

Instructor: Dr. Kurt Rahmlow

Office: ART 213

E-mail: Please use the messaging system on Canvas

Office hours: T, Th 1:00-2:00 and 5:00-5:30; also by appointment

**ARTH 4812.001:  
Modernism and the Visual Arts, 1890-1945\***

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Considers the emergence of “modernism” in the visual arts, exploring the development, interpretation, and use of works of modern art, while examining the historical, social, and cultural conditions of “modernity” in Europe and North and South America, from the late-nineteenth century to 1945. Prerequisite(s): ART 1200 or 1301, 2350, and 2360; or consent of the instructor.

This course surveys major movements in Modern Art from the later-19<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. More properly, this will be a course that focuses primarily on Modernism in art—that is, avant-garde or experimental art works that relate, or have typically been thought to relate, to the broadly conceived modernist attempt to always “make it new.” We will begin by considering Impressionist and Post-Impressionist experimental art, and we will work through late Surrealism. In the process, we will consider such movements, schools, and strains as Fauvism, Expressionism, Cubism, De Stijl, Suprematism, Constructivism, and Dada. This class is designed for students who have had some experience with art historical coursework—that is, it presupposes a basic familiarity with art historical terminologies and methodologies. I will primarily be conducting this course in a lecture format, but I will periodically break from this approach to conduct in-class discussions of works and readings and small-group exercises.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

1. To learn about modern art and artists, as well as the theoretical and philosophical principles that inform modern artworks.
2. To develop and hone research skills.
3. To develop and hone skills of analysis and critical thinking.
4. To develop advanced writing skills.

Textbooks

Arnason, H. H., and Elizabeth C. Mansfield. *History of Modern Art, Volume I*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Pearson, 2013. (Required; available at the university bookstore.)

Harrison, Charles, and Paul Wood, eds. *Art in Theory, 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, revised edition. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003. (Required; available at the university bookstore.)

Using “Canvas”

Students are required to check the course Website on Canvas on a regular basis. I will be using the Canvas e-mail style messaging system to communicate with the class rather than my UNT e-mail account, so please keep on top of your Canvas Inbox. In addition, I will post a number of

important documents to the website, including this syllabus, but also including informational sheets, handouts, and several reading assignments that are not contained in the required course textbook, too. Finally, you will be able to track your grades on this site, and I will require you to submit your formal writing assignments using the platform. You can access “Canvas” by following these steps:

1. Go to the UNT homepage.
2. Click on the Canvas link.
3. Log into the system.

To submit your written work on Canvas, simply click on the appropriate assignment link on the “Assignments” portion of the course Website (it will be labeled clearly). The software will lead you through the submission process, but **be sure that your submission actually goes through!** If you are not able to view your document on the platform after submission, your document was NOT submitted properly.

When submitting documents, please remember that it is **your responsibility** to (1) keep a copy of your submission, (2) submit your final draft before the due date has passed (you will be able to revise and resubmit your project up until that point, but you will not be able to do so after), and (3) upload your submission in a timely fashion in **advance** of the deadline—it is not an excuse that the link was slow or overloaded on the day the paper was due (you will have adequate time in which to complete these assignments and submit them). I will not accept a hard copy in lieu of an electronic submission; all submissions **MUST** go through the designated links on Canvas. If you are having difficulty uploading your document, you must contact IT in advance of the deadline to sort out the issue.

### Course Requirements

*Attendance*—5% of final grade

*Participation*—15% of final grade

*Formal Interpretation Essay*—10% of final grade

*Annotated Bibliography*—20% of final grade

*Mid-Term Exam*—25% of final grade

*Final Exam*—25% of final grade

#### *Attendance and Participation*

**Attendance** and timely arrival are mandatory. If you cannot commit to attending lectures, or if you believe you will regularly be late to class, please drop this course. I will take attendance at least five times during the course of the term, on random dates. If you should miss more than half a class meeting, you will be counted absent. If you arrive late or leave early and are not present when I call role, it is your responsibility to speak with me *before* we adjourn for the day; otherwise, you will not receive credit for attendance. Please also note that late arrivals will receive a late arrival score (80% attendance for the day). If you are absent for a legitimate reason on one of these days and wish to receive credit for the class, (1) you will have to provide me with

proper documentation of your excuse, and (2) you will have to make up the work for that day by writing a short response paper reviewing the material we covered in class. Please see me for details. If you cannot document a legitimate reason for missing class (illness, a death in the family, military duty, a religious holiday, for instance), you may not make up an absence. If you are going to be absent to observe a religious holiday, I ask that you notify me in advance, by canvas messaging, during the first two weeks of the term.

