



# Barbarism as an Aesthetic Problem

Theodor Adorno was fundamentally concerned with what he called the “violence of equality-mongering” or the reduction of life to the abstract equivalence of mere identity or sheer thingliness. When art adopts such a perspective, he said, it “takes photography as its model” and is “no less barbaric than the view of the artist as creator.” That is, in keeping with the original Greek definition, it releases itself from the rule of law. This seminar will take this barbarism as its aesthetic topic and its political problem. To that end we will draw deeply on both the history of recent art-cum-photography and photography-cum-art as well as critical writing by some who have taken sides in or otherwise engaged this aesthetico-political conflict.

## Texts

- Walter Benn Michaels, *The Beauty of a Social Problem: Photography, Autonomy, Economy*
- Blake Stimson, *The Pivot of the World: Photography and Its Nation*
- Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*
- [LaToya Ruby Frazier: The Notion of Family](#) (recommended)

## Requirements

The primary work of this seminar will be reading and discussion of the readings. Towards that end, you have two primary writing tasks.

The first assignment is to partner up with another student, sign up for one text (or section of a text) for each of two separate class meetings (by using the comments feature in this document), and co-author 1000-1500-word critical responses that draw on additional sources but take the assigned readings themselves as the primary objects of analysis. These should be linked to the syllabus by Tuesday of the week the reading is assigned and then presented informally in class on Thursday. You can sign up for any of the readings and change your choice as needed but we do not want to have more than two presentations for any one class.

The second assignment is a 20pp term paper on a topic of your choice related to the class.

You might think of these writing assignments as opportunities to make some headway working through this experience described by [Andrew Ross](#):

*It took me many, many years to find my own voice, which I think is the most difficult thing for people to do with a standard academic training. [One is taught to] work with the voice of the disciplinary consensus or to ape some master thinker who has been influential in the discipline, and that's not unrelated to your choice of research topics.*

Put differently, your task is one that is often more challenging than it would seem—to think for yourself.

Finally, here are some recent [writing tips from the New York Times](#), a few of which might be helpful.

## Evaluation

Your final grade will be calculated based on the following formula: 40% term paper + 40% presentations + 20% seminar participation. Participation will be evaluated based on your thoughtful engagement with the course readings and not on the quantity of your contributions. Unexcused absences will reduce your final grade by 5 points each. Work will be accepted late at the discretion of the professor.

[Presentation sign up.](#)

## Reading schedule

1/18	READ: Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 1967 VIEW: Anthony Caro, <a href="#">Table Piece XXVIII</a> , 1967
1/25	READ: Georg Lukács, "Art and Objective Truth," 1954 VIEW: Camille Pissarro, <a href="#">Chestnut Grove at Louveciennes</a> , 1872 VIEW: Paul Cézanne, <a href="#">Mont Sainte-Victoire</a> , 1902-04 REVIEW: Sergei Tret'iakov, " <a href="#">Art in the Revolution and the Revolution in Art (Aesthetic Consumption and Production)</a> ," 1923 REVIEW: Sergei Tret'iakov, " <a href="#">The Biography of the Thing</a> ," 1929 REVIEW: Sergei Tret'iakov, " <a href="#">Photo-Notes</a> ," 1928 REVIEW: Sergei Tret'iakov, " <a href="#">From the Photo-Series to Extended Photo-Observation</a> ," 1931

