**AHIS 364: Myths, Arts, Realities: Visual Culture in California, 1849 to the Present**

**Spring 2023**

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**Monday/Wednesday, 10:00–11:20 AM, CPA 260**

**Office Hours:** Monday, 11:30–1:30, THH 353 and by appointment on Zoom

**Course Description:**

This course introduces a range of painting, sculpture, photography, cinema, public art, and popular culture made in California over the course of more than 150 years. During this time, California was transformed from what was considered the American frontier to the society we live in today. Beginning with the era of the Gold Rush, we will encounter the symbolic potency of California, which, as a place, has also been associated with the mythos of an untouched natural environment, the glitz and glam of Hollywood, radical liberalism, a multicultural paradise, and technological entrepreneurialism. At the same time as artists have been interested in these ideals, we will study the ways in which simplistic mythologies flatten the diverse history of the state and are often contradictory in nature. While the bold female nudes taken by the Pictorialist photographer Anne Brigman in the early 1900s anticipated the California artistic community’s later receptivity to the feminist movement, other artists such as the ceramicist Peter Voulkos intentionally cultivated what was framed as a masculine style. And while Albert Bierstadt’s paintings presented an ostensibly untouched natural landscape, only a few decades later Native American basketry had been commodified as part of the tourist industry. Asian-American identity has been both celebrated, as in the case of Chinese-born artist Tyrus Wong’s paintings for Disney’s animated film *Bambi,* and censored, in the example of the artist Mine Okubo who was confined to a Japanese Internment Camp during World War II. Throughout the semester, we will work towards a better understanding of the ways in which a California-specific narrative of art history both reinforces the national, American storyline and offers a point of contrast.

**Learning Objectives:**

Students will:

* Be able to identify the diverse media encompassed by the term visual culture.
* Acquire and/or expand an art historical vocabulary.
* Critically analyze a variety of texts.
* Engage in “close looking” and visual and formal analysis with a variety of works of art.
* Analyze works of art through various interpretive approaches—aesthetic, historical, theoretical, social, economic, political, religious—and draw connections between art history and other fields of research.
* Practice and enhance writing skills.
* Apply lessons from the local environment of Los Angeles to academic work.

**Course Requirements:**

* Attendance and participation: The final 20 to 30 minutes of class will be devoted to a seminar-style discussion of the assigned reading. Each student should participate regularly to these discussions and strive to contribute every class period. (10%)
* Journal: Maintain a diary, which can be electronic and include images, of the visual culture you encounter in your daily life outside of class over the course of the semester; this can include visually striking films or television, street art, well-designed objects on campus and throughout the city, and any fine art in galleries or museums; make at least one entry each week. Submit the journal in the final week of class by April 28 via email. (10%)
* Midterm Exam, February 22: slide identifications, short answers, and an essay (20%)
* Paper: Identify a person involved in the California art world past or present, for example an artist, architect, curator, gallerist, collector. This person must either be the subject of a published oral history (consider exploring oral histories on the Archives of American Art, the Getty Research Institute Oral Histories Collection, the UCLA Oral History Institute’s Los Angeles Art Community Group Portrait, the Bancroft Library’s holdings of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art 75th Anniversary Oral History Project, and LACMA’s Vernon Oral History Project) or must agree to being interviewed by you. Write a 5-page, thesis-driven paper, using scholarly sources, that contextualizes this person’s experiences in a larger history. A one-paragraph paper proposal explaining the selection of the person for your oral history is due in class, on February 27; if you are performing an oral history interview, it must be completed and the transcript submitted by class time on March 27; the paper is due April 19, in class. Bring a hard copy to class, and upload it to Turnitin. (20%)
* Final Exam, May 8, 8:00–10:00 AM: slide identifications, short answers, and an essay related to course material introduced after the midterm (20%)
* Artist Presentation: Under most class meetings, you will see the name of an artist; during the first class meeting (January 9), each student will sign up for an artist to present about. On the assigned day, a 5-minute presentation will introduce the artist to the class and, if relevant, connect the artist to the readings; PowerPoints with images are encouraged. (10%)
* Thematic Oral History Presentation: In preparation for your final paper, you will be asked to make a 5-minute presentation about the relationship between the person who is the subject of your final paper and an art-historical theme (possibilities include performance, race, sex and gender, indigeneity, the art market, and California as a place). These presentations will occur between the twelfth and fourteenth weeks. Sign-ups for the date and theme of your choice will occur on March 20. (10%)

**Lecture PowerPoints and Readings:**

All lecture PowerPoints will be posted to the following Google Drive: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/19EX_RcP_9yl9cWwgwQ0Re_PeMLAnfXPj?usp=sharing>.

