

Money & Art

INTRODUCTION

GE1127

<http://glia.ca/scm/2014/ge1127>

(Please register on the blog)

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DISCLAIMER

This is not a course about the management of money, and it is not a course about the art market. It is a course concerned with the origins of money, the nature of exchange, and how money and themes of exchange are manipulated by artists for aesthetic and ideological purposes.

In “Money” students will be exposed to an **anthropological and aesthetic history of money** (contrasting the economic version with alternative histories from anthropology and the art-world). Students will explore theories of money as cultural inscription and as an extension of social and cultural exchange-networks based on trust.

Changing technological modes of money will be contextualized within a history that examines how **culture changes as exchange changes**. This discursive exploration will be framed by an examination of specific artists (from the ancients to the contemporary) who investigate money (cost, value, exchange) or use it as the material in their work.

An emphasis will be placed on **the role of new media in contemporary exchange.**

“The genealogy of the money form is the study of a new logic that is the money of the mind” (Shell, 1993, pg.11)

In the digital age,
**physical money as a material structure
is on the threshold of obsolescence,
-- as is art.**

AGREE?

All will be virtual.

DISAGREE?

Physical structures will always be
necessary.

NUANCES? (suggest your own)

Both will co-exist. Neither will be primary.

INDIFFERENT?

In the digital age, physical money as a material structure is on the threshold of obsolescence, as is art.

Trading is now enacted digitally through databases, flash trading algorithms, micro-transactions, and online auctions. Modes of networked digital money are proliferating: RFID cards, NFC, alternative open source currencies (BitCoins, etc...) and mobile transactions (Google Wallet, PayPal, Square, Card.io etc.).

Art is also becoming conceptual, virtual and data-driven. This transition from material money to virtual trade, from material art to virtual visualization, constitutes a shift in culture, and an opportunity to explore the interdependence of economic exchange and cultural inscription.

The Contract of this Class.

Be it hereby resolved
that the BUYER,
hereafter referred to as the STUDENT,
shall receive lectures and tutorials
in exchange for compelling course-work
and outstanding projects.

ATTENDANCE Policy

You are expected to attend over 80% of in-class time.

If you attend less than 80% of in-class time
(without doctor notes or legal reason)
then you fail the course.

Lateness more than 20 minutes
is recorded as an absence of one hour.

There are 13 weeks in this course.
2 hours of lecture. 1 hour of tutorial.
Therefore: 39 hours total in-class.

31.2 hours is 80% exactly.

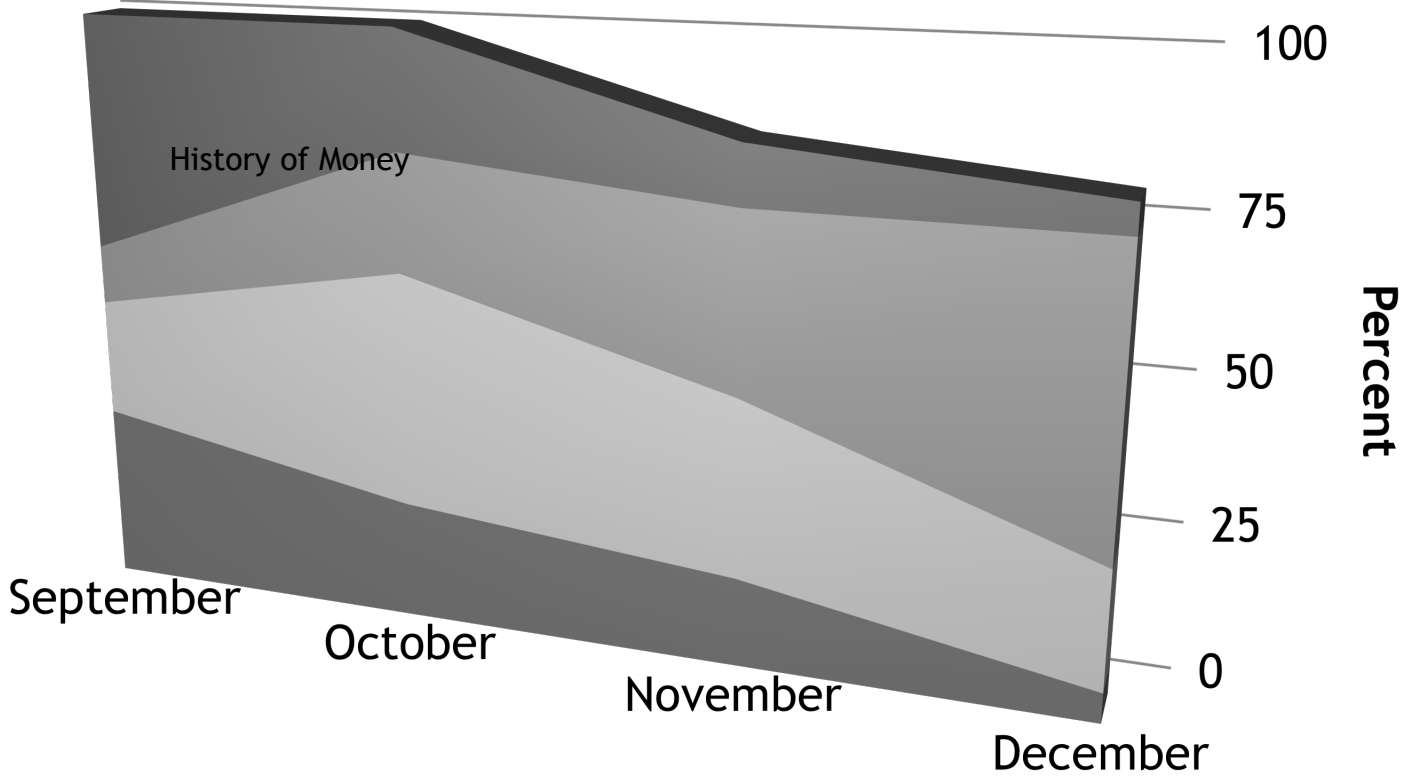
So more than 8 hours of missed time means a fail.

