

VISS 599: Art and Science in the Museum

Fall 2024
Wednesday, 2-4:50pm
THH 308 + museum visits

Professor Daniela Bleichmar
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Office hours TBD

[CLASS MATERIALS](#)

[Seminar Schedule](#)

Course description

Starting in the fall of 2024, cultural institutions throughout Southern California will host more than sixty simultaneous temporary exhibitions exploring connections between art and science as part of “PST: Art and Science Collide.” Sponsored by the Getty Foundation, PST is one of the most expansive art events in the world.

This graduate seminar will seize the opportunity presented by this constellation of exhibitions to examine select case studies of the relationship between art and science in a variety of historical moments and cultural contexts. We will visit and analyze exhibitions and their associated publications, and discuss the projects with their curators. Students will also attend special events and programs.

Students will develop a final research project that advances their own scholarly agenda and entails significant research. This might be a research paper, a historiographical essay, or another form of scholarly work chosen by each student in consultation with the professor. The seminar is open to doctoral students in any program in the humanities and humanistic social sciences and has been approved for credit for both the VSGC and the STS graduate certificate.

Course objectives

- Build historical, historiographical, and critical understanding of the connections between art and science in specific historical, cultural, and social contexts
- Develop an understanding of similarities and differences between curatorial and academic approaches to research and its presentation
- Develop skills in analytical reading, critical thinking, scholarly research, and oral and written presentation of original ideas

Course requirements and grading

Weekly preparation and participation in seminar discussion (20% of final grade)
The success of the seminar format depends on your attendance, dutiful completion of the reading assignments (which may be challenging in both length and content), and active participation during our meetings.

Students must attend our weekly seminar meeting having completed all the assigned readings. Please come prepared to participate actively by sharing your ideas and questions, responding to those of others, and engaging in our discussion. Attendance is

expected at all seminar meetings. If due to extenuating circumstances you must miss one meeting, please discuss this with me in advance of that date.

Weekly writing (20% of final grade)

By 8pm on the Tuesday before most of our meetings, students will contribute to our online discussion with a post providing (1) a response to the previous week's visit (when appropriate), and (2) an analysis of the current week's readings. Posts should summarize key arguments of each reading, identify overarching issues, make connections to our ongoing discussion, and pose two or three questions for discussion during our seminar meeting. We have 11 meetings with required posts; students may miss one week during the semester if they wish, for a total of 10 minimum posts.

Short writing assignments (10% of final grade)

Students will attend two PST events of their choice, and write short (roughly 3- to 5-page) analyses of each event, relating it to exhibitions, readings, and/or class discussions as appropriate. I have created a [list of events](#) that caught my eye and will continue to add to it through the class. Please do share information about other events and consult the vast PST schedule for more complete listings. If you plan on attending an event that is not in the class list, please clear your selection with me beforehand.

Final project presentation (10% of final grade)

Final paper (40%)

Students will develop a final project that is based on original research and engages with the topics and materials studied in the class. This might be a research paper, a historiographical essay, or another form of scholarly work, based on what best advances the student's research interests and goals. The final project will be developed over the course of the semester. The topic should be determined in consultation with the professor. Possibilities include: a thematic review of a group of exhibitions, a historiographical essay focused on a specific topic, a research essay based on primary sources.

In our last meeting, students will give prepared oral presentations of their final projects, comparable to conference talks. The oral presentations should last roughly 10 mins. (corresponding to about 2000 written words). Students will participate in the analysis of the presentations by both posing and answering questions about the research projects.

Based on that feedback, students will revise and expand their final papers to roughly 4000–5000 words (plus notes). Papers will be due on Monday, December 16 by 9am. Please submit the paper via email or, if the file is larger than 4MB, via [wettransfer.com](#). If you do not receive a confirmation, I have not received the paper.

Course Materials

I highly recommend that you purchase a notebook to take field notes and record your post-visit reflections. You are not required to purchase any books for this class. All readings for the class are available electronically, either through a link provided below in the schedule or in our [class folder](#). IMPORTANT: curators have generously provided

free digital copies of exhibition catalogs exclusively for educational use by students in this class. Please do not share or circulate.

Accessibility

If you need accommodation, please let me know as soon as you can. In order to best facilitate all students' participation and progress, I may modify aspects of this course. For more information, please visit [USC Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#), call (213) 740-0776, or email osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

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

Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [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.

Artificial Intelligence

This course aims to develop creative, analytical, and critical thinking skills. Therefore, all assignments should be prepared by the student. Students may not have another person

or entity complete any substantive portion of the assignment. Using AI-generated text, code, or other content is prohibited in this course, will be identified as plagiarism, and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Statement on University Academic and Support Systems

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. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:

To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the [Financial Aid Office webpage](#) for [undergraduate](#)- and [graduate-level](#) SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

Support Systems:

[Counseling and 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](#) - 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 consists 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 \(RSVP\)](#) - (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 \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (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](#) - (213) 740-2500

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 \(OSAS\)](#) - (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](#) - (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](#) - (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](#) - 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](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (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](#) - (323) 442-2850 or 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.