	VIEW: <a href="#">Sergei Mikhailovich Tretyakov, poet, playwright, journalist, accused of "counter-revolutionary agitation", sentenced to death September 10, 1937</a>
2/1	<p>READ: Michaels, "Formal Feelings" in <i>The Beauty of a Social Problem</i>, 2015,</p> <p>READ: Fried, Chaps 2 and 3 in <i>Why Photography Matters</i></p> <p>READ: Julian Stallabrass:  <a href="https://newleftreview.org/II/65/julian-stallabrass-museum-photography-and-museum-prose">https://newleftreview.org/II/65/julian-stallabrass-museum-photography-and-museum-prose</a></p> <p>VIEW: Jeff Wall, <i>Mimic</i> (1981)</p>
2/8	<p>READ: Stimson, "<a href="#">The Artiste</a>," 2007 (What is Wall's relationship to what he calls "the repressed and forgotten name of the social force (the working class) whose revolutionary upheaval had animated and inspired the earlier avant-garde"?)</p> <p>READ: Michael Fried, Conclusion, <i>Why Photography Matters as Never Before</i>, 2008 (What do the terms "facingness" [340] and "ontological work" [342] mean for Fried? What is his relationship to Heidegger [as also in the introduction's epigraph and chapters 2 and 3 from last week]?)</p> <p>READ: Ariella Azoulay, <a href="#">Introduction</a>, <i>The Civil Contract of Photography</i>, 2008 (What is Azoulay's "civil contract of photography"?)</p> <p>READ: Stimson, "<a href="#">Photography Against Ontology</a>," 2017 (What is the relationship of Fried and Azoulay to ontology [10-11]?)</p> <p>REVIEW: Stimson, "<a href="#">The Violence of the Real</a>," 2017 (See discussion of Fried and Heidegger pp. 121-123)</p> <p>VIEW: Paul Strand, <a href="#">Asenah Wara, Leader of the Women's Party in Wa, Ghana</a>, 1962</p>
2/15	<p>READ: Michaels &amp; Zamora, "<a href="#">The Promise of a Class Aesthetic</a>" (forthcoming)</p> <p>REVIEW: RHR special issue on "Photography and Work" <a href="#">CFP, ToC, and editors' introduction</a></p> <p>READ: Julian Stallabrass, "<a href="#">Salgado and Fine Art Photojournalism</a>"</p> <p>Read: <a href="https://brooklynrail.org/2016/06/art_books/chris-killip">https://brooklynrail.org/2016/06/art_books/chris-killip</a></p> <p>READ: John Yau, <a href="https://hyperallergic.com/277025/what-will-you-do-about-chris-killips-challenge/">https://hyperallergic.com/277025/what-will-you-do-about-chris-killips-challenge/</a></p> <p>VIEW: Frazier, <i>The Notion of Family</i></p>
2/22	CAA
3/1	<p>READ: Alexander Dugin, <a href="#">The Economic Personality</a>, 2017 (FYI, look at <a href="#">this</a> also for context.)</p> <p>READ: Stimson, "<a href="#">Art and Social Death</a>," 2018</p> <p>REVIEW: Gregory R. Copley, <a href="#">Republic Versus Crown: Competition or Convergence?</a>, 2017</p> <p>REVIEW: Walter Scheidel, <a href="#">The Only Thing, Historically, That's Curbed Inequality: Catastrophe</a>, 2017</p> <p>REVIEW: Eduardo Porter, <a href="#">Is the Populist Revolt Over? Not if Robots Have Their Way</a>, 2017</p> <p>VIEW: Robert Frank, <a href="#">Bar, New York City</a>, 1955-56</p> <p>VIEW: Robert Frank, <a href="#">Assembly Line - Detroit (River Rouge Ford Plant)</a>, 1955 (<a href="#">link to essay</a>)</p>
3/3	<p>OPENING RECEPTION 5pm - 8pm</p> <p>Form and Class: Origins and Ends of the Work of Art</p> <p>Curated by Walter Benn Michaels</p>

	ANDREW RAFACZ 835 West Washington Boulevard, Chicago March 3 - April 14, 2018
3/4	2-5:30pm TWO-PART PANEL DISCUSSION ANDREW RAFACZ 835 West Washington Boulevard, Chicago Viktoria Binschtok, Phil Chang, Arthur Ou, and Daniel Shea will talk about their work from 2-3:30pm on a panel moderated by Hannah Higgins. A second discussion with scholars and labor organizers Nick Christen, Adolph Reed, Robin Sowards and Kenneth W. Warren, moderated by Janet Smith will take place from 4-5:30pm.
3/8	READ: Michaels, " <a href="#">Picturing the whole: form, reform, revolution</a> ," READ: Michaels, " <a href="#">Race, Class and Kelley Walker: A Tenth Disaster</a> ," 2017 READ: Moten, " <a href="#">Black Mo'nin'</a> " READ Touré Reed: <a href="http://nonsite.org/article/why-moynihan-was-not-so-misunderstood-at-the-time">http://nonsite.org/article/why-moynihan-was-not-so-misunderstood-at-the-time</a> READ: Cedric Johnson, " <a href="#">The Panthers Can't Save Us Now</a> ," 2017 REVIEW: <a href="#">Racial Adaptability to Various Types of Plant Work</a> VIEW: selected photos from <a href="#">Daniel Shea, Blisner IL, 43-35 10th St.</a>
3/10	"Withering of the State?" Conference Location: UIC Student Center East, Room 713 Time: 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
3/15	READ: Stimson, <i>The Pivot of the World: Photography and Its Nation</i> , 2006 VIEW: Bernd and Hilla Becher, <a href="#">Industriebauten 1830-1930</a> , 1967 [ <a href="#">Response</a> ] VIEW: Bernd and Hilla Becher, <a href="#">Anonyme Skulpturen</a> , 1970
3/22	THEME: INTENTIONALITY PRO AND CON READ: Beardsley, " <a href="#">Comments</a> " [RECOMMENDED: Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy"] *READ: Cavell, " <a href="#">A Matter of Meaning It</a> ," 1967 [RECOMMENDED: Cavell, "Music Discomposed"] READ: Danto, " <a href="#">The Art World</a> " READ: Michaels, "I do what happens: Anscombe and Winograd" <a href="http://nonsite.org/article/i-do-what-happens">http://nonsite.org/article/i-do-what-happens</a> READ: WBM death-of-the-author reader
4/3	T.J. Clark lecture: "Velázquez, Aesop, and War," Cardinal Room, Third floor, Student Center East, 4pm, <a href="#">register here</a> . (See Clark readings for 4/5)
4/4	T.J. Clark seminar: "Cézanne and the Fetishism of Commodities," Institute for the Humanities, Lower Level of Stevenson Hall, 3pm, <a href="#">register here</a> . (See Clark readings for 4/5)
4/4	Adolph Reed seminar, Newberry Library, 5:30pm.