+

GRADES WILL BE DEDUCTED FOR EVERY HOUR OF CLASS TIME YOU MISS.

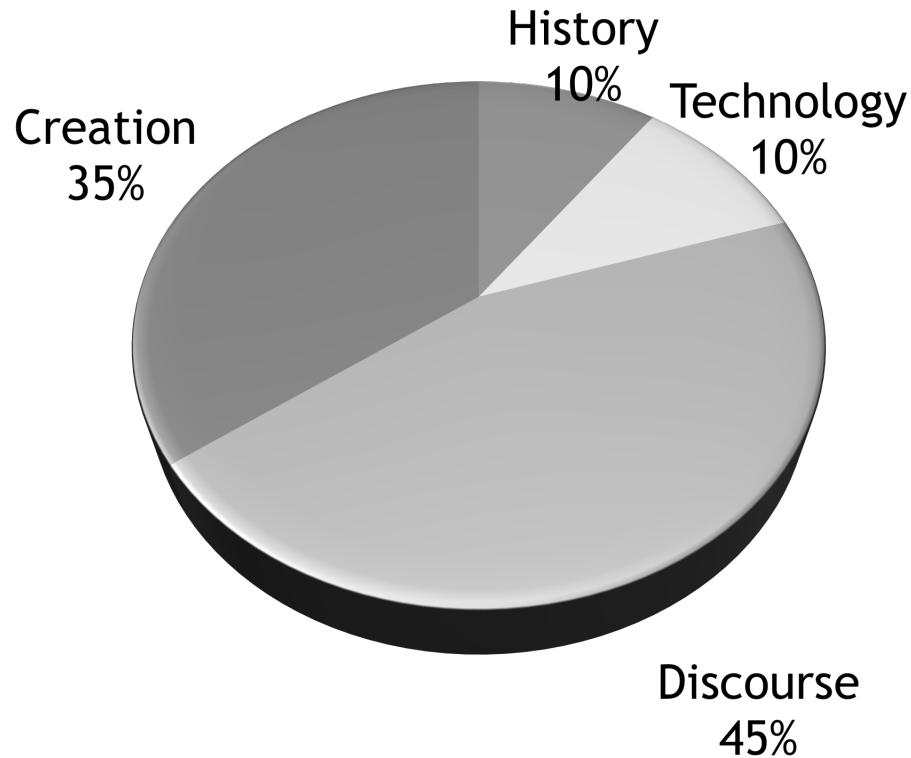
Review of course trajectory

Disciplines

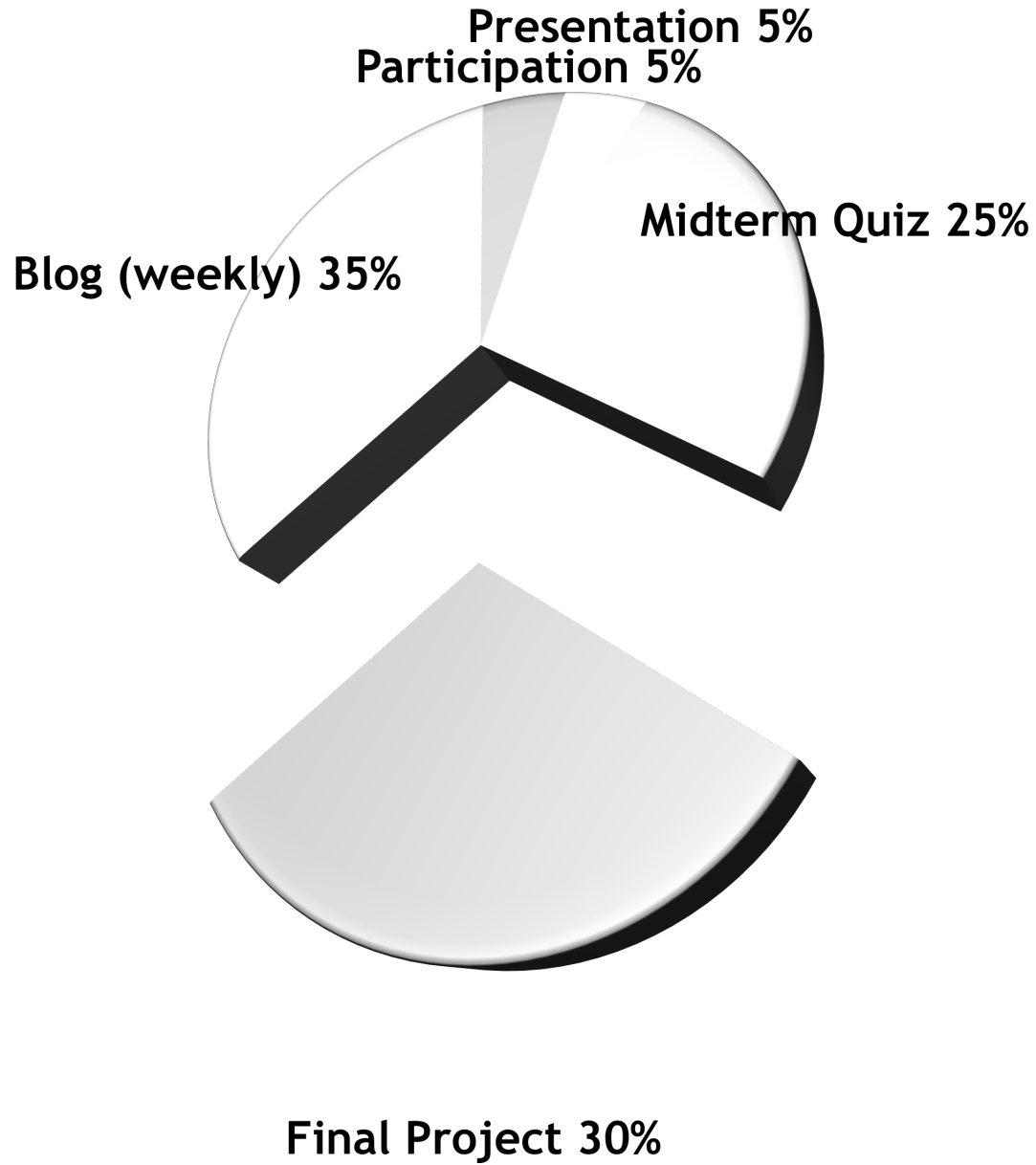


Develop creative research proposals for art projects concerning money and/or value and exchange.

MODES



- Reflect on and theorize the ways art has investigated money, emphasizing how questions of value and cost are destabilized through aesthetic enquiry.
- Integrate the themes of art, money and technology into critical arguments in a creative and informed manner.



HOMEWORK

Students are responsible
for ensuring that they are
enrolled as a user at the class blog
<http://glia.ca/scm/2014/ge1127>

PLEASE, REGISTER ON BLOG NOW.

Any QUESTIONS about

- **course structure?**
- **grading?**
- **attendance?**
- **assignments?**
- **anything?**

IN-CLASS
EXERCISE

RIGHT NOW
WRITE DOWN
ANSWERS TO
THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

WHAT IS ART?
WHAT IS MONEY?

PLEASE BLOG THESE ANSWERS
ON THE COURSE WEBSITE. Now.

If you finish, come down to front
and show me what you wrote.
(5 minutes)

INTRODUCING SOME OF THE KEY IDEAS
THAT WILL MOTIVATE OUR EXPLORATION.

IDEA: Shared transcendence

Because money is divorced from utility (*use-value*), it is a form of concealed transcendence.

One of art's use-values is transcendence.

Money & art therefore share an implicit purpose.

IDEA: Shared relational concerns

Contemporary artists often investigate **relations** between people.

Money **quantifies** social relations. Art examines the **quality** of social relations.

Money & art therefore complement each other; they underlie the complex power negotiations of culture.

IDEA: Shared symbolic nature

Money represents value but the paper or coins are not really worth as much as the money's value.

Money is therefore, like art, a symbolic structure.

Money & art therefore share a symbolic form.



