AH 435/533, Spring 2021

University of Washington

**Thematic Studies in Native American Art: Circumpolar Art and Aesthetics**

Instructor: Nadia M. Sethi, PhD

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Office Hours: Please contact me to schedule meeting times. I am available to schedule meetings during the week between 10 am and 1 pm.

**Course Outline**

Circumpolar Art and Aesthetics aims to introduce students to historical and contemporary arts from Indigenous communities in the Circumpolar North, with a focus on Alaska. Throughout the course students will examine a variety of artistic practices including sculpture, print making, skin sewing, grass work, video, photography, performance, body adornment and consider. Classes will include discussions around Indigenous traditional knowledge, cultural sovereignty, Indigenous aesthetics, colonial legacies and artists’ responses to ecological changes as a result of global warming. Students will also be introduced to Indigenous curatorial methodologies and role of museum work in circumpolar art history.

**Methods of Delivery**

This course will be delivered via distance delivery using Zoom and Canvas. Each week we will have slide-based lectures and a group discussion based on a weekly theme and assigned readings. Students will share ideas and their own research through discussion posts and presentations.

**Instructional goals:**

Students will develop an understanding art history from the circumpolar region. They will develop visual knowledge of key works of art and learn to analyze works based on culturally specific information. Students will develop their research and writing skills through written assignments. They will develop confidence in discussing their research and presenting it to their peers throughout the course. They will develop a deep knowledge of at least one artist of their own choosing.

**Expectations:** This is a discussion-based course. I have chosen the texts that I hope will lead to interesting discussions, but the course is dependent on student preparation and participation. I will begin most courses with an overview of context on the readings and the works we will discuss. I expect that when I start class you will have read all required readings and are arriving eager to talk and listen to your fellow classmates. In addition to bringing your own perspective and ideas, I expect you to respect your fellow classmates, fostering a classroom where students are comfortable sharing ideas. We will sometimes discuss sensitive topics and I expect a high level of conscientiousness and seriousness when discussing such issues. I expect that students will complete assignments on time and within the given parameters. Finally, I hope that students will approach the broader topic of this course and subsequent themes with an open mind.

**Required Text:** All course required readings will be assigned and made available on Canvas. Please read all readings in advance of class so that you are prepared to participate in discussions. Two books are recommended for this class (not required, as the required reading will be made available on Canvas):

* *Arctic Culture and Climate*, edited by Amber Lincoln, Jago Cooper and Jan Peter Laurens Loovers. 2020. London: Thames.
* *Sámi Art and Aesthetics: Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Aamold, Svein. 2017. Aarhus Aarhus University Press.
* *Native Studies Keywords*, edited by Stephanie Nohelani Teves, Andrea Smith and Michelle Raheja. 2015: University of Arizona Press.

\*Readings are subject to change with at least one-week notice.

**Participation** is a graded part of this class and you must actively engage in classroom discussions. For the discussion posts, your responses should reflect genuine engagement with the topic under consideration. As with all of your class assignments and correspondence, your responses should be professional (free of basic writing errors such spelling, punctuation and grammar), thoughtful and polite.

**Assignments**:

30% Class Discussions and Critical Responses

15% Formal Analysis papers (3 writing assignment completed in class)  
10% Virtual art event report

15% Artist research paper

30% Final Project

**Class Discussions/critical responses:**

Each week you are required to provide a review of the assigned readings (aim for 150-300 words). We will have a discussion board forum each week, where you will add a thread with post. You must provide a response to the discussion board postings during the week that they are due.

**Discussion Leader Presentations**: Staggered throughout the semester, each student will serve as part of discussion leader team. Teams will develop questions based on the assigned class readings and help to lead the class for the day. Discussion leader presentations will start the second week of class.

**Final Research Project:** To get a sense of curatorial work, students will develop a mock exhibition on a topic related to the North. The proposed exhibition can be focused entirely on one artist’s work, or a group of artists based on a theme of the student’s choosing. Students may but do not need to propose a venue for the work. In addition to the written work, students will prepare a presentation of their final projects, due in last week of the quarter.

