Syllabus: Form ~~and~~ as Meaning

Instructor: Dr. Maximilian Schich, Associate Professor
AHST4342.001.15F - Topics in Art History

General information
The course meets in the *Fall 2015*, *Mondays 1:00pm–3:45pm* in room *ATC 2.101*.
Coursebook: http://go.utdallas.edu/ahst4342.001.15f
Course website: http://elearning.utdallas.edu

Instructor contact
Address: 800 West Campbell Rd., AT10 – 75080 Richardson/TX – USA – *Office:* ATC3.301 – *Lab:* ATC3.502
Phone: +1-972-883-4334 – *Web:* http://www.utdallas.edu/atec/schich/ – *Email:* maximilian.schich@utdallas.edu
Email note: **The email subject line prefix "AHST4342" is required in all communication with the instructor!**
Office hours: Please meet me right after the course or make an appointment via email.

Mission
The *Form as Meaning* course deals with form as a meaningful subject of analysis in art and architecture. While the practice of formal analysis has a very long tradition, and at least implicitly is still as crucial to art history as interpreting X-Ray pictures is to the radiologist, formal analysis has fallen out of fashion for decades. Being called a formalist has aquired a negative connotation, implying a lack of interest in context and meaning. In this course we will revisit form, not only as a carrier of meaning, but form as meaning itself. We will stare at and discuss art; reevaluate classic liter- ature such as Wölfflin, Wentworth-Thompson, Riegel, Focillon, and Kubler; and we will take into account the current formalist renaissance, including feature recognition in computer vision, fMRI evidence of a form-empathy shortcut, and form as a base of life in molecular biology, including the consequences for art history.

The *Form as Meaning* mission feeds into the scope of *Topics in Art History*, covering aspects of *Digital Art History*, *Cultural Analytics* and *Cultural Data Science*.

Requirements
Curiosity and *ARTS 1301 – Exploration of the Arts* as a prerequisite.

Grading policy
Percentages: Assignments 45% + Attendance & Participation 45% + Presentation 10%
Grading scale: A = 100 - 90 B = 89 - 80 C = 79 - 70 D = 69 - 60 F = 59 - 0

Assignments and course schedule
In this course students will look at large numbers of artworks, aiming to distill the essence and evolution of form. Students will collect and classify visual material, do visual summaries, and work towards a common goal, **using a variety of qualitative, quantitative, and creative methods**. The final product is intended to cater to wider audience.

The *academic calendar*, *project assignments*, *readings*, and *presentation requirements* are discussed and defined to- gether and will feed into the final course summary. Preliminary summaries as necessary for the completion of assign- ments are provided to students via email.

Figure above: Pottery figurine fragments, 300 BC - 900AD, Teotihuacán and vicinity (as depicted in Kubler 1962)

Course & instructor policies (aka the fine print)

Class policies
– **All announcements will be sent via email.** Students are responsible for reading each announcement in detail.
– All students will participate in the discussion. Observers are expected to participate in the discussion equally.
– Students need to read all the assigned readings or complete homework prior to the class discussion. *Homework assignments need to be handed 6 hours before the respective class.* The nature of an assignment including deliverables will be defined together and announced in class or sent out as an announcement.
– Students have the *responsibility of backing up all their data, code, and preliminary work*. When writing code, it is highly encouraged to use a version control system, such as github, bitbucket, etc.
– Storage (regardless of the procedure): Maintain a *digital library of examples* (painting, sculpture, music, literature, computer art, interactive works, etc.) to be shared in class. Strictly adhere to academic and intellectual property procedures when quoting a work, or when presenting it as an example. Do not present the same work in two different classes.
– Please contact the instructor if you have a disability that requires some arrangements so that appropriate arrangments can be made.

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures
– The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please go to http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies for these policies.
– The principles of academic honesty and ethics will be enforced. *You should credit all your sources.* Plagiarism (see UTD syllabus policies for definition) in final presentations, papers, or posters will not be tolerated.
– Excessive unexcused non-attendance (see UTD syllabus policies for definition) will lower your grade.

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are *subject to change* at the discretion of the instructor.

Instructor Bio

Dr. Maximilian Schich is an Associate Professor in *Arts and Technology* and a founding member of the *Edith O'Donnell Institute for Art History* at *UT Dallas*. He is an art historian using a multidisciplinary approach to understand the nature of culture by integrating qualitative inquiry and observation, with methods of computation, natural science, and information design. Recent high-impact work in *Science* and *Nature* introduces *A Network Framework of Cultural History* (see www.cultsci.net). Dr. Schich is an editorial advisor at *Leonardo Journal*, and an editorial board member at the *International Journal of Digital Art History* and *Palgrave Communications* (More info see www.schich.info).

Selected references

The primary ~~Textbook~~ Picturebook of this course is **Google Image Search** (plus a number of individual sources)
Further selected readings (and sights) will be provided by the instructor.

Essential inspirations
George Kubler: **The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things** (Hartford: Yale University Press, 1962).

Eleanor Rosch & Carolyn B. Mervis: **Family Resemblances: Studies in the Internal Structure of Categories.** *Cognitive Psychology* 7,573-605 (1975) http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0010-0285(75)90024-9

David Freedberg, Vittorio Gallese: **Motion, Emotion, and Empathy in Esthetic Experience.** *Trends in Cognitive Science* 11,5 (2007) 197-203 http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2007.02.003

Ken A. Dill, Justin, L. MacCallum: **The Protein-Folding Problem, 50 Years On.** *Science* 338,1042 (2002) http://dx.doi.org/10.1126/science.1219021

Recent works of interest
Daniel Kim, Seung-Woo Son & Hawoong Jeong: **Large-Scale Quantitative Analysis of Painting Arts.** *Scientific Reports* 4,7370 (2014). http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/srep07370

Ahmed Elgammal, Babak Saleh: **Quantifying Creativity in Art Networks.** *arXiv:*1506.00711v1 (2. Jun 2015) http://arxiv.org/pdf/1506.00711v1.pdf & http://hyperallergic.com/214306/can-an-algorithm-determine-art-historys-most-creative-paintings/

Stefan Lee, Nicolas Maisonneuve, David Crandall, Alexei A. Efros, Josef Sivic: **Linking Past to Present: Discovering Style in Two Centuries of Architecture.** *ICCP 2015* http://vision.soic.indiana.edu/papers/linking2015iccp.pdf

Fei-Fei Lee: **How we're teaching computers to understand images.** *TED talk* (March 2015) http://www.ted.com/talks/fei_fei_li_how_we_re_teaching_computers_to_understand_pictures

A tool
Lev Manovich, J. Douglass, T. Zepel, X. Zeng: **Imageplot** (software). (San Diego: Software Studies Initiative, 2010). http://lab.softwarestudies.com/p/imageplot.html