It is also mandatory that you arrive having carefully prepared the day's assignments. I cannot emphasize this last point enough. This means that you must read the day's assignments closely, making written notes about items of interest, points of critique, possible connections to other materials that we have covered, etc. While in class, I expect students to draw from their preparation and participate in the classroom community—that is, I expect all students to get involved in the conversation. Finally, I have scheduled a series of informal “Textual Analysis” assignments (informal written responses to readings) designed to get you reviewing and thinking about the course material before attending class. These, too, will count toward your participation grade. These will need to be submitted electronically using the “Assignment” function on Canvas.

I do not permit the use of **cellular phones, pagers, laptops, iPads, or recording devices** in this classroom, except by special permission. If you have a documented disability that requires that you use a laptop or a recording device, I will gladly make an exception in your case; however, I will require proper documentation of necessity. If you are in the midst of a personal emergency that requires you to keep your telephone active, please notify me at the beginning of class. Otherwise, all cell phones and laptops **MUST** be shut off and put away before the start of class. If you do not adhere to this requirement, I will ask you to leave the classroom.

Finally, please be aware that I hold this class to appropriate standards of **collegiality** and decorum. The free exchange of ideas requires that we respect each other and listen carefully to one another. Please feel free to disagree with an interpretation and debate ideas with other students and with me. I do ask, however, that you refrain from insulting or abusing other students, and I ask that you do not conduct conversations, sleep, read the newspaper, send text messages, or wander in and out of class while I or one of your classmates is speaking. If you cannot observe this requirement, I will ask you to leave the classroom.

#### *Formal Interpretation Essay*

As mid-term approaches, you will write a **600- to 750-word** formal interpretation essay on a **work of modern art reproduced in the course textbook**. This work will also be the subject of your annotated bibliography (see below). The Formal Interpretation Essay will not be research-based, but will be your response to a specific task, as outlined in an assignment sheet that I will post to Canvas two weeks before the essay is due. This assignment will receive a numerical grade ranging from 0 to 100. A corresponding letter grade will conform to the grading scale below. This assignment must be submitted electronically using Canvas.

#### *Annotated Bibliography*

In lieu of a final research paper, I will be requiring students to assemble an annotated bibliography of **4 to 5** critical or theoretical texts that relate to your chosen work of art (that is, the work that you treated in your Formal Interpretation Essay). I will describe this assignment in more detail as the term

progresses. Unlike the Formal Interpretation Essay, this assignment will be research based, and it will require students to dedicate a significant amount of time on their own to completing it. This assignment will receive a numerical grade ranging from 0 to 100. A corresponding letter grade will conform to the grading scale listed below. This assignment must be submitted electronically using Canvas.

#### *Examinations*

You will demonstrate your grasp of the material we have covered in class by sitting **two** closed-book, in-class examinations (see the course schedule for the respective dates and times). The format will consist of multiple-choice questions. Exams will receive a number grade ranging from 0 to 100. Corresponding letter grades will conform to the grading scale listed below.