Your starting point for this assignment is to identity the theme or topic for your exhibition through a short exhibition proposal (300 words). The exhibition topic you decide to work on should be specific enough to be cohesive, and possible to explore from a variety of angles. Topics can focus on a specific artist, movement, region and time period, or issue.

For the final write up of your exhibition, you will write an entrance text (approximately 1000 words), accompanied by text labels for at least five works of art with accompanying images. Each student will share a brief presentation of their mock exhibition during finals week.

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

**Plagiarism**: The content of any of your assignments must be your own original work. Any ideas, statements or opinions quoted or paraphrased from the work of others must be cited. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the assignment. When in doubt, please ask me.

**Calendar of Topics and Assignments**

\*Schedule and assignments may change, please check Canvas for updates

**Week 1 (March 29, March 31): Introduction to the Arctic**

Instructor and student introductions, and syllabus review. What is the Arctic? Who are the peoples that live here? How has the North been represented?

Read for Wednesday, March 31

* McAteer, Christopher, “Melting Imaginaries of the Arctic,” in *Chattermarks*, Anchorage Museum, 2019.
* Selections from *Arctic Culture and Climate*, edited by Amber Lincoln, Jago Cooper and Jan Loovers, 2020, pp. 18-28, 44-77.
* Jonaitis, Aldona, “Looking North,” in *Looking North*: Art from the University of Alaska Museum,” University of Washington Press, 1998, pp. 22-23 (if you choose, you may read the whole chapter).

**Watch (in class):** *Sloth*, Alethea Arnaquq-Baril*.* 2011

**Week 2 (April 5, April 7): Indigenous Aesthetics and Terms of Indigenous Art**

Read for April 5

* Selections from *Sámi Art and Aesthetics: Contemporary Perspectives*.
* Dauenhauer, Nora Marks, “Tlingit At.o̓ow: Traditions and Concepts” in *The Spirit Within*, p.21-29
* ahtone, heather. 2009. “Designed to Last: Striving Toward an Indigenous Aesthetic” in *The International Journal of the Arts in Society*. 4(2):374-385.
* Mithlo, Nancy. 2012. “No Word for Art in Our Language? Old Questions, New Paradigms.” *Wicazo Sa Review*. 27.1 (Spring): 111-126.

April 7, Guest Speaker: Krista Zawadski, Curator of Inuit Art for the Government of Nunavut

* Zawadski, Krista, “Lines of Discovery on Inuit Needle Cases, *Kakpiit*, in Museum Collections” in *Museum Anthropology*,41(1): 61-75,
* Review the exhibition *Inua* which just opened at the Winnipeg Art Gallery’s Inuit Art Center *Qaumajuq* (It is Bright): https://www.wag.ca/event/inua/

**Week 3 (April 12, 14): Ancestral Arts from the Arctic and the Nature of Tradition**

* Fair, Susan. “The Nature of Tradition,” in *Alaska Native Art: Tradition, Innovation, Continuity*. Fairbanks, University of Alaska Press, 2007, pp. 1-26.
* Excerpts from *Arctic Culture and Climate* (2020).
* Excerpts from *Gifts from the Ancestors: Ancient Ivories of the Being Strait* (2009)

**Week 4 (April 19, 21): Reviving Arts**

Read for April 19

* Eaton, Perry, “Kodiak Masks: A Personal Odyssey,” in *The Alaska Native Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, (Maria Williams, ed.), Duke University Press: Durham, pp. 238-293.
* Igloliorte, Heather, “Inuit Art is a Marker of Cultural Resilience,” in *Inuit Art Quarterly*. 2020.
* Check Canvas for additional readings

Read for April 21

* Jelinski, Jamie, “If Only it Makes Them Pretty”: Tattooing in “Prompted” Inuit Drawings,” in *Etudes Inuit Studies* 42(1): 211-41.

