

idsva

703.1 / 803.1 Syllabus

Topological Studies

Mexico City: First and Second Year Winter Residency

In Residence

1 Credit

Dates: January 5-12, 2025

Instructor: Simonetta Moro, Dejan Lukic, Silvia Mazzini

Course Description

First and Second Year students begin the spring semester with a week-long January intensive residency in Mexico City, Mexico. This location should be understood not only from the point of view of its own rich history and culture, but also in topological relation with other residency sites, namely Madrid and Marrakech, which opens up considerations of Spanish colonization (not limited to Mexico, but including the rest of the Americas and the Caribbean Basin as well), and the long period of Muslim dominance in Spain (lasting roughly 700 years, from the 8th century to the 15th century), whose decline marks the beginning of the European expansion towards the Americas (1492). Traces of Islamic or Moorish iconographic and decorative motifs brought by the Spanish *conquista* are visible throughout Mexico City alongside vestiges of ancient pre-Columbian civilizations, interspersed with modernist art and architecture and the powerful visual testimonies of the Mexican Muralist movement (Orozco, Siqueiros, Rivera), and other avant-garde movements (Tamayo, Kahlo).

As Mexican philosopher Alberto Hernandez-Lemus (Professor of Philosophy at Colorado College, and IDSVA Visiting Faculty 2020) reminds us, the contemporary Mexican civilization is a conglomerate of diverse peoples and languages, made of various cultures and ethnic groups, not limited to the nation presently called “Mexico,” but rather extending to what we should think of as the Mesoamerican region. Not only are Mesoamerican roots and traditions diverse, but since the Conquest, those Mesoamerican roots have cross-pollinated with Spanish traditions, as well as with Latin American, African and European traditions. A *longue durée* perspective of Mexican art would need to recognize the multipolar artistic fabric that it belongs to, including indigenous motifs and perspectives that were “discovered” and incorporated in the nationalist art project after the Mexican Revolution in the 1920s.¹

In the attempt to grasp some of this complexity, our field work will include: the Museo de Antropología, displaying a vast collection of ancient Mesoamerican artifacts and objects; the Museo Tamayo, dedicated to the permanent collection of the modernist artist Rufino Tamayo and to temporary exhibitions of contemporary art; the Museo Casa de Leon Trotsky, the last dwelling

¹ Alberto Hernandez-Lemus, online lecture, December 20, 2019.

of the anti-Stalinist Marxist thinker and political activist; the Museo Frida Kahlo (Casa Azul), the home and studio of the modernist painter; the Museo Anahuacalli, Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo's Museo and Casa Estudio; the Templo Mayor and Museum, displaying the ruins of the Aztec temple next to the Catholic cathedral built on the original site of the ancient Tenochtitlan; and other sites displaying frescoes of Rivera, Siqueiros, Orozco and other muralists on the history of Mexican people. Optional visits to the archeological site of Teotihuacán and contemporary art galleries and museums complete the residency program.

Visiting Faculty include Mexican writers, historians, and editors of the art magazine *Artes de Mexico* Margarita de Orellana and Alberto Ruy-Sanchez (IDSVA Honorary Degree Recipients 2023); philosopher Luis Armando Hernández Cuevas (Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City); and Magali Lara, visual artist and professor of painting at the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos. Each in their own way, these artist-philosophers will highlight how historical and contemporary indigenous practices consider the objects of their material culture inseparable from their political, devotional, and everyday use.

Learning Objectives

In the course of the seminar, students will:

1. Familiarize themselves with the fundamental concepts of “topological studies” through readings, lectures, and field work;
2. Develop their oral presentation skills through seminar presentations based on their fall papers and Independent Studies, practicing the format, protocols, and basic methods of seminar presentations;
3. Come to terms with the critical language that informs philosophy and art theory as well as the hermeneutics of contemporary art discourse – this latter derived from the visual examples students provide with their paper presentations.
4. Practice the art of listening and asking **concise, critically informed questions**. This skill is to be developed and practiced through posing questions at the end of student seminar presentations and at the end of faculty lectures.

