TO ACCOMPANY PROPOSAL FOR ADDITION OF COURSE TO AN EXISTING UNST CLUSTER

Name of proposing faculty member: Sue Taylor
Title of proposed course: ARH 432/532 Issues in Gender and Art
From which department(s): Art
For which cluster: Women's Studies
Name of cluster coordinator: Johanna Brenner

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COURSE APPROVED FOR CLUSTER INCLUSION BY

DEPARTMENT CHAIR(S): [Signature] DATE: 10/30/00
CLUSTER COORDINATOR: [Signature] DATE: 10/30/00
CHAIR, CLUSTER COORDINATORS: [Signature] DATE: 11/4/00
CHAIR, UNST COMMITTEE: [Signature] DATE: 11/4/00

Copies of completed document are to be filed with appropriate cluster coordinator(s) as well as sent to appropriate department chair(s), UNST Scheduling, and Chair, Cluster Coordinators.

University Studies: March, 1999
Proposal for a Junior-Senior Cluster Course

Sue Taylor

ArH 432/532 Issues in Gender and Art

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION. Research, reading, and discussion on sexual subjectivity and the construction of gender in visual images and various cultural contexts. May be keyed to regional exhibitions, collections, or symposia. For example, topics include “Masculinity in Ancient Rome,” “Pornography and Representation,” “Surrealism and Sexuality.” Open to non-majors. Pre-requisites (for art and art history majors only): ArH 204, 205, 206, and/or 207.

B. COURSE DEVELOPMENT. Currently, the art department offers variants of this course under the more general ArH 450/550 (Great Periods and Themes in Art and Architecture) or Art 407/507 (Seminar). There is no effective mechanism, however, under this present system for alerting students outside the art department to the content of the course. A new course title and number would allow for a more specific indication of the topic to be covered and would have the additional benefit of allowing women’s studies students to apply credit earned for this course towards a double major in women’s studies and art history.

C. GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS.

Inquiry and Critical Thinking. The course will assist students’ analysis of the social construction of gender and its complex reinscription in visual representations in the art of various cultures—ancient, medieval, or modern. Theories of sexual subjectivity will be presented to alert students to the complex processes by which individuals are constituted as gendered (as opposed to biologically sexed) beings in society. Once grounded in these theories of masculinity and/or femininity, students will investigate the politics of representation in high art and/or popular culture, to think critically about how images of the body are ideologically informed rather than “natural” or unproblematic “reflections” of a given reality.

Communication. Students will be encouraged to participate in class discussions of readings and lecture topics, to share their perspectives on the issues generated by the visual images or texts under consideration. Both verbal and written communication skills will be honed in oral presentations and research papers on specific themes or works of art.

Human Experience. A dual aim of the course will be to increase students’ appreciation of 1) how gender roles are socially and historically defined rather than
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naturally given and 2) how visual representations participate variously in the construction, reinscription, and/or (less frequently) interrogation of those roles in human society. The sexual, psychological, and/or sociopolitical implications of visual representations will be considered as well as their reception by diverse reading communities.

Ethical Issues and Social Responsibility. Since visual representations wield enormous influence in our society, from works of art to movies, advertisements, video games, and fashion magazines, students will benefit from the strategies offered in this course for critical analysis of images of the gendered body. Image-producers (i.e., artists and designers) taking this course may recognize their work’s potential impact (positive or negative) on gender stereotypes in our culture, while image-consumers will gain a sophisticated awareness of the (often ethically dubious) persuasive powers of the visual image.

D. COURSE OUTLINE. A sample syllabus accompanies this proposal. Instructors for the course during its first year will be Anne McClanan or Sue Taylor, both assistant professors of art history.
The Problem

Many recent discussions of Surrealism have pondered the perplexing fact that the aesthetic transgressions of this modern avant garde are invariably staged across the image of the female body. From Hans Bellmer’s dismembered dolls to Salvador Dalí’s “dismountable woman,” Max Ernst’s decapitated *Femme 100 tête*, Alberto Giacometti’s *Woman with Her Throat Cut*, or René Magritte’s naked and bleeding female corpse in *The Threatened Assassin*, Surrealism repeatedly fantasizes scenes of sexual violence towards women. Given the masculinist position from which these images were produced, some scholars have wondered whether to consider the movement a subversive cultural enterprise or merely an extension of a patriarchal order. How do we come to terms with the ostensibly misogynist aspects of surrealist production? Moreover, how did women artists associated with the movement position themselves in such a context? Your contribution to the seminar should help us collectively to formulate responses to such questions, as we examine examples of surrealist art, literature, and film.