SEMINAR SCHEDULE

Week 1 (08/28)

Introductions. Discussion of seminar goals and mechanics (including transportation logistics). Review of syllabus.

Discussion of PST.ART.

Guest: Professor Suzanne Hudson (Professor of Art History and Fine Arts, USC)

- Choose one of the exhibitions that we will be visiting this semester ([sign up sheet](#)). Come ready to talk very briefly (roughly 2–3 minutes) about (a) your interest in this exhibition, and (to the best of your ability based on what is readily available online), (b) the exhibition's main topic and questions, (c) the materials included in the exhibition, including any highlights, and (d) what relationship the exhibition articulates between art and science. Each student will talk about the exhibition they signed up for as we review the syllabus.
Important: Please be flexible and collaborative so that we have at least one student for each exhibition, and no more than two students per exhibition.
- Review the project's website, [PST.ART](#). Begin with the [press releases](#), then look through the [list of exhibitions](#), and finally review other materials.
- Get a sense of the history of PST projects:
 - [PST Grant Report 2002–2017](#)
 - Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945–1980 (2012): [overview](#), [grants awarded](#)
 - PST: LA/LA (2017): [overview](#), [grants awarded](#)

Week 2 (09/04)

Exhibition visit: [Sci-fi, Magick, Queer LA: Sexual Science and the Imagi-Nation](#), at the Fisher Museum, USC

Guest: Alexis Johnson (Curator, ONE Archives) and Kelly Filreis (Exhibition Co-Curator)

- Alexis Bard Johnson and Kelly Filreis (eds.), *Sci-Fi, Magick, Queer L.A.: Sexual Science and the Imagi-Nation* (Los Angeles: Inventory Press and ONE Archives at the USC Libraries, 2024)

Week 3 (09/11)

Panel discussion on approaches to the study of art and science

Guests: Susanna Berger (Associate Professor of Art History, USC); Kate Flint (Provost Professor of Art History and English, USC); Sonya Lee (Professor of Art History, EALC, and Religion, USC); Kimia Shahi (Assistant Professor of Art History, USC)

- Please review the speakers' CVs, with an eye to tracing intellectual trajectories, disciplinary/interdisciplinary perspectives, and scholarly approaches
- Please look through book reviews

- Susanna Berger, “Martin Meurisse’s Garden of Logic,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 76, no. 1 (January 2013): 203–49
OR
Susanna Berger and Sara J. Schechner, “Observations on Niccolò Tornoli’s The Astronomers,” *Annals of Science* 78, no. 4 (2021): 418–62
- Daniela Bleichmar, reading TC
- Kate Flint, “Ruskin and Lichen,” in Kelly Freeman and Thomas Hughes (eds), *Ruskin’s Ecologies. Figures of Relation from Modern Painters to the Storm Cloud* London: Courtauld Books Online, 2021) ([link](#))
- Sonya Lee, reading TC
- Kimia Shahi, reading TC

Week 4 (09/18)

Exhibition visit: [Storm Cloud: Picturing the Origins of Our Climate Crisis](#), at The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens

Guests: Melinda McCurdy (Curator of British Art, Huntington Art Museum); Karla Nielsen (Curator of Literary Collections, Huntington Library); Kristen Anthony (Assistant Curator for Special Projects, Huntington Art Museum)

- Melinda McCurdy and Karla Nielsen, eds., *Storm Cloud: Picturing the Origins of Our Climate Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2024)
- “Storm Cloud” object checklist
- John Ruskin, *The Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1884), lecture 1, 1–46 ([link](#))
- Nicholas Robbins, “Ruskin, Whistler, and the Climate of Art in 1884,” in Kelly Freeman and Thomas Hughes (eds.), *Ruskin’s Ecologies* (London: Courtauld Books Online, 2021), 203–223 ([link](#))

Week 5 (09/25)

Exhibition visit: [Reframing Dioramas: The Art of Preserving Wilderness](#), Natural History Museum Los Angeles

Guests: Matt Davis (Exhibition Developer), David Pullido (Exhibition Designer)

- View videos about the making of NHMLA’s dioramas: [Habitat Views Part 1](#) (5:52 mins.) and [Habitat Views Part 2](#) (5:50 mins).
- Matt Davis (ed.), *Fabricating Wilderness: The Habitat Dioramas of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County* (Los Angeles: NHMLA, 2024)
- John Rowley, “The Proposed African Mammal Hall for Los Angeles Museum,” *Museum Graphic* 1:2 (1926), 43–50. ([link](#))
- Karen A. Rader and Victoria E.M. Cain, *Life on Display* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011): introduction, ch. 2, ch. 7, pp. 1–7, 51–90, 247–82 ([link](#)) (Note the helpful bibliographic essay on sources at the end.)
- Optional but encouraged, a classic:
Donna Haraway, “Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New

