

Infrastructures of Art

Winter Term 2026/2027

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Time: Wednesdays, 14:15-15:45 hrs

Start: October 21, 2026

Teaching term: 21.10.2026 - 03.02.2027

Location: Seminar für Ethnologie, Seminarraum,

Martin-Luther-Universität Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology, Reichardtstraße 11, 06114 Halle



Overview

How has the production of art been studied and with what concepts, methods and frames? How can we define emerging relations between individuals, collectives, and institutions, trace levels of cultural policy and implementation, and map political influence in and through the arts? To what ends is art harnessed, by whom, where, and how is it imbricated in contemporary political and economic discourses?

This course offers an introduction to analysing infrastructures of art and their situated discourses. Considering case studies and critical approaches, throughout the term we will map the dynamics of a political economy of the arts while taking a look at the uses and limits of various concepts, including the social production of art, abolitionism and reform, institutional critique, and critical theory of artists' labor. Case studies will range across institutional historiographies and attendant entanglements with changing definitions of autonomy and art as a social good. Each analytic approach will offer a lens through which to consider the varied dimensions of cultural production and circulation.

Following current debates will help students gain an understanding of the concepts, methodologies and frameworks that have been used in the study of art worlds, and will equip students with tools to unpack specific interventions, where art intervenes in the realm of labor, political economies, urban development and vice versa.

Interdisciplinary discussions between students of anthropology, arts, and other disciplines are expected and most welcome in this course.