All readings will be posted on Blackboard. Readings should be completed prior to the class meeting.

Although it is not assigned reading, the following book can be consulted for a broad understanding of art historical movements in California:

Jenni Sorkin, *Art in California* (New York, New York: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2021).

**Grading Scale:**

A 95-100

A- 90-94

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

C+ 77-79

C 73-76

C- 70-72

D+ 67-69

D 63-66

D- 60-62

F 59 and below

**Late Assignments Policy:**

Late assignments will be marked down 1/3 of a letter grade for each 12-hour period they are late (for example, if an A paper is three days late, it will be given an eventual grade of C). No make-ups will be granted without documentation for a medical or personal emergency from your doctor or academic advisor.

**Communication:**

I will respond to your emails as quickly as possible. Email is best used for logistical matters, such as requesting an appointment or asking for clarification on an assignment. If you have substantive questions about the course material itself, these are best addressed during section or office hours.

**Office Hours:**

My office hours are in-person in THH 353. Anyone can drop by and ask questions. If you need to meet with me at another time, please request an appointment in advance. You can schedule a meeting with me to discuss papers both in advance of the deadline and/ or to discuss the feedback you have received. I will not read full drafts but can review outlines up to a week before the deadline.

**Participation:**

Constructive and consistent participation is required, which means that you are expected to come to class prepared, having completed the assigned readings, and ready to engage in a discussion of the material and to do in-class work. Please try to contribute at least once during each discussion.

**Class Notes:**

Taking notes is an important skill that must be practiced throughout the semester. If you miss a class, please get notes from a fellow student. Within your first class this semester, please get contact information from two of your fellow students for this purpose.

**Electronic Devices Policy:**

Cell phones must be silenced and put away. Any cell phone use will impact your participation grade. Please silence notifications on your computer as well. Use of laptops and tablets for anything other than note-taking is not permitted.

**Blackboard:**

The syllabus, class readings, handouts, and announcements will be posted on Blackboard. Please check the site regularly.

**Course Discussion Etiquette:**

This is a safe and productive space to share your ideas and pose questions, even if not yet fully formed. The goal is to bring as many perspectives into the discussion as possible, and part of your participation is allowing others the chance to speak. We may discuss controversial issues and sensitive topics; be open to other points of view. There is room for disagreement. You are free to explore positions that differ from your own opinions, especially when analyzing readings. Review USC’s Menu of Discussion Norms, available on the class Blackboard.

**Class Calendar:**

Readings are listed under the date by which they should be completed.

Week 1

Monday, January 9: Introduction to the Course, California Origin Stories

* John Ott, “White Gold: Edwin Crocker and Charles Nahl’s *Sunday Morning in the Mines*,” *Manufacturing the Modern Patron in Victorian California: Cultural Philanthropy, Industrial Capital, and Social Authority* (2014)

Wednesday, January 11: The Pristine Landscape

Artist Presentation: Albert Bierstadt

* Martin A. Berger, “Overexposed: Whiteness and the Landscape Photography of Carleton Watkins,” *Oxford Art Journal* (2003)

Week 2

Monday, January 16: NO CLASS, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Wednesday, January 19: Landscape Photography: Pictorialism and Group f/64

Artist Presentation: Imogen Cunningham

* Ellen Macfarlane, “Group f.64, Rocks, and the Limits of the Political Photograph,” *American Art* (2016)

Week 3

Monday, January 23: California and the Arts and Crafts Movement

Artist Presentation: Bernard Maybeck

(Note: This is the birthday of the California Arts and Crafts architect Henry Greene)

* Steffie Nelson, “City of Angels Rising: The Judson Family Stakes Its Claim,” *Judson: Innovation in Stained Glass* (2020)

