

AMERICAN ART 1865-1970 (ARTH 296)
SPRING 2009
TUESDAYS/THURSDAYS 9-10:30AM

SYLLABUS

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Office Hours: 11a-12:30pm
Slide Library, basement of Fisher Fine Arts Library

The syllabus, like life, is subject to change.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will survey the most important and interesting art produced in the United States (or by American artists living abroad) between 1865 and 1970. This period encompasses the history of modern art in the U.S., from its first appearances to its rise to prominence and institutionalization and then its rejection or revision by “postmodernism.” While tracking this history, the course will examine this modern art's relation to historical processes of modernization (industrialization, the development of transportation and communications, the spread of corporate organization in business, urbanization, technological development, the rise of mass media and mass markets, etc.) and to the economic polarization, social fragmentation, political conflict, and myriad cultural changes these developments entailed. In these circumstances, art is drawn simultaneously toward truth and fraud, realism and artifice, science and spirituality, commodification and ephemerality, nationalism and cosmopolitanism, individualism and collectivity, the past and the future, professionalization and popularity, celebrating modern life and criticizing it.

TEXTS:

There is no text book for this course. All readings are posted to the Blackboard site, either in Course Documents or External Links.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Each of the requirements below will constitute 20% of a student's grade. EACH REQUIREMENT MUST BE FULFILLED IN ORDER TO PASS THE COURSE. FAILURE TO COMPLETE ANY REQUIRED WORK WILL RESULT IN A FAILING GRADE.

1. **Textual Analysis Paper.** Each student will write one paper on one of the assigned readings for the course (1 to 2 pages, double-spaced, one inch margins on all sides); students will choose their reading on the first day of class. This paper is designed to help you think critically and creatively about the reading assignments. The papers will serve as the basis for in-class discussions. In addition to presenting me with a paper copy, your essay must be posted to the Discussion Board section of Blackboard. Each student is required to read each posting and to

respond, on blackboard, to at least 2 of their peers' papers over the course of the semester. Please read the complete Textual Analysis paper instructions in the Course Assignments section of blackboard.

2. **Image Analysis Paper.** Each student will choose one object in the Philadelphia Museum of Art or the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts as the topic of a research paper, three to five pages (printed, one-inch margins on all sides, double-spaced, 10 or 12 point font). Obviously, this object should be one produced by an American artist between 1865 and 1970. In addition to the paper copy given to me, students will post their papers on blackboard. Each student is required to read and respond, on blackboard, to at least ONE of their peers' Image Analysis Papers before the last class. Please read the complete instructions in the Course Assignments section of blackboard.

3. **Class Attendance and Participation.** Class attendance is required. Participation in class discussions constitutes 20% of the course grade. Depending on the availability of relevant exhibitions in local galleries or museums, we may have one or more field trips. Each would probably take place on a Saturday or Sunday and would be a one hour session although we may go during the regularly scheduled class time.

4. **Midterm Exam.** One hour exam on Tuesday, 24 February. This will be an essay exam. I will show 3 or 4 sets of two slides for which I will provide the identifications. For each comparison, you will be asked to write a well-organized essay explaining the significant similarities and differences. Your essay will explain the cultural and aesthetic significance of this comparison and support your argument through the visual qualities of the objects and reference to specific assigned class readings.

5. **Final Exam.** Two hours. This will be an essay exam like the midterm, but with more questions. In addition, I may show an object we have not seen in class and ask you to use your newly acquired visual analysis skills to place this image within a particular aesthetic, cultural and/or historical context. Again, your essays should always be well-organized and refer, when applicable, to specific course readings.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

1/15 **Introduction**

1/20 **Pictures of the Civil War**

Trachtenberg, "Albums of War" **BB**

Browse the Library of Congress website of Civil War photographs found in External

Links on Blackboard: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/cwphome.html>

1/22 **Western Landscapes of Exploration**

Rosalind Krauss, "Photography's Discursive Spaces" **BB**
Janet Buerger, "Ultima Thule" **BB**
Photographs of 19th Century West from Library of Congress:
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award98/ienhtml/curthome.html>

1/27 Thomas Eakins & Henry Ossawa Tanner

Michael Leja, "Eakins's Reality Effects" **BB**
Wilson, "Lifting the Veil: Henry O. Tanner's The Banjo Lesson and The Thankful Poor" **BB**
Tanner paintings online:
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/ahas/icon/tanner.html>

1/29 Winslow Homer

Sarah Burns, "Revitalizing the 'Painted-Out' North" **BB**
Jules Prown, "Winslow Homer in His Art" **BB**
Winslow Homer online exhibition:
<http://www.nga.gov/feature/homer/homersplash.htm>

