

ART, CULTURE AND COMMUNITY - ANTH 2996-501/UNMV

SYLLABUS (Online 8-week session, SPRING 2026/H2)

Instructor: Dr. Tressa Berman

Office Hours: By appointment via Zoom. Please email me for appointment.

Contact: tberman@unm.edu

Required Textbooks:

Between Anthropology and Art. Contemporary Ethnographic Practice. Arnd Schneider and Christopher Wright. Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 2010 (on reserve or for purchase)

Community Art in Action. Kristen Congdon (2004)

Textbooks will available at UNMV bookstore, via Redshelf, or can be purchased through an on-line vendor

Additional articles, films and case studies to be posted online in the course Modules as assigned. These include, but not limited to excerpted chapters and articles:

Classic article: Victor Turner *Liminality and Communitas*, (PDF will be posted to Module)

Chapters as assigned: Redress Project. *Art, Action and the Power of Presence.* Ed. Jaime Black Morsette (Portage Press) 2026 [PDF will be posted to Module when assigned]



Course Content

This course introduces core concepts in the anthropology of art, and how ethnography—as a community-based practice—informs community and public art. We will examine cross-cultural case studies within contemporary global frames from anthropological perspectives of art and ritual, community-based art practices, and how creative communities can address social and ecological justice through innovation and design. This course takes a holistic and culturally historical approach to unpack the complexities of cross-cultural aesthetics, and the relational and collective expressions of art in contemporary cultural contexts.

Course Learning Objectives

CO1: To understand how the discipline of anthropology approaches the study of art in society

CO2: To contextualize “world arts” in both western and non-western contexts by applying anthropological concepts and ethnographic methods

CO3: To become familiar with and conversant in fundamentals of visual culture, ethnographic methods in community arts, exhibitions and performance as forms of cultural expression

Requirements: 100 points

1. Online Discussions and observations, as assigned: 25 pts. total
2. Midterm Essay: 25 pts.
3. Two Quizzes (Terminology and concepts referenced in readings): 10 pts each = 20 pts.
4. Final Reflection Paper (To be assigned): 30 pts.

Course Schedule and Topics

Module 1/Topic 1: Introduction to the Ethnography of Art (Weeks 1–3)

Week 1

Introduction: the Ethnography of Art

Reading: Chapter 1, Schneider and Wright (pages as assigned)

Week 2:

Reading: Introduction and Chapter 2, Part I, “Theorizing Art” in Svasek (pp. 1-37)

Victor Turner’s *Communitas*. Link in Module. Page numbers to be assigned

Week 3:

Schneider and Wright: Chapter 5: "In the Thick of It, Notes on Observation and Context" (Wright)

Schneider and Wright: Chapter 6: "Fieldwork as Artistic Practice," Inagaki

Module 2/Topic 2: Artists in Communities

Week 4:

Chapter 10: Collaborative Migrations: Contemporary Art as/in Anthropology (Feld and Ryan in Schneider and Wright)

The Red Dress Project. Jaime Black Morsette (chapters to be assigned)

Week 5: Module 3/Topic 3: Transforming Public Spaces through Art

Community Art in Action (pages to be assigned)

Consultation and Engagement: Excerpts, Design and Landscape for People (to be posted)

Project Row Houses: Rick Lowe case studies (web link to be posted)

Powering Places: Land Art Generator Initiative (PDF to be posted)

****MIDTERM ESSAY DUE AT CLOSE OF MODULE 2****

Module 3/Topic 3: Performing Culture (Weeks 6-7)

Week 6:

Selections (Case study from Chapter 17, Kenneth Guest text, posted and on reserve)

Shapeshifting: Performance as Resistance

Gina Athena Ulysse: Performance, MultiMedia Artist, Anthropologist

Week 7.

Kenneth Guest: Chapter 17, Art and Media in *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for A Global Age* (On reserve; chapter to be posted). Film Selections

Week 8.

Module 4/Topic 4: Artist as Social Performer and Cultural Critique (Week 8)

Schneider and Knight: Walters, Chapter 3: "The Artist as Shaman"

Chapter 7: Marcus "Fieldwork in Anthropology Today and the Ethnographic in Art"

Optional: Chapter 14, "Fairytale" in *1000 Years of Joys and Sorrows*, Ai Weiwei

Final Reflection Essay Due