Wednesday, January 25: Spanish Mission Revival Style

Artist Presentation: Charles Lummis

* Edna E. Kimbro, Julia G. Costello, Tevvy Ball, “Ruins, Romance, and Revival” and “Restoration and Reconstruction,” *The* *California Missions: History, Art, and Preservation* (2009)

Week 4

Monday, January 30: The Ethnographic: Photography and Collecting

Artist Presentation: Carl Moon

* Ira Jacknis, “The First Boasian: Alfred Kroeber and Franz Boas, 1896-1905,” *American Anthropologist* (2002)

Wednesday, February 1: Spectacle of the International Expositions

Artist Presentation: Jules Guérin

* Andrew Shanken, “California and the Pacific” and “A Room of their Own: The Yerba Buena Club,” *Into the Void Pacific: Building the 1939 San Francisco World's Fair* (2015)

Week 5

Monday, February 6: Asian-American Life and Culture

Artist Presentation: Mine Okubo

* Anthony W. Lee, “Picturesque Chinatown,” *Picturing Chinatown: Art and Orientalism in San Francisco* (2001)
* Karen Fang, “Commercial Design and Midcentury Asian American Art: The Greeting Cards of Tyrus Wong,” *Panorama* (2021)

Wednesday, February 8: Exchange Across the Southern Border

Artist Presentation: Clara Porset

* Staci Steinberger, “Journeys to the Land of ‘Colorful Handicraft’,” *Found in Translation: Design in California and Mexico 1915–1985* (2017)
* Bobbye Tigerman, “Day of the Dead: A Film by Charles and Ray Eames,” *Found in Translation: Design in California and Mexico 1915–1985* (2017)

Week 6

Monday, February 13: Disney and Hollywood

Artist Presentation: Mary Blair

* Sarah Burns, “Gremlins in Hollywood”, *The Emphatically Queer Career of Artist Perkins Harnly and His Bohemian Friends* (2021)

Wednesday, February 15: Civic and Commercial Patronage

Artist Presentation: Edward Biberman

* Sarah Schrank, “Modernism in Public Spaces,” *Art and the City: Civic Imagination and Cultural Authority in Los Angeles* (2008)

Week 7

Monday, February 20: NO CLASS, Presidents’ Day

Wednesday, February 22: Midterm

Week 8

February 27: Modern Architecture and Design

Due: Proposal for final paper

Artist Presentation: Wayne Thom

* Dianne Harris, “Case Study Utopia and Architectural Photography,” *American Art* (2011)
* Sylvia Lavin, “Richard Neutra and the Psychology of the American Spectator,” *Grey Room* (2000)

Wednesday, March 1: Bay Area Abstract Expressionism

Artist Presentation: Clyfford Still

* Susan Landauer, “The Advantages of Obscurity: Women Abstract Expressionists in San Francisco,” *Women of Abstract Expressionism* (2016)

Week 9

Monday, March 6: Modern Collectors

Artist (and Collector) Presentation: Galka Scheyer

* William H. Sherman and Mark Nelson, “The King and Queen Surrounded: The Arensberg Collection in Context,” *Hollywood Arensberg: Avant-garde Collecting in Midcentury L.A.* (2020)

Wednesday, March 8: Pop Art

Artist Presentation: Corita Kent

* Cécile Whiting, “Cruising Los Angeles,” *Pop L.A.: Art and the City in the 1960s* (2006)

Week 10

NO CLASS, Spring Break

Week 11

Monday, March 20: California Printmaking

Artist Presentation: June Wayne

Sign up for Thematic Oral History Presentation

* Karin Breuer, “What’s LA Got to Do with It?: Artists as Printmakers in Los Angeles, 1960–1980,” *Proof: The Rise of Printmaking in Southern California* (2012)

Wednesday, March 22: California Craft

Artist Presentation: Edith Kiertzner Heath

* Frank Lloyd, “Vanguard Ceramics: John Mason, Ken Price, and Peter Voulkos,” *Clay's Tectonic Shift, 1956–1968: John Mason, Ken Price, Peter Voulkos* (2012)

Week 12

Monday, March 27: Outliers and Outsiders

Due: Oral History Transcript

Thematic Oral History Presentations on Performance as an Art Form

* Richard Candida Smith, “An Era of Grand Ambitions: Sam Rodia and California Modernism,” *Sabato Rodia's Towers in Watts: Art, Migrations, Development* (2014)

