

## **ART HISTORY 1100: WHAT IS MODERN ART?**

Fall 2022 TR 10:15-11:44AM

Perelman Center for Political Science and Economics (PCPE) 200

133 S 36<sup>th</sup> St (19104), UPENN

### ***Professor***

Huey Copeland, [hueyc@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:hueyc@sas.upenn.edu); T12-2PM or by appointment ([calendly.com/hueyc](https://calendly.com/hueyc)), 209 Jaffe History of Art Building, 3405 Woodland Walk

### ***Teaching Assistant***

Kendra Grimmett, [grimmett@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:grimmett@sas.upenn.edu); T1-3PM or by appointment, Basement Room B-8, Jaffe History of Art Building, 3405 Woodland Walk

### ***Description***

Modernism is not easily defined. For some, the word simply identifies Western art of the last two hundred-odd years. For others, modernism refers to forms of “advanced” visual art, whether the cubist distortions of Pablo Picasso or the all-over abstractions of Jackson Pollock, that break with established representational conventions. For still others, the term singles out modes of artistic opposition to the ravages of capitalism, colonialism, industrialization, imperialism, and war that continue to define our world. Among its manifold practices, we find the rise of abstraction, paintings that pretend to show nothing but an instant, dreams and erotic desires set free for everyone to see, and everyday objects elevated to the status of sculpture. At key moments, “art” itself was declared dead, then resurrected as the solution to the social problems of the era, forming a highly ambivalent relationship to the spheres of politics and history. We will cover the development of modernism broadly, from the 1860s to the 1960s, introducing many of the best-known figures (like Monet, Van Gogh, Duchamp, and Picasso) and movements (like Impressionism, Cubism, Dada, and Surrealism). Europe and North America will be the focus, but we will frequently look to global developments as well and analyze art made in colonial and diasporic conditions. The standard narratives of modernism will be questioned at every turn and artists of color—and those from national and economic backgrounds beyond the “mainstream”—will be studied as well. We will proceed more or less chronologically, doubling back or projecting forward when necessary to understand the determinative historical influences that have shaped the development of modernist idioms in particular times and places. In every instance, we will study works of art that have confronted our culture’s visual means—of life, death, consumption, and display—and attempted to work them over into critical even resistant forms, whose tactical operations offer models for further thought and action today.

### ***Objectives***

- To grasp varying approaches to and definitions of modern art
- To understand and identify the key forms, figures, and episodes of artistic modernism
- To describe modernist works of art both formally and historically
- To think comparatively and transnationally about the emergence of modernist forms
- To hone skills in close reading, visual analysis, active listening, and engaged discussion

## ***Requirements***

Attendance at all lectures as recorded by the sign-in sheet circulated at the beginning of each class; preparation of readings for and active participation in all discussions; satisfactory completion of all assignments, which, with the exception of the final take-home exam, are due in class in hard copy. You must receive a passing grade on all coursework to pass. Evaluation will be as follows:

2-3 page visual analysis (15%) due **R 09/29**

Midterm examination (25%) **R 10/20**

4-5-page comparative art-historical essay (20%) due **T 11/27**

Final take-home examination (20%) due **F 12/16 via email**

Participation in lecture and discussion (20%)

Unless you have received appropriate permission, all electronic devices—laptops, cellphones, tablets, recorders, e-readers, and pagers included—must be turned off and put away before class begins (be sure to bring a notebook and writing utensil to all course sessions). All papers must be double-spaced and typed in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins on all sides of each page and headings of no more than 2 lines. Papers not handed in on time will automatically be marked down a half-grade for every day late unless you have been previously granted an extension by the Professor or Teaching Assistant. Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated. Any student needing accommodations related to disability or another condition should register with Disability Services to receive the necessary course accommodations. All information will remain confidential.

## ***Readings***

All readings will be posted on Canvas. The required textbook will be available on Canvas via Course Reserves by week 3 and is now available for purchase at the University Bookstore:

Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, and David Joselit, *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism, 1900-1944*, Volume 1, 3rd Edition (London: Thames and Hudson, 2016).

In the schedule that follows, the readings that correspond to each week's theme are prefaced by a question that should guide your engagement with the lecture, texts and art works presented. Make sure that you are prepared to speak on and to all of the readings for the accompanying class discussions.