Course Requirements

In the morning, students in each cohort will give seminar presentations on their Fall semester papers and Independent Studies while practising their skills as presenters and as listeners.

Readings distributed ahead of the residency should be completed before the start of the residency.

Attendance policy: students are expected to attend *every* class, including the sessions in which they are not presenting. All museum visits and field work are mandatory unless otherwise specified.

Students should check their emails daily for notifications. Use of Canvas will be limited to posting relevant reading materials and communications relative to the weekly schedule.

As a way to introduce themselves to their peers, Under >Discussions, each student can post links to their website or one or two images about the artistic or professional work they want to present, ahead of the trip to Mexico City. This is not mandatory but highly encouraged!

Individual Advising Meetings

Post-residency, each student will schedule a call or video conference with one of the core faculty for their biannual advising meetings. Students should come prepared to discuss their progress in the previous semester and ideas for possible topics to develop in future papers. A sign-up schedule will be distributed shortly following the residency.

Assessment and Grading

Grades will be determined as follows:

- 60% for the paper presentations (see Rubric for Oral Presentations on Canvas)
- 20% for participation in seminar discussions
- 20% for residency field work participation

Please make sure you familiarize yourself with the Grading Scale in the Student Handbook.

At the end of the residency, students will be asked to assess the course via an online anonymous **course evaluation**. Please make sure you complete this evaluation; faculty and administrators really value your evaluations and often make important changes to the curriculum based on this feedback.

Reading List:

(Most of these texts are excerpts available on Canvas as PDF)

Siqueiros, David Alfaro. “Introduction: Some Questions about Mural Art in Mexico International” in *Art and Revolution*. (PDF)

Cuevas, José Luis. “The Cactus Curtain”. (PDF)

Paz, Octavio. “Re/Visions: Mural painting” in *Essays on Mexican Art* (113—168), 1978. Available with a free account on the Internet Archive:

<https://archive.org/details/essaysonmexicana00pazo>

[See, in particular, an excerpt from Siqueiros on “The Birth of Fascism” painting at pp. 158-59.]

Didi-Huberman, Georges. “Introduction” in *Uprisings*. (PDF)

Artes de Mexico, articles on Sacred Plants (English version). (PDF)

Artes de Mexico, articles on Shamanism (Spanish/English versions). (PDF)

Maffie, James. *Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion*, University Press of Colorado, 2014. Read at least the Introduction and Chapter 1. (PDF)

De la Cadena, Marisol & Mario Blaser, eds. *A World of Many Worlds*, Duke University Press, 2018. Introduction: “Pluriverse” and Chapter 6: “Humans and Terrans in the Gaia War”. (PDF)

Dussel, Enrique. *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of “the Other” and the Myth of Modernity*, trans. Michael D. Barber, Continuum New York, 1995. Chapters 1, 4 (p. 19-26; 49-57). (PDF)

Recommended Readings, from *Art in Theory 1900-2000*:

Siqueiros et al., “A Declaration of Social, Political, and Aesthetic Principles”, 1922 (406-7).

Rivera, “The Revolutionary Spirit in Modern Art” 1932 (421-24).

Siqueiros, “Towards a Transformation of the Plastic Arts” 1934 (429-31).

Breton, Rivera, Trotsky, “Towards a Free Revolutionary Art”, 1938 (532-535).

Siqueiros, “Open Letter to the Painters, Sculptors, and Engravers of the Soviet Union”, 1955 (680-3).

Kahlo, “On Moses” 1945 (649-52).

Interview with Carmen Boullosa

<https://southwestreview.com/magazine/volume-105-number-1/carnal-language-an-interview-with-carmen-boullosa/>

Bruno, Giuliana: “Storage Space.” *E-Flux Architecture*, November 16, 2016.

