



香港中文大學  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

CURE3036 Spring 2025

## Contemporary Art and Representation



© Cai Guo-Qiang's Head On (2006), Installation view at Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, 2009.  
Photo by Erika Barahona-Ede, ©FMGB, Courtesy of Cai Guo-Qiang

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**Instructor:** Prof. Yongwoo Lee, Assistant Professor of Cultural Studies

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Please allow at least 24 hours for a response to your email – longer on weekends

**Class Time/Place:**

Lecture: Thursday, 1:30-3:15 pm, Venue: Lee Dak Sum Building (LDS) 214

Tutorials: Thursday, 3:30-4:15 pm, Venues: Lee Dak Sum Building (LDS) 214

**Medium of Instruction:** English

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**Course Description and Methodology:** Contemporary art has emerged as a privileged domain for exploring interspecies relations where various contemporary issues intersect. Thus, this course aims to introduce contemporary art in Asia and its representational aesthetics to consider various socio-cultural issues regarding art circulation and its interpretation, the connotation of contemporary art in society. The works of various contemporary artists will be presented in the context of focal issues that invoke social practices, conventional modality of the contemporary art scene, shifting art

interpretation within the norms and values in a society, relational art and public engagement, experimental use of media. Each week we will analyze contemporary art with specific themes, emphasizing the recurrent motifs and issues in contemporary art and its politics of representation, such as situation and activism, space, ruin and urbanity/modernity, trauma and memory in history, animality and non-human subjectivity, post-human and prosthetic body, gender and sexuality, queer art, magic (the material culture of the weird and eerie, ghost and monstrous iconography), cuteness as a concept reflecting from the contemporary popular cultural reference. Close readings in both academic and art critical practices, class discussion and participation will culminate in a final individual research paper interrogating the implications of representational tactics and strategies of a single artist and/or artwork in contemporary art.

**Students' Responsibilities:** Preparation and attendance are required. **Required Readings** in the class schedule must be read before each week's first class. Active participation in discussions is required.

**Readings:** The reader for this course will be available on the CUHK Blackboard. Readings are usually under 50 pages per week (some are more than 100 pages with figures and pictures).

## Course Schedule and Bibliography

This is a guideline only. The official schedule will be online and subject to announced changes on Blackboard.

### UNIT 1

#### WEEK 1 Contemporary Art and Politics of Representation (January 9)

##### Key Themes

- Introduction to the course, assessment, schedule, and assignments
- Politics of Representation
- What is an act of seeing?
- Analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of contemporary art
- Visual Studies and Contemporary Art

##### Required Readings

- Mirzoeff, Nicholas. "Introduction: What Is Visual Culture?" In *An Introduction to Visual Culture*. Routledge, 1999, 1-33.

##### Recommended Reading

- Staniszewski, Mary Anne. "What Is Art?" In *Believing Is Seeing: Creating the Culture of Art*. Penguin Books, 1995, pp. 1-101.

## WEEK 2 Contemporaneity in Contemporary Art (January 16)

### Key Themes

- What is the meaning of contemporary in contemporary art?
- What is the superstructure of art that allows its production and distribution?
- What is Asian Art's role and history within it?
- How can an artist navigate this structure of space such as ruin, and urbanity?

### Required Readings

- Wu, Hung. "Mapping Contemporaneity in Asia-Pacific Art." In *APT 2002: Asia-Pacific Triennale of Contemporary Art*. Queensland Art Gallery, 2002, pp. 18-27.

### Recommended Reading

- Bishop, Claire. "Museums of Contemporary Art" and "Theorizing the Contemporary." In *Radical Museology*. Köln, 2014, pp. 9-28.

## WEEK 3 Body and Self (January 23)



© Marina Abramović. *Cleaning the Mirror #2*, video, 1995.  
Courtesy of Sean Kelly Gallery, New York.

### Key Themes

- Body as form and content
- Body as a social medium
- Personal lives and artistic practice
- Embodying abstraction within the body and self
- Cultural Representations and the Spectacle of "Others"

### Required Readings

- Kalb, Peter R. "Culture, Body, Self." In *Art since 1980: Charting the Contemporary*. Pearson, 2014, pp. 169-91.
- Hall, Stuart. "The Work of Representation." *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall, Sage, 1997, pp. 15-64.

### Further Readings

- Piper, Adrian. "In Support of Meta Art." *Artforum*, Oct. 1973, pp. 79-81.
- Said, Edward W. "The Art of Displacement: Mona Hatoum's Logic of Irreconcilables." In *Mona Hatoum: The Entire World as a Foreign Land*. Tate, 2000, pp. 8-18.