Wednesday, March 29: African American Histories

Thematic Oral History Presentations Related to Race

* Kellie Jones, “Introduction: South of Pico: Migration, Art, and Black Los Angeles,” *South of Pico: African American Artists in Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1970s* (2017)

Week 13

Monday, April 3: Challenging Sex and Gender Stereotypes

Thematic Oral History Presentations on Sex and Gender Issues

* Judy Chicago, “Feminist Art Education: Made in California,” *Entering the Picture Judy Chicago, The Fresno Feminist Art Program, and the Collective Visions of Women Artists* (2011)
* Laura Meyer with Faith Wilding, “Collaboration and Conflict in the Fresno Feminist Art Program: An Experiment in Feminist Pedagogy,” *Entering the Picture Judy Chicago, The Fresno Feminist Art Program, and the Collective Visions of Women Artists* (2011)

Wednesday, April 5: Activism and Art

Thematic Oral History Presentations on Indigeneity

* Jane Blocker, “Ambivalent Entertainments: James Luna, Performance, and the Archive,” *Grey Room* (2009)

Week 14

Monday, April 10: Bay Area Figuration

Thematic Oral History Presentations on the Art Market

* Nancy Boas, “David Park and George Staempfli: A Painter and His Dealer,” *Archives of American Art Journal* (2015)

Wednesday, April 12: California Counterculture: The Beat Generation and Funk Art

Thematic Oral History Presentations on California as a Place

* Julia Bryan-Wilson, “The Cockette’s Crafty Genders,” *Fray: Art and Textile Politics* (2017)

Week 15

Monday, April 17: Creating and Marketing Minimalism in Los Angeles

Artist Presentation: Robert Irwin

* Rachel Rivenc, “Craig Kauffman: The Poetry of Plastic,” *Made in Los Angeles: Materials, Processes, and the Birth of West Coast Minimalism* (2016)

Wednesday, April 19: Light and Space Movement

Due: Paper

Artist Presentation: Helen Pashgian

* Robin Clark, “Phenomenal: An Introduction,” *Phenomenal: California Light, Space, Surface* (2011)

Week 16

Monday, April 24: Museums and Display Today

Artist Presentation: Chris Burden

* Joseph Giovannini, “Inside Diller Scofidio + Renfo's Broad Museum,” *The Architect* (2015)
* Edwin Heathcote, “The Broad Museum: A Very LA Kind of Building,” *The Financial Times* (2015)

Wednesday, April 26: Visit to Special Collections

Friday, April 28: Due: Journal

Week 17

Study Days

Week 18

Monday, May 8, 8:00–10:00 AM: Final Exam

**Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

**Academic Integrity:**

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, comprises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university’s mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or “recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](https://policy.usc.edu/studenthandbook/) or the [Office of Academic Integrity’s website](http://academicintegrity.usc.edu/), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](https://policy.usc.edu/research-and-scholarship-misconduct/).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

**Students and Disability Accommodations:**

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at [osas.usc.edu](http://osas.usc.edu/). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

**Support Systems:**

[*Counseling and Mental Health*](http://sites.google.com/usc.edu/counseling-mental-health) *- (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[*988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline*](http://988lifeline.org/) *- 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call*

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)*](http://sites.google.com/usc.edu/rsvpclientservices/home) *- (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[*Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX)*](http://eeotix.usc.edu/) *- (213) 740-5086*

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment*](http://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report) *- (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[*The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS)*](http://osas.usc.edu/) *- (213) 740-0776*

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[*USC Campus Support and Intervention*](http://campussupport.usc.edu/) *- (213) 740-0411*

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[*Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*](http://diversity.usc.edu/) *- (213) 740-2101*

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[*USC Emergency*](https://emergency.usc.edu/) *- UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[*USC Department of Public Safety*](https://dps.usc.edu/) *- UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call*

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[*Office of the Ombuds*](http://ombuds.usc.edu/) *- (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)*

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[*Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice*](http://chan.usc.edu/patient-care/faculty-practice) *- (323) 442-2850 or*[otfp@med.usc.edu](mailto:otfp@med.usc.edu)

​Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.