Guest Speaker, April 21: Holly Nordlum (Inuit tattoo artist and graphic designer)

**Week 5 (April 26, 28): Curating the North**

* Fienup-Riordan. “Yup'ik Elders in Museums: Fieldwork turned on its head,” in *Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader*. London: Routledge. pp.28-41.
* Clifford, James. “On Collecting art And Culture” in *The predicament of Culture: Twentieth-century Ethnography, Literature, and Art, pp.* 215-251.
* Driscoll Engelstad, “Curators, Collections and Inuit Communities” in *Sharing Knowledge and Cultural Heritage: First Nations of Americas*, 2010, pp. 39-52.
* Check Canvas for additional readings

**Case Studies: Alison Warden at the Anchorage, Sami Museum**

**Week 6 (May 3, 5): Arctic Photography and Film**

* Selections from *North: Finding Place in Alaska,* University of Washington Press, 2017.
* Høvik, Ingeborg, “Reproducing the Indigenous: John Møller's studio portraits of Greenlanders in context” inActa Borealia, 33-2. Pp. 166-188.
* Check Canvas for additional readings

Guest Speaker, May 5: Brian Adams (Inuit photographer)

**Week 7 (May 10, 12): Outsider Representations of the Arctic**

* Excerpts from *Looking North*: Art from the University of Alaska Museum,” University of Washington Press, 1998.
* Excerpts from *Freeze Frame: Alaska Eskimos in the Movies*. Seattle, Wash: University of Washington Press, 2003.
* Excerpts from *Sami Stories: Art and Identity of an Arctic People,* Stamsund: Orkana forlag, 2014.
* Excerpts from *Arctic Culture and Climate* (2020)

Watch: *Nanook of the North*, directed by Robert Flaherty (1922)

Guest Speaker, May 12: Charis Gulckison, Curator at Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum

**Week 8: Arts as Commodity (May 17), Northern Landscapes (May 19)**

Read for Monday, May 17

* Igloliorte, Heather. 2018. “"Hooked Forever on Primitive Peoples": James Houston and the Transformation of "Eskimo Handicrafts" to Inuit Art," *Mapping Modernisms: Art, Indigeneity, Colonialism,* edited by Elizabeth Harney and Ruth B. Phillips. 62-90. Durham: Duke University Press.
* Lee, Molly. 2004. “Weaving Culture: The Many Dimensions of the Yup’ik Mingqaaq,” in *Etudes Inuit* 28(1): 57-67.
* Verano, Norman. 2018. “Cape Dorset Cosmopolitans: Making “local” prints in Global Modernity” in *Mapping Modernisms: Art, Indigeneity, Colonialism,* edited by Elizabeth Harney and Ruth B. Phillips. 62-90. Durham: Duke University Press. 209-234.

Read for Wednesday, May 19 (Northern Landscapes)

* Excerpts from *North: Finding Place in Alaska,* University of Washington Press, 2017.
* “Reflections on Landscape, Perception and Art,” in *Sami Stories: Art and Identity of an Arctic People,* 2014.

Watch: *Who we are.* Directed by Alexis Sallee (2019)

**Week 9 (May 24, May 26): Arctic Arts and Activism**

* Excerpts from *Arctic Culture and Climate* (2020).
* Gallpen, Britt, “Surface Tensions: Maureen Gruben, Sonya Kelliher-Combs, and Joar Nango” in *Inuit Art Magazine* 31(2).
* Excerpts from *Sámi Art and Aesthetics: Contemporary Perspectives* (2017).
* Thisted, Kristen. De-framing the Indigenous Body. Ethnography, Landscape and Cultural Belonging in the Art of Pia Arke. May 2012; Nordlit 16(1).

**Week 10 (no class May 31, Memorial Day): Final Project Presentations June 2**

Each student will spend 10 minutes sharing his/her/their final project. If we need additional time for this, we will add an additional day during finals week (June 5). This depends on how many students register for the class.