2/3 Mary Cassatt

Griselda Pollock, "Mary Cassatt: Painter of Women and Children" **BB**
Mary Cassatt online exhibition:
<http://www.nga.gov/collection/gallery/ggcassattptg/ggcassattptg-main1.html>

2/5 James McNeill Whistler

Sarah Burns, "Old Maverick to Old Master" **BB**
Whistler, "Ten O'Clock Lecture" **BB External Links**:
<http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/html/tenocloc.htm>

David Park Curry, "Total Control: Whistler at an Exhibition" **BB**
Whistler vs. Ruskin, **BB External Links**: <http://blogs.princeton.edu/wri152-3/rpower/archives/001951/html>

Peacock Room website **BB External Links**:
<http://www.asia.si.edu/exhibitions/current/peacock.htm#>

2/10 Aestheticism & Late 19th Century Painting

Nicholas Cikovsky, Jr., "Chase's Tenth Street Studio" **BB**
Ethan Robey, "John Sartain and the Contest of Taste at the Centennial" **BB**
Browse Free Library Centennial website:
<http://libwww.library.phila.gov/cencol/>

2/12 Mass Market Fads & Fantasies: Trompe l'oeil, cartes-de-visites, spirit photographs & Buffalo Bill

Paul Staiti, "Illusionism, Trompe l'oeil & the Perils of Viewership" **BB**

Elizabeth Siegel, "Trading Faces" **BB**

Browse Museum of Photography website featuring Mumler photographs:

<http://photographymuseum.com/mumler.html>

2/17 Late 19th Century Sculpture

Michele H. Bogart, excerpts from Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City, 1890-1930 **BB**

2/19 Documentary Photography in the Late 19th Century

Lewis Hine, "Social Photography" **BB**

Jacob Riis, Introduction and "The Italians" from How the Other Half Lives **BB External**

Links: <http://www.cis.yale.edu/amstud/inforev/riis/contents.html>

Edward Curtis photographs:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award98/ienhtml/curthome.html>

Hine Child Labor Photographs:

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/nclquery.html>

2/24 MIDTERM EXAM

2/26 The Ashcan Artists

Robert Snyder & Rebecca Zurier, "Picturing the City" from Metropolitan Lives **BB**

3/3 Alfred Stiegliz & Photography

Reading TBA

3/5 New York Dada, Modernism & the Armory Show

William Camfield, Marcel Duchamp: Fountain (excerpts) **BB**

Tour of Armory Show:

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~museum/armory/entrance.html>

3/10 Spring Break

3/12 Spring Break

3/17 Georgia O'Keeffe

Barbara Buhler Lynes, O’Keeffe, Stieglitz and the Critics, 1916-1929 **BB**

3/19 The Harlem Renaissance: Modernism and Racial Identity

Alain Locke, The New Negro, 1925 (excerpts) **BB**

Patricia Hills, “Jacob Lawrence as Pictorial Griot” **BB**

Harlem Renaissance exhibition online:

<http://www.si.umich.edu/chico/harlem/>

3/24 Geometric Abstraction & Urban Realism: Davis, Sheeler, Bishop, Marsh, Hopper

Zabel, “Stuart Davis’s Appropriation of Advertising: The *Tobacco* Series” **BB**

3/26 Social Vision: Artists, Photographers and the New Deal

Lawrence W. Levine, “The Historian and the Icon,” from Documenting America, 1935-1943 **BB**

FSA Photographs Library of Congress:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/fsahtml/fahome.html>

3/31 From Regionalism to Abstraction

Wanda Corn, “The Birth of a National Icon” **BB**

Grant Wood online:

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma98/haven/wood/home.html>

4/2 The Magical & the Surreal: Cornell, Wyeth, Gorky

Reading TBA

4/7 Abstract Expressionism

Harold Rosenberg, “American Action Painting” **BB**

Clement Greenberg, “American-Type Painting,” **BB**

Serge Guilbaut, “The New Adventures of the Avant-Garde in America” **BB**

Jackson Pollock paintings online:

http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/pollock_jackson.html

4/9 Neo-Dada & Happenings

Leo Steinberg, “The Flatbed Picture Plane” **BB**

Moira Roth, “An Aesthetic of Indifference” **BB**

4/14 Pop Art

Gene Swenson, “What Is Pop Art?” (interviews with artists) **BB**

Thomas Crow, "Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol" **BB**

4/16 Minimalism

Anna Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power" **BB**

Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood" **BB**

Donald Judd, "Specific Objects" **BB**

Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture" **BB**

4/21 Think/Do: Conceptual & Activist Art

Sol Lewitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" **BB**

Lucy Lippard, "Dreams, Demands, and Desires" **BB**

4/23 Earth Art

Robert Smithson, "The Monuments of Passaic" **BB**

4/28 Conclusions