York City, 1908–36”,” in *Primate Visions* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 26–58
([link](#))

Monday, 09/30 by 9am: Submit proposal for final project (first draft)

Week 6 (10/02)

Exhibition visit: [Crossing Over: Art and Science at Caltech, 1920–2020](#), Caltech

Guests: Peter Collopy (University Archivist and Head of Archives and Special Collections, Caltech) and Claudia Bohn-Spector (Independent Curator)

- Peter Sachs Collopy and Claudia Bohn-Spector (eds.), *Crossing Over: Art and Science at Caltech, 1920–2020* (Pasadena: Caltech Library and Getty Publications, 2024)

Week 7 (10/09)

Exhibition visit: [We Live in Painting: The Nature of Color in Mesoamerican Art](#), LACMA

Guests: Diana Magaloni-Kerpel (Deputy Director; Program Director and Dr. Virginia Fields Curator of the Art of the Ancient Americas; Suzanne D. Booth and David G. Booth Conservation Center Director; LACMA); Dr. Alyce de Carteret (Assistant Curator of the Art of the Ancient Americas, LACMA)

- Diana Magaloni, Davide Domenici, and Alyce de Carteret, eds., *We Live in Painting: The Nature of Color in Mesoamerican Art* (Los Angeles: LACMA, 2024)

Week 8 (10/16)

Exhibition visit: [Out of Site: Survey Science and the Hidden West](#), The Autry Museum of the American West

Guest: Amy Scott (Vice President of Research and Interpretation, Marilyn B. and Calvin B. Gross Curator of Visual Arts at The Autry)

- Amy Scott, Jason D. Weems, and Britt Salvesen, eds., *Out of Site: Survey Science and the Hidden West* (Los Angeles: Autry Museum of the American West, 2024)

Monday, 10/21 by 9am: Submit revised proposal for final project

Week 9 (10/23)

Exhibition visit: [Mapping the Infinite: Cosmologies Across Cultures](#), LACMA

Guest: Stephen Little (Florence and Harry Sloan Curator of Chinese Art and Head of the Chinese, Korean, and South & Southeast Asian Departments)

- Readings TBD

Week 10 (10/30): Research week (no meeting)

Students will work independently on their final project.

Week 11 (11/06)

Exhibition visit: [World Without End: The George Washington Carver Project](#), CAAM

Guest: Cameron Shaw (Executive Director, CAAM) and Yael Lipschutz (Independent Curator, USC Art History PhD)

- George Washington Carver, *Progressive Nature Studies* (Tuskegee, Ala: Tuskegee Institute Print, 1896). ([link](#))
- Yael Lipschutz, "World Without End: An Introduction," in Cameron Shaw and Yael Lipschutz (eds.), *World Without End: The George Washington Carver Project* (Hirmer Verlag, 2025)
- Mark D. Hersey, *My Work Is That of Conservation: An Environmental Biography of George Washington Carver* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), selections ([link](#))

Week 12 (11/13)

Exhibition visit: [Sensing the Future: Experiments in Art and Technology](#), Getty Research Institute

Guest: Nancy Perloff (Curator of Modern & Contemporary Collections, Getty Research Institute)

- Nancy Perloff (ed.), *Sensing the Future: Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.)* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2024)
OR
- Kuo, Michelle. 2018. "To Avoid the Waste of a Cultural Revolution": Experiments in Art and Technology. Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences. ([link](#))
- Look through: Getty Research Institute, Research Collections: Experiments in Art and Technology records, 1966–1993, 94003
[About](#), [container list](#), [finding aid](#)
- Look through: Getty Research Institute, Research Collections: Experiments in Art and Technology Los Angeles records, 1969–1975 (bulk 1966-1973), 2003.M.12
[About](#), [container list](#), [finding aid](#)

Week 13 (11/20)

*** Special Event, Tuesday 11/19: Collections-based workshop with Paula Findlen and Pamela Smith at The Huntington Library, organized by the USC-Huntington Early Modern Studies Institute, Seminar on the History of Science, Medicine, and Technology. RSVP through the [EMSI](#).

Exhibition visit: [Lumen: The Art and Science of Light](#), Getty Museum

Guests: Kristen Collins (Curator of Manuscripts, J. Paul Getty Museum) and Nancy Turner (Conservator of Manuscripts, J. Paul Getty Museum)

Professors Paula Findlen (Stanford University) and Pamela Smith (Columbia University)

- Kristen Collins and Nancy Turner (eds.), *Lumen: The Art and Science of Light, 800–1600* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2024) ([link](#))
- Bissera V. Pentcheva, “Optical and Acoustic Aura in the Medieval Image: The Golden Retable of the Pentecost at Stavelot,” *Material Religion* 16:1 (2020), 9-40

Week 14 (11/27): No class, Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 15 (12/04): Oral Presentations of Final Research Projects

Monday, 12/16 by 9am: SUBMIT FINAL PROJECT ONLINE
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