

Rochester Institute of Technology

College of Liberal Arts

Spring 2025

Instructor: Eboni Jones-Stewart

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Art of Dying

VISL 384-01/WGST 384-01 | MW 3:00 - 4:15 pm | Wallace (WAL)-4560

Course Description:

This course explores the experience of dying—a profoundly human and universal experience as it is represented by artists who are themselves facing immanent death. The unique and deeply personal process of each dying artist is crucially informed by social, cultural and historical as well as artistic contexts. The course will focus primarily on visual artists and writers living with and dying of disease - such as AIDS, cancer and cystic fibrosis as well as mortality and age. Topics such as aesthetics, artistic media, representation, grief, bereavement, illness, care-giving, aging, and the dying process will be considered within the context of issues of race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and community values. Some of the artists covered will be Jo Spence, Hannah Wilke, Elias Canetti, Bob Flanagan, Herve Guibert, Tom Joslin, Laurie Lynd, Audre Lorde, Charlotte Salomon, Keith Haring, Frida Kahlo, Bas Jan Ader, Ted Rosenthal, Felix Gonzalez Torres, Keith Haring, Eric Steel, Derek Jarman, Eric Michaels, and David Wojnarowicz. We will also explore some of the critical theory of Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Elaine Scarry, Susan Sontag, and Ross Chambers.

Class Grade Components

40% 2 Short Papers (2-3 pages each)

- These will be response papers to themes that you are drawn to as we read and watch media (i.e. dynamics between artist and illness, viewer and performer, theorist and artist, etc.) These will hopefully be building blocks for your final presentation.

35% Project and Presentation

- You will be presenting in class a project/paper either exploring your own experiences engaging with the work this semester, or using an artist or theorist as a jumping off point to share other works you have found that relate to your interests.

30% Attendance & Participation

- This course is collaborative. Attendance and participation are mandatory and will count in the weighing of your grade. It is important, therefore, that you attend all classes and

engage actively with the task at hand. Obviously, I will excuse absences caused by serious illness or emergency. If you acquire more than four un-excused absences you will fail.

Class Materials/Format

- Readings - available via MyCourses or RIT Course Reserves
- Media Viewings - In class or linked on MyCourses
- Discussions and Activities in class

Grading Percentages

- A 94-100 A- 90-93 B+ 87-89 B 84-86 B- 80-83
C+ 77-79 C 74-76 C- 70-73 D 60-69
F 0-59

Class Policies

USE ELECTRONICS INTENTIONALLY.

Phones, laptops and tablets are incredibly distracting and I need you to pay attention and be in class mentally, not just physically. Your eyes will need to be used to look at the things I show you. If you need to do work for other classes and you must do it on Monday and Wednesday afternoons, please do so away from my classroom. You will be asked to leave if you do not comply with this simple rule. Please see me if there are any accommodations that need to be made to facilitate the best possible learning experience for you.

NO EXTRA CREDIT. SIN CRÉDITO EXTRA. KEIN ZUSÄTZLICHER KREDIT.

没有额外的功劳. **PAS DE CRÉDIT SUPPLÉMENTAIRE.** لا رصيد إضافي.

Extra credit means extra work for both you and I. We are all too busy for that. If you show up and do your assignments, you will be fine. It is really hard to fail this class but people have succeeded. If you don't do well on a quiz, it isn't the end of the world. I try to keep grades as accurate as possible every week on MyCourses.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T.

We live in tumultuous times. It takes all kinds to make a world, and there are likely to be differences in opinion on issues of art, race, gender, sexuality, religion or politics. We all have had different experiences that shape our current worldview. Because our world is saturated in

visual objects that push boundaries and opinions, our discussions WILL land on hot button issues. All I ask is that we hear each other out. We do not have to agree with each other. Keeping an open mind is going to be very important in this class. Be respectful. You will be asked to leave the room if you do not comply with this simple rule.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY! USE YOUR WORDS!

I am always available via email. I encourage everyone to reach out to me with any questions or concerns. I am not a mind reader—if something is bothering you, or you have suggestions to improve the class, I want to hear them before your final grades and my class evaluation. I have limited availability for in-person meetings, but I could make arrangements if needed. The sooner you let me know about any difficulties or issues, the sooner I can help and the happier we both will be!

Policies That Need to Be In Every Syllabus

Academic Integrity Statement

As an institution of higher learning, RIT expects students to behave honestly and ethically at all times, especially when submitting work for evaluation in conjunction with any course or degree requirement. The College of Liberal Arts encourages all students to become familiar with the RIT Honor Code and with RIT's Academic Honesty Policy.

Statement on Reasonable Accommodations

RIT is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. If you would like to request accommodations such as special seating or testing modifications due to a disability, please contact the Disability Services Office. It is located in the Student Alumni Union, Room 1150; the Web site is www.rit.edu/dso. After you receive accommodation approval, it is imperative that you see me during office hours so that we can work out whatever arrangement is necessary.

Title IX

RIT is committed to providing a safe learning environment, free of harassment and discrimination as articulated in our university policies located on our [governance website](#). RIT's policies require faculty to share information about incidents of gender based discrimination and harassment with [RIT's Title IX](#) coordinator or deputy coordinators when incidents are stated to them directly. The information you provide to a non-confidential resource which includes faculty will be relayed only as necessary for the Title IX Coordinator to investigate and/or seek resolution. Even RIT Offices and employees who cannot guarantee confidentiality will maintain

your privacy to the greatest extent possible. If an individual discloses information during a public awareness event, a protest, during a class project, or advocacy event, RIT is not obligated to investigate based on this public disclosure. RIT may however use this information to further educate faculty, staff and students about prevention efforts and available resources.

If you would like to report an incident of gender based discrimination or harassment directly you may do so anonymously by using the online [TIX report form](#) or anonymously by using the [Compliance and Ethics Hotline](#).

If you have a concern related to gender-based discrimination and/or harassment and prefer to have a confidential discussion, assistance is available from any of RIT's confidential resources.

RIT Counseling and Psychological Services www.rit.edu/counseling
585-475-2261 (V) 585-475-6897 (TTY)

RIT Student Health Center www.rit.edu/studentaffairs/studenthealth
585-475-2255 (V)

RIT Center for Women and Gender www.rit.edu/womenandgender
585-475-7764 (V/TTY)

RIT Ombuds Office www.rit.edu/ombuds/contact-us
585-475-7200 (V) 585-475-2876 (TTY)

NTID Counseling and Academic Advising www.ntid.rit.edu/counselingdept
585-475-6400 (V/TTY)

Center for Religious Life www.rit.edu/studentaffairs/religion
585-475-2137 (V)