## **DRAFT SCHEDULE**

### ***Week 1***

T 08/30 Introduction

R 09/01 *What was modernism (and why won't it go away)?*

Clark, *Farewell to an Idea*, 1-12

### **Week 2**

T 09/06 Realism and other Crises of Re-presentation

*How did artists register and resist the rise of modern capitalism?*

Arnason, *History of Modern Art*, 16-32; 41-45

Marx and Engels, "Bourgeoisie and Proletariat," 219-23

R 09/08 Discussion

### **Week 3**

T 09/13 The Painting of Modern Life

*How do we "read" the gender of modernist painting?*

Fer, *Modernity and Modernism*, 15-33

Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," 395-406

Irigaray, selections from "Women on the Market"

### **VISUAL ANALYSIS ASSIGNED**

R 09/15 Visit Barnes Foundation

### **Week 4**

T 09/20 Impressionism and its Aftermaths

*What sites, subjects, and techniques have come to define "modern art"?*

Harrison, "Impressionism, Modernism, and Originality," 141-167; 201-208

Foster et al., *Art Since 1900*, 82-89; 112-117

R 09/22 Discussion

### **Week 5**

T 09/27 Primitive Scenes

*What happened when the "Other" to the West entered the modernist picture?*

Said, *Orientalism*, 1-6

Foster et al., *Art Since 1900*, 76-81; 90-96

Malraux, *Picasso's Mask*, 10-13

R 09/29 The Cubist Revolution

*How did modernist formal innovations shift over time and space?*

Foster et al., *Art Since 1900*, 118-130; 178-183

Mitter, "The Formalist Prelude," 18-27

### **VISUAL ANALYSIS DUE**

### **Week 6**

T 10/04 Discussion

R 10/06 NO CLASS (FALL BREAK)

### **Week 7**

T 10/11 Toward Abstraction

*Why did modern artists abandon the figure?*

Foster et al., *Art Since 1900*, 97-101; 130-136; 142-146; 160-165

Kandinsky, "The Cologne Lecture," 94-98

R 10/13 Sculpting the Future

*To what resources did modernist sculptors turn in materializing the body?*

Marinetti, "Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," 28-33  
Foster et al., *Art Since 1900*, 102-109; 252-255

**Week 8**

T 10/18 Discussion and Exam Review  
R 10/20 **MIDTERM EXAM**

**Week 9**

T 10/25 Forms of Readymade

*What models for art and critique did mass production provide for modern artists?*

Duchamp, "The Richard Mutt Case," 248

Marx, "The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret," 163-167

Foster et al., *Art Since 1900*, 137-141; 172-177; 256-261

Okoye, "Unmapped Trajectories," 29-31; 35-39

R 10/27 Dada and the Politics of Collage

*What means did modern artists develop for direct social and political critique?*

Huelsenbeck, "First German Dada Manifesto," 253-255

Foster et al., *Art Since 1900*, 147-153; 186-191

**ART-HISTORICAL ESSAY ASSIGNED**

**Week 10**

T 11/01 Discussion

R 11/03 Constructivist Subjects

*How did modern artists reimagine themselves and their work for revolutionary ends?*

Punin, "Monument to the Third International," 311-315

Rodchenko and Stepanova, "Program of the First Working Group of Constructivists,"  
317-318

Foster et al., *Art Since 1900*, 198-203; 262-267

Weisenfeld, *MAVO*, 1-6; 125-138

F 11/05 6:30-8PM Extended Office Hours at Philadelphia Museum of Art

**Week 11**

T 11/08 NO CLASS (ELECTION DAY)

R 11/10 From the Rational to the Surreal

*What alternatives for modern art, life, and revolution did the unconscious unlock?*

Freud, "The Uncanny," 135-151

Breton, "First Manifesto of Surrealism," 432-439

Mercer, "Cosmopolitan Contact Zones," 40-47

Foster et al., *Art Since 1900*, 214-219; 287-296

**Week 12**

T 11/15 Discussion

R 11/17 Remaking Race

*To what extent did modernist pictorial strategies enable the "Other" to speak back?*

Locke, "Legacy of the Ancestral Arts," 197-201

Powell, "Re/Birth of a Nation," 16-33

Foster et al., *Art Since 1900*, 358-363

**Week 13** NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING BREAK)

**Week 14**

T 11/29 Murals and their Publics

*How did modern art both serve and contest warring national and political interests?*

Rivera, "The Revolutionary Spirit in Modern Art," 404-407

Siqueiros, "Towards a Transformation of the Plastic Arts," 412-414

Foster et al., *Art Since 1900*, 303-314; 329-333; 338-345

**ART-HISTORICAL ESSAY DUE**

R 12/01 The Triumph of Abstract Expressionism?

*How did American abstraction come to define the pinnacle of modern artistic discourse?*

Foster et al., *Art Since 1900*, 324-333; 380-391 (v.2)

Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," 85-94

Clarke, *Modern Chinese Art*, 42-53

**Week 15**

T 12/06 Hegemony and its Discontents

*What was modernism (and why won't it go away)?*

Wagner, "Jasper Johns's *Flag*," 11-25

R 12/08 Conclusion and Review

**TAKE HOME EXAM ASSIGNED; DUE F 12/16 BY 11:59PM VIA EMAIL.**