#### *Late and Missed Assignments and Exams*

All major written assignments must be submitted in electronic form using Canvas. These projects are due on the dates and at the times noted on their respective assignment sheets. Any assignment submitted later than the time specified on the assignment sheet, even by one minute, will be counted late and assessed a penalty. Late submissions of major assignments will be accepted for two full calendar days after the posted deadline. However, once the link has closed, late submissions will no longer be accepted. All late major assignments will be penalized the equivalent of **one full letter grade** (10 points) for **every calendar day** they are late, beginning immediately once the deadline passes. Informal writing assignments (that is, “participation” assignments) must also be submitted electronically, using the assignment function on Canvas—please note that these will NOT be accepted late without documentation of hardship. If you miss a deadline of any sort due to unavoidable circumstances, and you have a legitimate, documented excuse (for example, you were seriously ill and hospitalized), then you **MUST** notify me **within 24 hours**. If you are experiencing difficulties that you believe will interfere with your ability to complete an assignment on time, please notify me in advance of the due date so that we can discuss the situation. Regarding exams, I only grant make-ups in extreme cases involving **unavoidable circumstances that have kept a student from being present in the classroom on exam day**, and I require formal documentation of hardship before I schedule them. The exception to this rule is the observance of religious holidays; however, if you are going to miss an exam for this reason, I require advance notification. Please note that I also may make exceptions for academic or university-sponsored activities, but that these decisions are made on a case-by-case basis during consultation with a student in advance of the exam.

Additionally, no matter what the cause of your absence, you **MUST** contact me **no more than 24 hours after the exam** concludes, by Canvas messaging, to schedule a make-up; if you fail to contact me within this period, you will forfeit your right to taking a make-up exam. Finally, I do not give exams early, under any circumstances. The final exam day and time are listed on the course syllabus. Please plan your travel accordingly.

#### *Resubmission of Work Originally Done for Other Courses*

All written work must be original to this section of this course. That is, you may not submit an essay, a participation exercise, a project, etc. (either as a whole or in part) that you originally wrote to submit to another course or even another section of this course. If you do so, you will receive a 0 for the assignment. Since this technically constitutes academic dishonesty, I will also be required to submit a report to the Office of Academic Integrity.

### *Grading Scale*

Your final grade in this course will appear on your transcript as a straight letter grade, without a “+” or a “-.” However, individual assignments will be scored as follows:

A+	97-100
A	94-96
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
F	0-59

The standards that I apply when assessing submissions are as follows:

- A: Outstanding (excellent work; the student performs well above the minimum criteria)
- B: Good-to-very good (impressive work; the student performs above the minimum criteria)
- C: Satisfactory (college-level work; the student meets the criteria of the assignment)
- D: Unsatisfactory (below-average work; the student fails to meet the minimum criteria)
- F: Substantially unsatisfactory (well-below-average work; the student fails to complete the assignment or fails to meet the minimum criteria to an unusual degree)

### University and Departmental Policies

#### *Plagiarism and Cheating*

I shouldn't have to talk about such things at this level, but please note: I feel *very* strongly about this. *Please* do not do this in my course. It would embarrass us both, and it would make me feel stressed out, disappointed, and depressed. If I catch a student cheating or plagiarizing, I will certainly fail that student for the assignment, possibly for the course, and report that student for disciplinary action. Please take pride in your abilities and your work and give this class your best honest effort. If you are not sure what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, please see me. In general, if you use someone else's **words or ideas**, you must acknowledge that you are borrowing them, usually by citing your source—you may not pass them off as your own. In addition, if you accept so much assistance on a project that the work is no longer substantially your own, you have cheated. Regarding quizzes and exams, all of these will be “closed book.” Accepting or seeking any assistance from, or seeking reference to, another person, piece of writing, or electronic source, constitutes cheating. Put simply, just bear in mind that your responsibility in this course is to earn your score by virtue of your own best effort—use your own ideas, and put them in all your own words. I will be running all student submissions through Turnitin on Canvas—this is the university's plagiarism detection software, and it works.

Regarding the use of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** programs to complete assignments—don't do it. The university has provided faculty with an AI detection service, and I use it in this course. If

a student submits work of any kind and that work shows up as having been written (or even just revised) by AI, I will treat this as evidence of cheating and assess a penalty according to my policy on Plagiarism and Cheating. The simple rule of thumb is this, then—*don't use AI for any aspect of any assignment in this course*. The AI detection software that we use does not differentiate between something written by AI and something “revised” by AI. If the detection service flags a passage, I will treat that passage as having been plagiarized.

#### *Students with Disabilities*

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one’s specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and **must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class**. For additional information see the ODA website at [disability.unt.edu](http://disability.unt.edu). If your letter has come through, please see me during office hours, so that we can figure out how to address your accommodations in a way that will work for both of us.

#### *Emergency Notification and Procedures*

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to the UNT Learning Management System (LMS) for contingency plans for covering course materials.

