

AMERICAN ART: 1750-1950 (ARTH 289)
FALL 2004
MONDAYS 5:30-8:30pm

Professor Rebecca Butterfield
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Office Hours: TBA

Course Description:

This course examines major themes and issues in two centuries of American painting, sculpture, and, to a lesser extent, works on paper. Among the topics to be considered is: the development and promotion of various genres (such as history painting, portraiture, landscape, still life, and figure painting); the interrelation of American art and European traditions; the relationship between art and identity; the links between the production and reception of art works; and the achievements of such well-known artists as Benjamin West, Thomas Eakins, Winslow Homer, Cecilia Beaux, Henry Ossawa Tanner, and Georgia O'Keeffe. We will pay particular attention to the importance that American artists, critics and viewers have placed on national identity. We will approach this material through assessments of style and form, historical context, and iconography, all of which will be amplified by assigned readings.

Classes will combine lecture and discussion, for which students will prepare with careful critical reading. There will be one or two museum visits. Written assignments consist of two short response papers, one longer paper, a midterm exam, and a final exam. Students will be evaluated on class contributions as well as on their written work, with discussion weighted equally with the papers and exams.

Texts:

The following books are available for purchase at the Penn Book Center, 130 S. 34th Street:

Frances K. Pohl, *Framing America: A Social History of American Art*, Thames & Hudson, 2002.
M. Doezema & Elizabeth Milroy, *Reading American Art*, Yale University Press, 1998.

Both of these books are on reserve (**FAR**), along with many others, at the Fisher Fine Arts Library in the Furness Building. Additional required readings will be available on the Blackboard site for this course. Please make sure you have access to blackboard and that your email address is listed there.

Requirements:

Response Papers (20%) These two papers are designed to help you think critically and creatively about the reading assignments. They will serve as the basis for in-class discussions as well as prepare you for the exams. Some questions to consider in your writing (and in all your readings for this course) include: What are the author's main points? How does s/he support these points? What kind of sources does the author use (published or unpublished writings contemporary with the making of the art, such as

correspondence or records of the artist, critical reviews in periodicals or newspapers, diaries or correspondence of those who saw the work; other visual images; recent art-historical or cultural-historical scholarship about the era of the artist)? What are the author's underlying assumptions about art history? What alternative analyses would you suggest? How would you develop these ideas? How does the piece compare to others you have read for the course? To what extent does the author's essay illuminate the meanings of the art under discussion?

Object Paper (20%) A three to five page paper (typed or printed, one-inch margins on all sides, double-spaced, 10 or 12 point font) on one work of art in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Obviously, this work should be one produced by an American artist between 1750 and 1950! More information will be available later in the term.

Exams (20% each). The midterm and final will be essay exams.

Attendance and Participation (20%) Attendance is required and participation in class discussions is expected.

NOTE: ALL requirements must be completed in order to receive a passing grade for the course. Requirements will be slightly different for graduate students. Come to class prepared to discuss the readings listed for that week.

Course Schedule:

Sept. 3 *Introduction & Colonial Portraiture*

Readings: Pohl: A Protestant Presence in America, 54-56; Art & Architecture of the British & Dutch Colonies, 58-66; Itinerant Portrait Painters, 123-128.

Reading American Art: Craven, "The 17th Century New England Mercantile Image: Social Content and Style in the Freake Portraits," Staiti, "Character and Class: The Portraits of John Singleton Copley"

Recommended: Lovell, "Reading 18th-Century American Family Portraits," **BB**

Sept. 20 *The Grand Manner Tradition & History Painting*

Reading: Pohl: Foreign Wars & Domestic Unrest, 69-72; John Trumbull's Canvases of War, 78-82, Presidential Poses, 83-92; Schooling the Nation's Artists, 112-116.

Reading American Art: Stein, "Charles Willson Peale's Expressive Design: *The Artist in His Museum*"

Recommended: Abrams, "Benjamin West's Documentation of Colonial History: Penn's Treaty with the Indians," **BB**

Sept. 27 *Landscape*

Reading: Pohl: God, Nature & the Rise of Landscape Painting, 134-152; Nature Transformed, 163-166.