4/5	<p><b>SPECIAL MEETING TIME 1:00-4:00 PM</b></p> <p>READ: Jeff Wall, "<a href="#">Depiction, Object, Event</a>," 2006 <a href="#">VIEW</a></p> <p>READ: T.J. Clark, "<a href="#">For a Left with No Future</a>," 2012</p> <p>READ: T.J. Clark, "<a href="#">Beauty lacks strength: Hegel and the art of his century</a>," 2018 (<a href="#">better images</a>)</p> <p>READ: Stimson, "<a href="#">The Crisis of Crisis</a>," 2018</p> <p>REVIEW: Jeff Wall, <a href="#">Landscape Manual</a>, 1970</p> <p>VIEW: Douglas Huebler, <a href="#">Variable Piece #70 (in process) Global</a>, 1971-97</p>
4/6	<p>9:30-5:00 "<a href="#">Utopia Battle Stations</a>" conference <a href="#">SCHEDULE</a></p> <p>3:45pm keynote: <a href="#">Kristin Romberg</a></p> <p>SCE, Dearborn Conference Room</p>
4/12	<p>READ: Harold Rosenberg, "<a href="#">Action Painting</a>"</p> <p>READ: Rob Slifkin, "<a href="#">The Tragic Image: Action Painting Refigured</a>."</p> <p>READ: Michael Schreyach, "<a href="#">Intention and Interpretation in Hans Namuth's Film, Jackson Pollock</a>." <a href="#">Rae+Chris' Response</a></p> <p>READ: Dominic McIver Lopes, "Making, Meaning, <a href="https://www.dropbox.com/sh/xsslle6hqi4p5jy/AAD8H2kihEtFE-eIWCzLlhara?dl=0">https://www.dropbox.com/sh/xsslle6hqi4p5jy/AAD8H2kihEtFE-eIWCzLlhara?dl=0</a> and Meaning by Making" <a href="#">Jacki and Nick response</a> <a href="http://nonsite.org/article/making-meaning-and-meaning-by-making">http://nonsite.org/article/making-meaning-and-meaning-by-making</a></p> <p>READ: "A Reply to Dominic McIver Lopes." <a href="http://nonsite.org/article/anscombe-and-winogrand-danto-and-mapplethorpe">http://nonsite.org/article/anscombe-and-winogrand-danto-and-mapplethorpe</a></p> <p>VIEW: selected Winogrand, Mapplethorpe</p> <p>VIEW: Jackson Pollock</p> <p>VIEW: Phil Chang</p> <p>VIEW: Arthur Ou</p>
4/19	<p>READ: Fredric Jameson, "<a href="#">An American Utopia</a>," 2016</p> <p>READ: David Singh Grewal and Jedediah Purdy, "<a href="#">The Original Theory of Originalism</a>," 2018</p> <p>READ: Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels, "<a href="#">What Is Legal Interpretation? Not a Matter of Interpretation</a>," 2005</p> <p>READ: Stimson, "<a href="#">Photography and God</a>," 2016</p>
4/26	<p>SYMPOSIUM</p> <p>Nicholas Brown, <a href="#">Actually Existing Modernism in Photography as Film and in Film as Photography</a></p> <p>Elise Archias, <a href="#">Coda, Concrete Body</a> + <a href="#">images</a> + <a href="#">optional reading on Melvin Edwards</a></p> <p>Leili and Kaveh, <a href="#">Walter Benjamin, Small History of Photography (1931) and New Things about Flowers (1928)</a></p>
5/3	FINAL PRESENTATIONS
5/7	<b>12-3</b> FINAL PRESENTATIONS



## University Policies

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

As an academic community, UIC is committed to providing an environment in which research, learning, and scholarship can flourish and in which all endeavors are guided by academic and professional integrity. All members of the campus community—students, staff, faculty, and administrators—share the responsibility of insuring that these standards are upheld so that such an environment exists. Instances of academic misconduct by students will be handled pursuant to the [Student Disciplinary Policy](#).

### DISABILITY

The University of Illinois at Chicago is committed to maintaining a barrier-free environment so that students with disabilities can fully access programs, courses, services, and activities at UIC. Students with disabilities who require accommodations for access to and/or participation in this course are welcome, but must be registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). You may contact DRC at 312-413-2183 (v) or 312-413-0123 (TTY) and consult [this resource](#).

### RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Students who wish to observe their religious holidays shall notify the faculty member by the tenth day of the semester of the date when they will be absent unless the religious holiday is observed on

or before the tenth day of the semester. In such cases, the student shall notify the faculty member at least five days in advance of the date when he/she will be absent. The faculty member shall make every reasonable effort to honor the request, not penalize the student for missing the class, and if an examination or project is due during the absence, give the student an exam or assignment equivalent to the one completed by those students in attendance. If the student feels aggrieved, he/she may request remedy through the campus grievance procedure.