### Artists

- Marina Abramović, Ming Wong, Tracy Emin, Sophie Calle, Kiki Smith, Mona Hatoum, Nikki Lee.

## WEEK 4 Lunar New Year Public Holiday (January 30)

No Class during the Lunar New Year Holiday (January 28~February 3)

## WEEK 5 Post-Human Imagination:

### Cyborg, Prosthetic Body, and Extended Experience (February 6)



© Stelarc. Portrait of the Artist. Courtesy of i.ytimg.com

#### Key Themes

- Post-human bodies, extended memory, and virtual identity
- Transgender, Transhuman, and Beyond
- Obsolescence of the Corporeal Body in Contemporary Art

#### Required Readings

- Hayles, Nancy Katherine. "The Life Cycle of Cyborgs: Wring the Posthuman." *Cybersexualities: A Reader on Feminist Theory, Cyborgs and Cyberspace*, edited by Jenny Wolmark, Edinburgh University Press, 1999, pp. 157-73.
- Stelarc. "Prosthetics, Robotics and Remote Existence: Postevolutionary Strategies." *Leonardo*, vol 24, no. 5, 1991, pp.591–95.
- Lee, Bul. "Beauty and Trauma" translated by Andrew Han. *Art Journal*, vol.59, no.3, 2000, pp. 105-07.

#### Further Readings

- Haraway, Donna J. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." In *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. Free Association Books, 1991, pp. 149-51.
- Goodall, Jane. "The Will to Evolve." In *STELARC – The Monograph*. MIT Press, 2005, pp. 1-31.
- Zurr, Ionat and Oron Catts. "Are the Semi-Living Semi-Good or Semi-evil?" In *Engineering Nature – Art & Consciousness in the Post-Biological Era*. Intellect Books, 2006, pp. 77-89.
- Wilson, Stephen. "Corpus." *Sensorium – Embodied Experience, Technology and Contemporary Art*, edited by Caroline A. Jones, MIT Press, 2006, pp. 128-32.

#### Artists

- Stelarc, Kim Keever, Yuri Suzuki, Eduardo Kac, Patricia Piccinini, Lee Bul, Geumhyung Jeong.

## WEEK 6 Cuteness and Pop Culture (February 13)



© Liu Yin, *Spring*, 2022 / Courtesy of Kiang Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong.

### Key Themes

- Historical development of cuteness in contemporary art
- Cultural formation of gendered identity through cuteness
- Aesthetics of cuteness in consumption in the era of affective capitalism

### Required Readings

- Ngai, Sianne. “Chapter 1: The Cuteness of the Avant-Garde.” In *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting*. Harvard University Press, 2015, pp. 2-53.
- Ivy, Marilyn. “The Art of Cute Little Things: Nara Yoshitomo’s Parapolitics.” *Mechademia*, vol. 5, 2010, pp. 3-29.

### Further Readings

- Azuma, Hiroki. “Chapter 3: Hyper flatness and Multiple Personality.” In *Otaku: Japan’s Database Animals*, translated by Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kono, University of Minnesota Press, 2009, pp. 96-166.

### Artists

- Murakami Takashi, Nara Yoshitomo, Jeff Koons, Liu Yin, Kaws, Diana Yesenia Alvarado.

## WEEK 7 Contemporary Artist as an Object of Art (February 20)



© Seth Price. *Danlvin*, 2022. Courtesy of ArtForum

### Key Themes

- What is the meaning of creativity in today’s digital regime?
- What’s the meaning of Contemporary Art to Artists
- How does contemporary art reflect the modern world?
- Hybrid of fiction, visual art scene, memoirs in contemporary art

### Required Reading and Film

- Price, Seth. *Fuck Seth Price*. Leopard, 2015.
- The Andy Warhol Diaries, 2022 (Netflix, dir. Andrew Rossi).

### WEEK 8 Documentary as Contemporary Art (February 27)



© *Sans Soleil*, 1983. Courtesy of Chris Marker.

#### Key Themes

- Representation of Asian visual culture.
- Meditation on the nature of human memory and inability to recall the context and nuance of memory.
- Perception of personal and global history in contemporary art.

### In-Class Film Screening

- *Sans Soleil*, 1983, directed by Chris Marker (100 minutes).

### Required Readings

- Mavor, Carol. "Happiness with a long piece of black leader: Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil*." *Art History*, vol. 30, no. 5, 2007, pp. 738-56.
- Chan, Paul. "The Cat and the Owl: Remembering Chris Marker." *October*, no. 149, 2014, pp. 181-91.