<https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/superhumanity/68650/storage-space/>

Schedule (see Google Calendar for details and updates)

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Monday, Jan 6* (*National Holiday)		Tuesday, Jan 7			Wednesday, Jan 8		Thursday, Jan 9			Friday, Jan 10	Sat, January 11
Breakfast at Hotel		Breakfast at hotel			Breakfast at hotel		Breakfast at hotel			Breakfast at hotel (early)	Breakfast at hotel
9-10am Orientation / Topological Studies Intro to residency		9-11:30 am 702 pres. (4) SM JC JG ZH PS Group 1	9-11:30 am 702 pres. (4) SMa AN JB AA KK Group 2	9-11:30 am -11:30 am IS pres. (4) DL LD MF AM AH	9-11:30 am 702 pres. (3) SMa YYF VT KN	9-11:30 am IS pres. (4) DL HK SI LCa BM	9-11 am 702 pres. (3) SMa KB ES SDL	9-11am IS pres. (3) DL NO RM CB Group 1	9-11am IS pres. (3) SM WJ AW PA Group 2	7:30 am-5pm Trip to Teotihuacán (all day)	9-10am wrap up mtg Optional: Museo Nacional de Historia (Siqueiros mural), Castillo Chapultepec (Tue-Su 10-5 pm) Orozco project in Chapulte
10:30-12:30 Lecture by Luis Hernandez Cuevas (Hotel)											
12:30-1:30 pm Lunch (Hotel)		Lunch on your own			Lunch on your own		Lunch on your own			Lunch on your own	Lunch on your own
2-4 pm 702 pres. (cohort '24) – (2) SMa, SM EMR JK	2-4 pm IS pres. (cohort '23) –(3) DL LC TSV CAM	1:30-4:30 pm Museo de Antropologia Av. Paseo de la Reforma s/n, Polanco, Bosque de Chapultepec I Secc, Miguel Hidalgo, 11560 Mexico City. (Tue-Sun, 9am-6 pm)			1-4 pm Templo Mayor and museum Seminario 8, Centro Histórico de la Cdad. de México, Centro, Cuauhtémoc, 06060, Mexico City. (Tue-Sun, 9-5 pm)		1:30-2:45 pm Anahuacalli museum Museo 150, San Pablo Tepetlapa, Coyoacán, 04620 (Tue-Sun, 11-5:30 pm)			Alternative program: MUAC museum and Centro de espacio escultórico with Magali Lara	Free time/Options: Kurimazutto gallery + Museo de Arte Moderno with Magali Lara
4:30-6:00 Artes de Mexico Córdoba 69, Roma Nte., Cuauhtémoc, 06700 Mexico City. Alberto Ruy-Sanchez +Margarita deOrellana Talk about Mexican art and culture		Optional: 4:30-5:30 pm: Museo Tamayo Av. Paseo de la Reforma 51, Polanco, Bosque de Chapultepec I Secc, Miguel Hidalgo, 11580, Mexico City (Tue-Sun, 10-5:30 pm) https://www.museotamayo.org/proximas-exposiciones Or: Museo de Arte Moderno (Tue-Fr, 10:15-5:30 pm)			Optional: 4-5 pm: Colegio de San Ildefonso Justo Sierra 16, Centro Histórico de la Cdad. de México, Centro, 06020 Ciudad de México, CDMX, Mexico (Tue-Sun 11-5 pm)		3-4: pm Trotsky House Av. Río Churubusco 410, Del Carmen, Coyoacán, 04100 (Tue-Sun, 10-5 pm) 4:30-6pm Frida Kahlo museum (Casa Azul) Londres 247, Del Carmen, Coyoacán, 04100, Mexico City (Tue-Sun, 10-6 pm)				
Dinner on your own		Dinner on your own			Dinner on your own		Dinner on your own			Dinner on your own	Reception at Zocalo