#### Course Schedule

01/13: Introduction/s; overview of course material; what was/is modernism?

01/15: Art academies and academic style; reading—Arnason, pp. 1-13.

01/20: Early photography and Realism; reading—Arnason, pp. 14-24; Gustave Courbet, “Realist Manifesto: An Open Letter” (1861), available at <https://arthistoryproject.com/artists/gustave-courbet/realist-manifesto-an-open-letter/>.

01/22: Late-Realism to Impressionism, followed by a primer on effectively integrating source texts; reading—Arnason, pp. 24-41; **Participation Assignment: Syllabus Agreement Quiz** due, on-line submission, by 11:00 am.

01/27: Impressionism (cont.); reading—Charles Baudelaire, from “The Painter of Modern Life” (1863), supplementary reading available on Canvas; **Textual Analysis Assignment #1** due, on-line submission, by 11:00 am.

01/29: Neo-Impressionism and Post-Impressionism; reading—Arnason, pp. 42-50; Paul Signac, from *Eugène Delacroix to Neo-Impressionism* (1899), in *Art in Theory, 1900-2000*, edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (hereafter identified as AIT), pp. 15-18; Paul Cézanne, Letters to Émile Bernard (1904-1906), in AIT, pp. 33-36.

02/03: Post-Impressionism (cont.) and Symbolism; reading—Arnason, pp. 50-58; Vincent van Gogh,

Letter to Theo van Gogh, no. 677 (available at <https://vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let677/letter.html>); Vincent van Gogh, Letter to Paul Gauguin, no. 695 (available at <https://vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let695/letter.html>); Vincent van Gogh, Letter to Theo van Gogh, no. 726 (available at <https://vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let726/letter.html>).

02/05: Symbolism (cont.); reading—Arnason, pp. 58-69; G.-Albert Aurier, “Symbolism in Painting: Paul Gauguin” (1891), supplementary reading available on Canvas.

02/10: Symbolism (cont.); **Textual Analysis Assignment #2** due, on-line submission, by 11:00 am.

02/12: The Arts and Crafts Movement, Art Nouveau, and the beginnings of Expressionism; reading—Arnason, pp. 70-89.

02/17: Fauvism and the early work of Matisse; reading—Arnason, pp. 90-106; Henri Matisse, “Notes of a Painter” (1908), in *AIT*, pp. 69-75; **Formal Interpretation Essay assigned.**

02/19: Brancusi and early experiments in sculpture, followed by German Expressionism and a primer on expository writing; reading—Arnason, pp. 106-121; Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, “Programme of the Brücke” (1906), in *AIT*, pg. 65; Emil Nolde, “On Primitive Art” (1912), in *AIT*, pp. 96-97.

02/24: German Expressionism (cont.); reading—Arnason, pp. 121-135; Wassily Kandinsky, from “Concerning the Spiritual in Art” (1911), in *AIT*, pp. 82-89; Franz Marc, “The ‘Savages’ of Germany” and “Two Pictures” (1912), in *AIT*, pp. 93-95; **Mid-Term Exam review sheet posted to Canvas.**

02/26: Cubism; reading—Arnason, pp. 136-168; Guillaume Apollinaire, “The Cubists” (1911), in *AIT*, 185-186; Guillaume Apollinaire, from *The Cubist Painters* (1912), in *AIT*, 188-190; Pablo Picasso, “Picasso Speaks” (1923), in *AIT*, pp. 215-217.

02/27: Class does not meet, but **Formal Interpretation Paper due (on-line submission), by 5:00 pm.**

03/03: Cubism (cont.), followed by a discussion of research tools; **Annotated Bibliography assigned.**

03/05: **Mid-Term Exam, administered in hard-copy, face-to-face format, in our regular classroom.**

03/10: Spring Break; class does not meet!

03/12: Spring Break; class does not meet!

03/17: Fantastic Art and the Metaphysical School, followed by Futurism in Italy and Vorticism in Great Britain; reading—Arnason, pp. 186-198; Giorgio de Chirico, “Mystery and Creation” (1913), in *AIT*, pg. 58; Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, “The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism” (1909), in *AIT*, pp. 146-149; Percy Wyndham Lewis, “Our Vortex” (1914), in *AIT*, pp. 162-163.