Requirements

1. Class attendance is mandatory and no one with more than three absences will receive a passing grade. Punctuality is also an important requirement, and chronic tardiness will count as absence. Participation in class discussions constitutes 30% of the course grade. Discussion leaders will be appointed for each class reading assignment; should you fail to appear in class on a day when you are expected to lead a discussion, your grade for this 30% will be an F. Please also note that incompletes will be given only under the conditions described in the Portland State University Bulletin.

2. In addition to participating in class discussions, each student will present a carefully researched oral report (30% of grade) on a topic to be determined by Friday, 5 February.
3. A final paper (30% of grade) developed from the oral presentation is due on Friday, 5 March, \textit{without exception}. The paper must be seven to ten pages, typed, double spaced, including properly formatted notes and bibliography. Late papers will drop one letter grade for each day overdue.

**Required Texts**

Please purchase the following books, available from the PSU Bookstore:


Some knowledge of Surrealism is expected of students enrolled in the course; if your grasp of the movement is tentative, purchase and immediately read:


You will also be asked to read selections from the following, available from the Millar Library and/or in photocopy form from the instructor throughout the term:


Suggested for further reading and independent research:


Schedule of Topics and Readings

**SURREALIST CONSTRUCTIONS OF WOMAN**

**Week 1**

Introductory lecture, review of course requirements and overview of the literature.
   Reading: Briony Fer chapter in Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism.

Lecture: Muses and Madwomen in Surrealism.
   Reading: Surrealism and Women, pp. 1-25, 37-75, 123-181, 228, and (optional) 182-227.

**Week 2**

Discussion: Kuenzli and Belton articles from Surrealism and Women.
   Reading: André Breton, Nadja.

Discussion: Nadja.
   Reading: Freud, "Fetishism" and "The `Uncanny.'"
PSYCHOANALYTIC INSIGHTS

Week 3

Holiday: M. L. King Birthday, no class on Monday, Jan. 18.

Discussion: Freud readings.
    Reading: Linda Williams, introduction, chapters 1 and 2.

Week 4

Screening: Buñuel and Dalí, Un Chien andalou, and discussion of Williams.
    Reading: Rosalind Krauss, “Corpus Delicti.”

Discussion: Krauss, “Corpus Delicti.”
    Reading: André Breton, L’Amour fou.

SURREALIST LOVE AND LONGING

Week 5

Discussion: L’Amour fou.
    Reading: Hal Foster, preface, chapters 1 and 2; Riffaterre, “Surrealist Libido.”

Discussion: Foster and Riffaterre readings.
    Reading: Foster, chapters 3 and (optional) 7 and 8.

SEXUALITY AND TRANSGRESSION

Week 6

Discussion: Foster, chapter 3
    Reading: Foster, chapter 4

Lecture: Hans Bellmer
    Reading: Williams, chapter 3
Week 7

Screening: Luis Buñuel's *L'Age d'or*

Discussion: Williams, chapter 3

Reading: Williams, chapters 4 and (optional) 5

SEXUAL OBSESSION

Week 8

Screening: Buñuel's *That Obscure Object of Desire*

Discussion: Williams, chapter 4

STUDENT REPORTS

Weeks 9 through 11

Term papers due Mar. 5 without exception.
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Addendum to page 2, section C:

Gender and art contributes to the Women's Studies cluster in two ways. First, focusing on topics in the study of gender within the visual arts, the course fits the theme of the cluster which is the use of gender as a category of analysis and exploration of the impact of gender on all areas of social life. Second, this course expands the interdisciplinary reach of the cluster by adding a course from the fine and performing arts.