### Further Readings

- Lupton, Catherine, et al. "The owl's legacy: in memory of Chris Marker." *Sight and Sound*, vol. 22, no. 10, 2012, pp. 40-46. <https://www2.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/features/owls-legacy-memory-chris-marker>.

### Artist

- Chris Marker.

## UNIT 2

### WEEK 9 Reading Week (March 6)

No Class during Reading Week (March 3~8)

## WEEK 10 Memory and Trauma: Representation of War and Holocaust (March 13)



© Attia Kader. *Untitled*, 2019, in *Memory of Forgetfulness* exhibition. Courtesy of Attia Kader.

### Key Themes

- Politics of historiography, memory, and commemoration in contemporary art
- Cultural representation of Trauma in Contemporary Art

### Required Readings

- Kalb, Peter R. "Memory and History." In *Art since 1980: Charting the Contemporary*. Pearson, 2014, pp. 160-166.

### Further Readings

- Lee, Yongwoo. "Re-remembering Absence: Memory, Trauma and Spectral Imagination in Jane Jin Kaisen's Artworks." In *Community of Parting*. Archive Books, 2020, pp.336-51.

### Artists

- Chen Chieh-Jen, Kader Attia, Yoshiko Shimada, Jane Jin Kaisen, Park Chan-Kyong.

## WEEK 11 Queer Art (March 20)



© Felix Gonzalez-Torres. *Untitled* (Para Un Hombre En Uniforme), installation, 1991. /Courtesy Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation/Hessel Museum of Art

### Key Themes

- Representations of Queer identity
- Visibility/Invisibility
- Politics of Body, Gender, and LGBTQ+ Sexuality in Queer art
- Film Screening (in class): Mapplethorpe: *Look at the picture (excerpt)*, 2016.

### Required Readings

- Meyer, Richard. "Mapplethorpe: Art, Photography, and the Pornographic Imagination." *Robert Mapplethorpe: The Pictures*, edited by Paul Martineau and Britt Salvesen, J. Paul Getty Museum, 2016, pp. 231-43.
- Butler, Judith. "Imitation and Gender Insubordination." *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, edited by Diana Fuss, Routledge, 1991, pp. 307-20.

### Further Readings

- Butler, Judith. "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire." In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990, pp. 6-34.
- Lola, Lenzi. "Looking Out: How Queer Translates in Southeast Asian Contemporary Art." *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, no. 38, online publication, 2015.
- Spector, Nancy. *Felix Gonzalez-Torres*. Guggenheim Museum, 1995, pp. 147-50.

### Artists

- Robert Mapplethorpe, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Sin Wai Kin, Tracy Emin, Wolfgang Tillmans, siren eun young jung.

## WEEK 12 Beyond Regional Modernity: **Field Trip** (March 27)

# Art | Basel Hong Kong

Art Basel Hong Kong Week: 28-30 March 2025

### Required Reading

- Enwezor, Okwui. "Modernity and Postcolonial Ambivalence." *South Atlantic Quarterly Summer*, vol. 109, no. 03, 2010, pp. 595-620.

### Further Readings

- Lamarre, Thomas. "Introduction: The Impact of Modernities." *Traces: A Multilingual Journal of Cultural Theory and Translation*, edited by Thomas Lamarre and Kang Nae-Hui, Hong Kong University Press, 2004, pp. 1-38.
- Gaonkar, Dilip Parameshwar. "On Alternative Modernities." *Public Culture*, vol. 11, no.1, 1999, pp. 1-18.
- Sakai, Naoki. "Dislocation of the West and the Status of the Humanities." *Specters of the West and the Politics of Translation*, edited by Naoki Sakai and Yukiko Hanawa, Cornell University Press, 2001, pp. 71-91.



## WEEK 13: Animal and Non-Human (April 3)



© Joan Jonas, *Reading Dante*. Cell Block Theatre, Sydney, 2008.  
Image courtesy of the artist.

### Key Themes

- Contemporary Art across species and beyond the human beings
- Animality as a metaphor
- Dynamics of dominance, oppression, and exclusion in human society

### Required Readings

- Haraway, Donna J. "The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People and Significant Otherness." In *Manifestly Haraway*. University of Minnesota Press, 2016, pp. 4-91.
- Martinez, Chus. "The Octopus in Love." *e-flux journal*, no. 55, 2014, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/55/60304/the-octopus-in-love/>.
- Lee, Yongwoo. "The Return of the Have-Lived Things: The Non-Human, the Animal and the Ever-present Memory in Postcolonial Korea." In *Superhumanity*. University of Minnesota Press, 2018. pp. 419-26.

