Early Twentieth-Century Art

MLART 5382N, Section 2690
Department of Fine Arts and Drama, University of St. Thomas
Fall 2015, Monday, 5:30-8:15 pm, Cullen 204

Professor:  Dr. Jessica Basciano
Office hours:  Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30-12:30,
Wednesday, 3:00-4:00, and by appointment
Office:  Art History Building, 1204 Colquitt Street,
Room 203
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Course Description
The late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century was a period of extreme change and two world wars, when many artists broke from tradition and made art that responded to modernity by depicting modern subjects and inventing new forms. This course examines European and North American art from around 1870 to World War II. Students investigate works of painting, photography, sculpture, design, and architecture by important artists and architects, who were often affiliated with avant-garde groups, for example, the Impressionists, Futurists, and Surrealists. Furthermore, students engage with art-historical debates surrounding narratives of modern art. Attention is paid to issues of: modernity, modernisms, and the avant-garde; the persistence of tradition and academies; the continuum from abstraction to naturalistic representation; the relationship of art and ideology; Western artists’ appropriation of “primitive” art and culture; and the concept of the autonomy of art from society.

Class meetings will consist of lectures illustrated by PowerPoint presentations, and discussions. These will be supplemented by three special events. First, a workshop on research skills led by Nicolas Castellanos, Public Services Librarian, held at Doherty Library during class on September 21. Second, Ashley Sheffield, an MLA candidate who is writing her thesis on Art Nouveau objects by Hector Guimard, will come to our class on September 28 to present her research to us. And third, we will go on a field trip to the Menil Collection’s Surrealism Galleries. The trip will be held outside of class time on Thursday, November 19 at 5:45 pm.

The goals of the course are:
1) to learn to recognize and identify well-known works of art produced in Europe and North America in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century;
2) to learn to describe and evaluate the formal characteristics of works of art using specialized vocabulary;
3) to learn to analyze and interpret works of art in their historical contexts;
4) to gain familiarity with research tools in art history;
5) and to develop skills of critical reading and oral and written communication, particularly the ability to write a research essay that advances an original argument.
Online Resources
The Blackboard website is an essential component of the course: [https://blackboard.stthom.edu/](https://blackboard.stthom.edu/)

I will use Blackboard to make accessible readings, PowerPoints, and other course documents. If you have any difficulty finding these resources on the site, please let me know right away. In addition, I will use your UST e-mail address to contact you outside of class time. Therefore, I ask that you check it regularly.

Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work required</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Percentage of final grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plagiarism Tutorial</td>
<td>September 14</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading and Field Trip Responses (4)</td>
<td>throughout the term</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>September 28</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>October 19</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Essay</td>
<td>November 16</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>December 14</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>throughout the term</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Course Requirements

Completion of UST’s Plagiarism Tutorial with a passing grade (70% or more) is a course requirement. Students must provide their certificate of completion for the course, dated this semester. Please use the following link to access the tutorial: [http://www.stthom.edu/libtraining/ustplagiarism/ustplagiarism.htm](http://www.stthom.edu/libtraining/ustplagiarism/ustplagiarism.htm)

The textbook for the course is:


It is available for purchase at the campus bookstore. The textbook provides a chronological narrative and illustrates many of the works we will study. Further readings, chosen to stimulate discussion, will be posted on Blackboard. Most are primary sources that offer direct insight into the production and reception of works of art; three are secondary sources that complement the textbook.

Reading and field trip responses (1-1 ½ pages) are due four times during the semester. Before a response is due, I will ask specific questions for you to answer. Three responses will be on readings, one will be on our field trip. Your response must be typed, double-spaced, and printed: I do not accept e-mailed work. Since the point of the responses is to prepare for class discussion, they must be done on time.
Note: Regardless of whether a reading response is assigned, students are expected to read all required readings by the due date and to come to class ready to discuss them. Please print out all readings apart from the textbook and bring them to class with you.

The research proposal (1 ½-2 pages) will present your preliminary research on your essay topic. It will consist of a statement in paragraph form defining your topic and outlining your argument, your methodological approach, the problems inherent to the topic, and the direction of your research, complemented by a bibliography of at least ten scholarly sources, at least five of which must be printed only—not on the web. Online sources must be scholarly too, such as e-books or articles in academic journals. Graduate students must provide an annotated bibliography. You are free to choose your own topic, but it must concern European or North American art of the period from 1870 to 1945. See the ideas for formulating your topic below. We will discuss topic ideas and the research and writing of essays in class. A good starting point is the Art History Resources at Doherty Library webpage: http://campusguides.stthom.edu/arthistory.

The final research essay (6-8 pages for undergraduates, 12-15 pages for graduates, not including bibliography and illustrations) will develop the ideas explored in your proposal. The essay must be complete with footnotes, a bibliography, and illustrations, and must conform to a style guide such as the Chicago Manual of Style. Scans of images must be included as illustrations at the end of the text, with figure references in the text. All illustrations must be numbered and identified with captions.

The midterm exam will consist of slide identifications with short-answer questions, a vocabulary section, and comparative essays.

The final exam will be composed of slide identifications with short-answer questions, comparative essays, and a comprehensive essay. Questions for the comprehensive essay will be distributed beforehand.

The field trip to the Menil Collection’s Surrealism Galleries is scheduled on a Thursday evening because the museum is closed during our normal class time on Monday. It is required, because the examination of original art objects is fundamental to the teaching of art history. Students who are unable to participate must visit the museum on their own in order to complete the field trip response due the following class.

Research Essay Ideas

1. A case study of an artwork or monument that has attracted considerable attention in art history. Compare and contrast several interpretations. Which is the most convincing? Why?