**IDEA: Shared reliance on
consensus**

As symbolic form, money & art
**both rely on context. Without a
group of people in agreement
about their value, they are
worthless.**

They arise from consensus.
They emerge from context.
They are abstractions.

Please:
Do this short [online survey](#) NOW



Use QR or access it from course website
Schedule tab under Week 1

Tutorial DEC

T1: *Transactional-Speed-Idea-Banking*

Student pairs for 30-40 seconds at a time can talk only about money or art.

They must only speak one sentence, then stop and let partner speak.

This is a form of intellectual speed-networking (*speed-banking/bartering*):
give an idea to gain an idea; give a fact to get a fact;
give an opinion to get an opinion. If no idea *deposited*, no idea given.

At end of 15 1-minute changing-partner-exercises: students must write down (from memory) all the ideas/facts/opinions they received; this is their *account*. It is written in total silence for 10 minutes.

Discussion & Presentation of *Accounts*: Is memory value? What if memory is incorrect/falsified (do accounts match memory of inputs?) What *counts* for more ideas/facts/opinions? Can value be created?

T2: *A society without money. A society without art.*

Individually: Each student answers the following questions on a piece of paper. *5 minutes each question. Point form answers encouraged.*

1. What *objects that you are carrying* would not have any value in a post/pre-money world (after an economic collapse, devalued currency)? What would be of value?
2. If no art (no drawing, painting, animation, video, film, decorative design), what would world look like?

For each question, divide class into groups according to their answers (allegiance or affinity can be expressed as who thinks what); then have these groups *discourse-barter* (argue by offering ideas) using arguments to gain more members.

IDEA: Art and money follow similar evolution at a material level from concept to material to media.

The evolution of contemporary art (from figurative to conceptual to mediated) parallels the evolution of money.

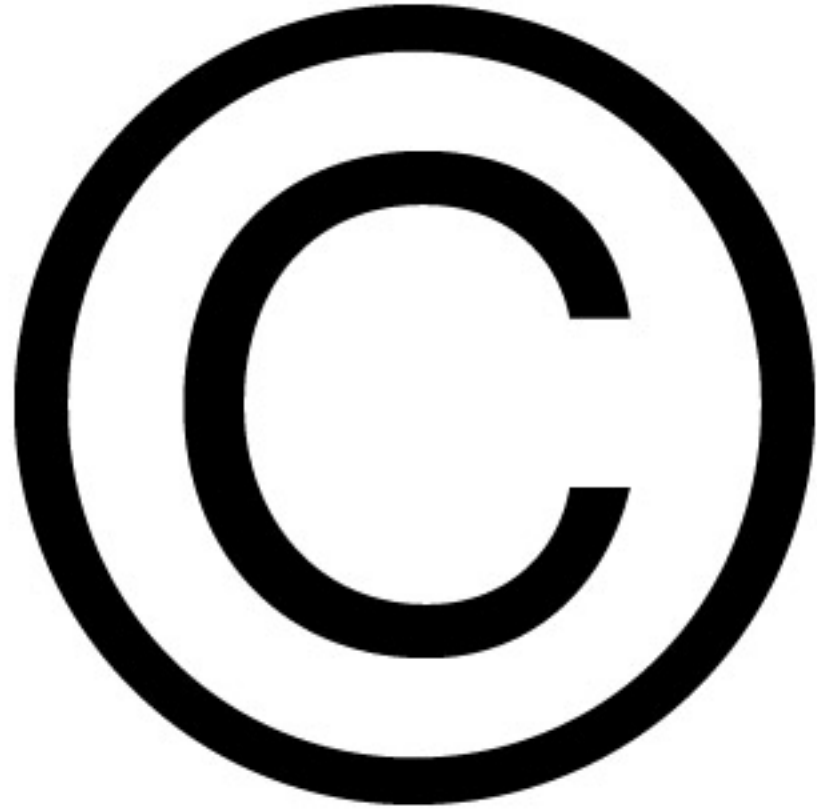
Transformations in both parallel because they rely on the same technologies : carve, smelt, ink, print, program...

IDEA: Absolute values

Art & money are also similar in that both systems represent absolute goals and ends of existence.

Art represents a desire to strive for absolute qualities: aesthetics, instincts, concepts, communications.

Money represents a desire to accumulate absolute quantities: survival, status, power, glamour.



Break?

After break
we take attendance
and review very quickly
a few more artists
in order to introduce
a way of thinking
about creativity
as an economic
and contextually sensitive
process.

Remember attendance is mandatory.
It will sometimes be taken at the beginning.
Other times in middle after break.
Sometimes at end.
So stick around.

And use in class time wisely.
With effort and attention and thought
a lot of ideas for projects, blog posts, comments, etc
will spontaneously arise.