### Further Readings

- Lee, Yongwoo. "Fables and Gazes: Allegories, Gazes as Non-Human, and Transversal Poiesis in CHO Eunji's Artwork." In *Gyeonggi Artists Highlights 2021: Vast and Slow exhibition*. Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art, 2022, pp.228-55.

### Artists

- Joan Jonas, Pierre Huyghe, Haegue Yang, Francis Alÿs, Jimmie Durham, Marcel Dzama, Cho Eun Ji, Cai Guo-Qiang.

### Guest Speaker

- TBA

## WEEK 14 Student Presentation, Final Discussion & Review (April 10)

### Colloquium

- student presentations of their individual term paper topic.
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## Evaluation and Assignments

### Overview

- (1) Attendance, Participation, and Discussion Facilitation (30%)
- (2) Contemporary Art Notes (15%)
- (3) Mid-term paper: Response Paper for Unit 1 (15%)
- (4) Final: Individual Presentation (10%) + Final Synthesis Paper (30%)

### (1) Attendance, Participation, and Discussion Facilitation (30%)

- **Attendance:** Class attendance is extremely important. Students who are absent for 3 times without prior permission may fail the course, regardless of their in-class performance. If students must be absent on a **Discussion Facilitation Day**, please trade with others in advance and notify the instructor via email as soon as possible
- **Participation:** I expect everyone to participate regularly in class discussions. Students should attend every class ready to discuss the readings. Good faith in discussion, attention to the readings, and relevance to the course are encouraged.
- **Discussion Facilitation:** Each week, at least three students will help facilitate discussion in three different roles: Facilitator, Inquisitor, and Finder of the Objects. Students are required to write up a 2 to 3-page note for their roles and it should be handed to the instructor or the TA before the week starts. All students need to perform each role at least once and might be more than once subject to the course enrollment. As **the Facilitator** of the week, students should pay more attention to the weekly readings and summarize the key points in the 2 to 3-page notes. Students should be prepared to discuss the readings in depth. **The Inquisitor** should bring in discussion questions related to the weekly topics and lead the discussion. **The Finder of Objects** needs to bring in an object for us to discuss in relation to the weekly readings. The object can be an image, a sound recording, a photograph, a device, or anything else you think fit to bring in.

### (2) Contemporary Art Notes (15%)

- Students will write notes on self-selected audio-visual materials and make short comments on others' notes. The notes are a personal archive for preserving your memory of various art forms. They will be checked up by the instructor during the mid-term and before the final presentation.

### (3) Midterm Response Paper and Final Synthesis Paper Assignments (55%)

- **Mid-Term Response Paper (15%):** Students are required to write a mid-term response paper write around 1000 words (excluding reference and endnote, MLA format) regarding any topic from Unit 1 in relation to the student-chosen contemporary artwork. In this paper, students need to critically summarize **Unit 1** for one page in relation to one's own artwork and then select a topic to argue with as a journal article style/short research paper.
- **Final Presentation (10%):** This presentation will be based on students' individual **Final Synthesis Paper** topics structured within the discussion of the whole course. It will be conducted on the last day of the class. Students should prepare possible discussions and responses for the students and the instructor. Based on the collected comments, students can revise their paper before final submission. The length of the presentations will depend on final enrollment and will be strictly enforced.
- **Final Synthesis Paper (30%):** Students are required to write an individual paper of around 2500-3000 words (excluding reference and endnote, MLA format) on contemporary artworks in relation to the topics of this class. Students can choose their own artifacts of analysis from a wide range of forms such as paintings, sculptures, films, architecture, prints, photography, etc., but the choice must be approved by the instructor before writing. This paper should involve significant research on your part as well as a close analysis of your chosen contemporary artwork.

## Policies, Expectations, and Rules

**Attendance and Performance:** This course is designed for motivated students who attend all lectures. If you are absent more than three times without prior notification, regardless of your class performance and the quality of your paper, your grade will be marked failed. If you are absent for sickness, you must provide a doctor's note in the next class. Preparation and attendance are required: "Required Readings" in the class schedule must be read before each class. Active participation in discussions is required.

**Late Arrivals and Early Departures:** Entering and leaving the classroom randomly during lectures is distracting. Students should inform the instructor before the class if early leave is needed. Repeat offenders who are late to class and leave early without notifying the instructor will find their semester grades reduced.

**The classroom:** Students are encouraged to raise their hands during the class to ask questions, add comments, or ask for further clarification to clear the confusion. Cell phones and other appliances that make unnecessary noises are not welcome in the class.

**Assignments and Extensions:** Assignments will be announced well in advance of due dates. If

students know in advance that they cannot make the due date for an assignment, please discuss the issue with the instructor beforehand. Late assignments without permission are not accepted or are subject to a significant grade penalty.