2. A case study of a single artist. Compare and contrast several works. What are their similarities and differences, and how can they be assessed in relation to the artist’s biography, as well as cultural, social, political, and other factors?

3. An examination of an avant-garde group, for example, the Impressionists, Futurists, or Surrealists. Compare and contrast several works by artists in the group. What are their
similarities and differences, and how can they be assessed in relation to the artists’ stated aims and the writings of critics of the time?

4. A comparison of two artworks with similar subjects that were made in different places or times. What are the similarities and differences between the works, and what is the significance of these similarities and differences? Why do the works differ? The essay could deal with works that you examine in person, at the MFAH or Menil Collection, for example.

5. A comparison of two buildings with similar functions that were made in different places or times. What are the similarities and differences between the buildings, and what is the significance of these similarities and differences? Why do the buildings differ?

**Course Policies**

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend every class meeting. The only acceptable reasons for missing class are: religious observance, illness, family emergency, and co-curricular activities such as intercollegiate athletics. In the case of absence for religious reasons, please let me know in advance. In the case of a medical or family emergency, provide a note from a doctor or counselor. In the case of co-curricular activities, a coach or other leader must submit an excused absence form. Students who miss more than one class without permission will have their participation grade lowered by one point (out of ten) for each absence. Students who arrive late or leave early will likewise have their participation grade lowered.

**Participation:**
The success of the course depends on the active participation of all class members. Therefore, it is essential that students keep up with the readings and writing assignments and contribute to discussions.

**Food:** Please do not eat in class.

**Laptops and Cellphones:** Please turn off and put away your laptops and phones.

**Late Work:** Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the specified date. Responses will not be accepted late. If you fail to submit a response on time, your grade for the work will be zero. Essays submitted later on the day they are due will be considered one day late. A student will lose a grade step for each day an essay is late. (An example of a grade step is the difference between a B and a B-.) No work will be accepted after the last day of class.

**Academic Integrity:** The UST Student Handbook states that “every offense against academic honesty seriously undermines the teaching-learning process for which the University exists”. In keeping with this view, students are expected to be honest when taking their exams, to cite sources in their essays, and to submit their own work. Students may not submit work for one course that has already been used for another course. Cheating, plagiarizing, or any other form of academic dishonesty will lead either to a mark of zero for the work in question or to the grade of ‘F” for the course, and to a formal University procedure.
You must cite all sources used, whether printed or online. If you are unsure about what to cite or how to cite it, please see me during my office hours. You can also find links to citation style guides on the Doherty Library Research Guide webpage: [http://campusguides.stthom.edu/cat.php?cid=866](http://campusguides.stthom.edu/cat.php?cid=866).

Disability Services:  Students with a suspected or documented disability may be eligible to receive academic accommodations. Faculty must be notified that exam accommodations have been approved well before the exam. For more information, see the Disability Services FAQ on the UST website or contact the Coordinator, Tiffany Devereux. She may be reached by e-mail at deveret@stthom.edu or by phone at 713-525-2169 or 6953.

**Schedule of Classes and Assignments (Subject to Revision)**

1. **August 24.**  Introduction to Early Twentieth-Century Art. Modernism and the Avant-Garde, with a Focus on Manet. Explanation of Course Requirements and Goals

2. **August 31.**  Impressionism, Photography, and Japonisme
   **Readings**

*No class September 7:  LABOR DAY.*

3. **September 14.**  Post-Impressionism, Primitivism, and Symbolism
   **Reading Response 1 Due**
   **Plagiarism Tutorial Certificate of Completion Due**
   **Readings**
   Foster et al.  1900b, 1903

4. **September 21.**  Library Workshop:  Meet at Doherty Library, room 008.  Art Nouveau and Secession in Vienna
   **Readings**
   Foster et al.  1900a
   Art History Research Guide:  [http://libguides.stthom.edu/arthistory](http://libguides.stthom.edu/arthistory)

5. **September 28.**  Presentation by Ashley Sheffield on Art Nouveau Objects by Hector Guimard.  Cézanne, Fauvism, and Matisse
*Research Proposal Due*
Readings
Foster et al. 1906, 1910
Matisse, Henri. “Notes of a Painter”. In *Art in Theory, 1900-2000*. pp. 69-75. (Blackboard and Reserves.)

6. October 5. German Expressionism. Midterm Review
*Reading Response 2 Due*
Readings
Foster et al. 1908

*No class October 12: WINTER BREAK.*

7. October 19. MIDTERM EXAM. Cubism 1: Picasso’s *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon*
Readings
Foster et al. 1907

Readings
Foster et al. 1911, 1912
Leighten, Patricia. “Picasso’s Collages and the Threat of War, 1912-13.” *Art Bulletin* 67, no. 4 (December 1985): 653-672. (Blackboard.)

9. November 2. Futurism, Abstraction, Suprematism, and Mondrian
*Reading Response 3 Due*
Readings
Foster et al. 1909, 1913, 1915, 1917a, 1944a

Readings
Foster et al. 1914, 1916a, 1918, 1920, 1935

*RESEARCH ESSAY DUE*
Readings
Foster et al. 1924, 1927a, 1930b, 1931a, 1931b

Thursday, November 19, at 5:45 pm: Field Trip to the Menil Collection’s Surrealism Galleries
12. November 23. De Stijl, Soviet Constructivism, the Bauhaus, and Neue Sachlichkeit

*Field Trip Response Due*

Readings
Foster et al. 1917b, 1921, 1923, 1925a, 1925b


Readings
Foster et al. 1927c, 1933, 1934a, 1936, 1943
(Blackboard and Reserves.)


Readings
Foster et al. 1937a, 1937c

*The final exam will be at 4:30 pm (note time change), Monday, December 14, 2015.*