PROPOSAL:
NEW MAJOR IN ART THEORY & CRITICISM
PRESENTER: PETER FREUND, ART & ART HISTORY DEPARTMENT

DESCRIPTION:
The Art & Art History Department proposes to offer a new major focused on art theory and criticism. This course of study differs from art history and art practice in its emphasis on conceptualization, the asking of foundational questions about the nature and function of art in relation to human subjectivity and society, and the endeavor to link the aims of art to concerns in other disciplines.

In this curriculum, students take core courses in art theory, history, and criticism with electives in studio and digital art practice as well as critical studies from other humanities and art-related disciplines, including anthropology, communication, literature, performing arts, and philosophy. Students develop critical thinking and writing skills that will prepare them to pursue graduate studies and careers in the art field.

As proposed, the new major will offer a configuration of existing SMC courses from across several disciplines without requiring new course development or faculty hires.

RATIONALE:
The conceptual nature of contemporary art practices puts theoretical and critical investigations at the creative core of art production. The work of artists, art historians, and theorists today includes dialogue and debate that cut across art production and art criticism in a way that links and sometimes even combines the critical and creative disciplines. The new major in Art Theory & Criticism aims to provide a challenging course of study that reflects such current trends in the field.

Many graduate programs in contemporary art history and practice assume some familiarity with critical theory and the cross-pollinating relationship between theory and production. Our curriculum will prepare students for graduate studies in art history and related fields as well as established and emerging programs in critical theory. Majors will also gain the critical background needed to pursue professional work in art curation, gallery/museum administration, and writing on the arts.

The new major in Art Theory & Criticism will bolster the college’s core curriculum learning outcome in Artistic Understanding and promote interdisciplinary learning in the broad-based liberals arts tradition.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:
Upon successfully completing the program of study with an art theory and criticism emphasis, students should be able to...

• Conduct an extended, rigorous written analysis of artworks by drawing upon concepts from established critical theoretical texts;

• Articulate the theoretical assumptions driving specific interpretations of artworks by availing a knowledge base of art theory and criticism;

• Pose and investigate theoretical questions about the nature and function of art by utilizing specific artworks as reference points;

• Demonstrate a foundational knowledge of facts and accepted art historical and critical terminology in writing and discussion;

• Contextualize established and contemporary artworks within a broader cultural, historical, and political framework;

• Produce a work of art or curate an exhibition informed by an art-theoretical concept.
PROPOSED CURRICULUM (14 courses total):

Lower Division (Six courses)

Required Core (three courses):

AH 1: Survey of World Art
AH 2: Survey of World Art
Art 80: Art Theory

Electives (Choose three):

Art 1: Studio Foundations 1
Art 2: Studio Foundations 2
Art 3: Basic Design
Art 55: Digital Foundations 1
Art 65: Digital Foundations 2
Perfa 1: Perceiving the Performing Arts
Perfa 10: Rock to Bach: Introduction to Music
Perfa 14: World Music and Dance
Perfa 50: Interactive Theatre
Phil 5: Practical Logic

Upper Division (Eight Courses)

Required Core (five courses):

AH 111: Philosophy of New Media Art
AH 117: Art Criticism, 1900 – the Present
AH 166: Issues in Twentieth-Century Art
Art 180: Seminar in Theory & Practice of Art
Art 192: Capstone Project

Electives (Choose three):

AH 118: Art since 1930
AH 193: Museum Internship Project
AH 194: Special Topics in Art History
Anth 120: Visual Anthropology
Anth 124: Museum Studies
Comm 100: Communication Theory*
Comm 109: Visual Communication
Eng 170: Problems in Literary Theory
Perfa 118: Twentieth-Century Composers
Perfa 160: Special Topics in Performing Arts
Phil 111: Philosophy of Art

* Students should consult the department regarding possible substitutions, as certain courses vary their content.