**Language:** The language of instruction at the Chinese University of Hong Kong is English.

**Accommodations:** If students require special testing accommodations or other class modifications, please notify both the instructor and the Support Center for Students with Disabilities (SCSD) by the end of the first week in which you are enrolled in the course.

<https://www2.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/disability/en-GB/>

**Nondiscrimination Statement:** The instructor values equality of opportunity and human dignity and diversity. In accordance with the Chinese University of Hong Kong policy, I will not tolerate discrimination or harassment based on race, color, ethnic or national origin, civil status, religion, creed, political convictions, language, sex, sexual orientation, age, disabilities, or the use of any means to palliate disability. If there is something we can do to make the class more hospitable, please let me know.

**Cheating and Plagiarism:** The Chinese University of Hong Kong values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism, and other academic offenses under the code of student conduct and disciplinary procedures. Please see the last page of the syllabus for the specifics.

**Communications Policy:** Questions and comments in class are encouraged. To ensure the quality of communication, in-person discussions during office hours by appointment or after class is preferred. I will try to answer emails promptly but please do not expect immediate responses. Please do not spam me or the TA with flooding emails. Last-minute emails requesting urgent issues such as an extension will be ignored.

## Assessment Expectations

**Grade A ~ A-:** The student makes excellent use of empirical and theoretical material and offers well-structured arguments in his/her work. The student writes comprehensive essays /answers to exam questions and his/her work shows strong evidence of critical thought and extensive reading.

**Grade B+ ~ B:** The candidate shows a good understanding of the problem and has demonstrated the ability to formulate and execute a coherent research strategy.

**Grade B- ~ C:** The work is acceptable and shows a basic grasp of the research problem. However, the work fails to organize findings coherently and needs improvement.

**Grade D:** The work passes because some relevant points are made. However, there may be a problem of poor definition, lack of critical awareness, and poor research.

**Grade F:** The work shows that the research problem is not understood; there is little or no critical awareness, and the research is clearly negligible.

## Honesty in Academic Work: A Guide for Students

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on honesty in academic work submitted by students and adopts a policy of zero tolerance for cheating and plagiarism. Any related offence will lead to disciplinary action including termination of studies at the University. Although cases of cheating or plagiarism are rare at the University, everyone should make himself/herself familiar with the content of this website and thereby help avoid any practice that would not be acceptable.

Section 1 What is plagiarism?

[https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng\\_hmk\\_files\\_\(2013-14\)/p01.htm](https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_hmk_files_(2013-14)/p01.htm)

Section 2 Proper use of source material

[https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng\\_hmk\\_files\\_\(2013-14\)/p02.htm](https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_hmk_files_(2013-14)/p02.htm)

Section 3 Citation styles

[https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng\\_hmk\\_files\\_\(2013-14\)/p03.htm](https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_hmk_files_(2013-14)/p03.htm)

Section 4 Plagiarism and copyright violation

[https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng\\_hmk\\_files\\_\(2013-14\)/p04.htm](https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_hmk_files_(2013-14)/p04.htm)

Section 5 CUHK regulations on honesty in academic work

[https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng\\_hmk\\_files\\_\(2013-14\)/p05.htm](https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_hmk_files_(2013-14)/p05.htm)

Section 6 CUHK disciplinary guidelines and procedures

[https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng\\_hmk\\_files\\_\(2013-14\)/p06.htm](https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_hmk_files_(2013-14)/p06.htm)

Section 7 Guide for teachers and departments in handling of academic dishonesty

[https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng\\_hmk\\_files\\_\(2013-14\)/p07.htm](https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_hmk_files_(2013-14)/p07.htm)

Section 8 Recommended material to be included in course outlines

[https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng\\_hmk\\_files\\_\(2013-14\)/p08.htm](https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_hmk_files_(2013-14)/p08.htm)

Section 9 Electronic submission of assignments via VeriGuide

[https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng\\_hmk\\_files\\_\(2013-14\)/p09.htm](https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_hmk_files_(2013-14)/p09.htm)

Section 10 Declaration to be included in assignments

[https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng\\_hmk\\_files\\_\(2013-14\)/p10.htm](https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_hmk_files_(2013-14)/p10.htm)

**Use of AI Tools in Teaching, Learning and Assessment: Guide for students**

[https://www.aqs.cuhk.edu.hk/documents/A-guide-for-students\\_use-of-AI-tools.pdf](https://www.aqs.cuhk.edu.hk/documents/A-guide-for-students_use-of-AI-tools.pdf)

This course is Approach 1 (by default), thus, prohibit all use of AI tools (excluding Grammer check)