unique aspects of Indian art and handicraft with then current global forms and concepts. While radical changes were taking place among the educated urban elite, in villages and tribal areas artists and artisans continued to produce stunning works of art based largely on ancient inherited forms and ritual

practices. That both could exist simultaneously, and largely still do, is what makes the study of Indian art unique among other world art. NGO's continue to preserve rural art through direct support, commission and exhibitions and these acts of preservation and alteration for survival, is a contentious and interesting subject in itself.