Reading American Art: Wallach, "Thomas Cole and the Aristocracy."

Kinsey, "History in Natural Sequence: The Civil War Polyptych of Frederic Edwin Church," **BB**

Recommended: Kenneth Myers, *The Catskills*, pp. 17-20, 65-87 **FAR**

Oct. 4 ***The Frontier Experience***

Reading: Pohl: From Indian Queen to Greek Goddess, 106-108; Narratives of Captivity, 108-109; Portraits & Treaties, 109-112; Native Americans as Nature and others, 152-162; Encyclopedia of Experience, 226-238
Reading American Art: Hight, “‘Doomed to Perish’: George Catlin’s Depictions of the Mandan;” Anderson, “‘The Kiss of Enterprise’: The Western Landscape as Symbol and Resource,”

Recommended: Brooklyn Museum, *Buffalo Bill and the Wild West* **FAR**;
 Truettner et al, *West As America* **FAR**

Oct. 11 ***Genre Painting/ Mid-Century Sculpture***

Reading: Pohl: Human Actors in the Landscape, 166-174, Monuments to Freedom, 217-224; The Female Body & the Rights of Women, 258-260; Domestic culture & Cultural Production, 260-263; Helpful Women, 263-267
Reading American Art: Kasson, “Narratives of the Female Body: *The Greek Slave*;” Buick, “The Ideal Works of Edmonia Lewis”

Oct. 18 **Mid-Term Exam !!!**

Short, detailed essays on individual works of art and related readings

Oct. 25 **Fall Break – No Class!!!**

Nov. 1 ***Winslow Homer, Thomas Eakins, Mary Cassatt***

Reading: Pohl: Chapter 4, 197-216; Chapter 5, 240-258, 288-300.
Reading American Art: Johns, “The Gross Clinic;” Prown, “Winslow Homer in His Art”; Pollock, “Mary Cassatt: Painter of Women and Children.”
Recommended: Burns, “Revitalizing the ‘Painted-Out’ North: Winslow Homer, Manly Health, and New England Regionalism in Turn-of-the-Century America” **BB**; Johns, *Thomas Eakins: The Heroism of Modern Life*, ch. 1 **FAR**; Sharp, “How Mary Cassatt Became an American Artist” in *Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman* **FAR**

Nov. 8 ***Late 19th Century Painting***

Reading: Pohl: Feminine Ideal & the Rise of Aestheticism, 269-280; Trompe l’Oeil, 280-282
 Burns, “The Earnest, Untiring Worker and the Magician of the Brush,” **BB**
 Cikovsky, “Chase’s 10th Street Studio,” **BB**
 Burns, “From Old Maverick to Old Master,” **BB**

Nov. 15 ***Early Modernism: The 8, the Stieglitz Group and the Armory Show***

Reading: Pohl: Chapter 6, 302-327
Reading American Art: Trachtenberg, “Images and Ideology: New York in the Photographer’s Eye”; Hills, “John Sloan’s Images of Working-Class Women”

Nov. 22 ***Identity Politics in Early 20th Century Art***

- Reading:** Pohl: Modernism, Gender, and Sexuality, 327-337; Escape to Mexico, 337-350; Harlem Renaissance, 350-362.
Reading American Art: Chave, “O’Keeffe and the Masculine Gaze,”
 Haywood, “George Bellow’s *Stag at Sharkey’s*: Boxing, Violence, and Male Identity,” **BB**
- Nov. 29 ***Geometric Abstraction & Urban Realism***
 Pohl: Art for the People, 364-404.
Reading American Art: Troyen, “The Open Window and the Empty Chair: Charles Sheeler’s View of New York;” Todd, “The Question of Difference: Isabel Bishop’s Deferential Office Girls.”
 Zabel, “Stuart Davis’s Appropriation of Advertising: The *Tobacco Series*” **BB**
- Dec. 6 ***Regionalism and Early Abstract Expressionism***
 Pohl: Alternative Visions: Rural America, 404-439
Reading American Art: Corn, “The Birth of a National Icon: Grant Wood’s *American Gothic*”