03/19: Suprematism and Constructivism in Russia; reading—Arnason, pp. 198-212; Kasimir Malevich, *From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Realism in Painting* (1915-16), in *AIT*, pp. 173-183; Alexander Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova, “Programme of the First Working Group of Constructivists” (1922), in *AIT*, pp. 341-343; **Textual Analysis Assignment #3** due, on-

line submission, by 11:00 am.

03/24: Trends in early-20<sup>th</sup>-century architecture; reading—Arnason, pp. 169-185.

03/26: Dada in Zurich and New York; reading—Arnason, pp. 213-227; Hugo Ball, “Dada Fragments” (1916-1917), in *AIT*, pp. 250-251; Tristan Tzara, “Dada Manifesto 1918” (1918), in *AIT*, pp. 252-257; Marcel Duchamp, “The Richard Mutt Case” (1917), in *AIT*, pp. 252.

03/31: Dada in Germany and the New Objectivity; reading—Arnason, pp. 227-241; Richard Huelsenbeck and Raoul Hausmann, “What Is Dadaism and What Does It Want in Germany?” (1919), in *AIT*, pp. 259-260; Adolf Hitler, “Speech Inaugurating the ‘Great Exhibition of German Art’” (1937), in *AIT*, pp. 439-441.

04/02: The School of Paris between the Wars; reading—Arnason, pp. 242-261.

04/07: De Stijl, followed by the Bauhaus and International Constructivism; reading—Arnason, pp. 262-296; “De Stijl: Manifesto 1” (1918), in *AIT*, pg. 281; Theo van Doesburg, from *Principles of Neo-Plastic Art* (1915-25), in *AIT*, pp. 281- 284; Walter Gropius, “The Theory and Organization of the Bauhaus” (1923), in *AIT*, pp. 309-314.

04/09: Surrealism; reading—Arnason, pp. 297-313; André Breton, from the “First Manifesto of Surrealism” (1924), in *AIT*, pp. 447-453; Salvador Dali, “The Stinking Ass” (1930), in *AIT*, pp. 486-489.

04/14: Surrealism (cont.), followed by a primer on *Chicago Manual of Style* bibliographic form; reading—Arnason, pp. 313-326; Pablo Picasso, “Why I Joined the Communist Party” (1944), in *AIT*, pg. 648; **Textual Analysis Assignment #4** due, on-line submission, by 11:00 am.

04/16: Surrealism in sculpture and photography; reading—Arnason, pp. 326-337; Max Ernst, “What Is Surrealism?” (1934), in *AIT*, pp. 491-493.

04/17: Class does not meet as a group, but **Annotated Bibliography due (on-line submission), by 5:00 pm.**

04/21: The American Scene, Part I—The Eight and social criticism in America, followed by the Armory Show, the Stieglitz Circle, Precisionism, and American abstraction between the wars; reading—Arnason, pp. 338-349, 350-354, 368-372; American Abstract Artists, “Editorial Statement” (1938), in *AIT*, pp. 396-397.

04/23: The American Scene, Part II—African-American art between the wars, trends in Mexican art; reading—Arnason, pp. 358-360, 364-368; Diego Rivera, “The Revolutionary Spirit in Modern Art” (1932), in *AIT*, pp. 421-424; David A. Siqueiros, “A Declaration of Social, Political and Aesthetic Principles” (1922), in *AIT*, pp. 406-407.

04/28: The American Scene, Part III—Regionalism and experiments in Photography; reading—Arnason, pp. 355-358, 361-364, 349-350; Grant Wood, from “Revolt against the City” (1935), in *AIT*, pp. 435-436; Paul Strand, “Photography” and “Photography and the New God,” in *Classic Essays on Photography*, pp. 141-151, supplementary reading on Canvas; **Final Exam review sheet posted to Canvas.**

04/30: Pre-Finals Day—Exam Preparation Day; class does not meet.

05/05: (Tuesday): **Final Exam**, administered in hard-copy, face-to-face format, 10:00 am-12:00 pm, in our regular classroom.

**\*The instructor reserves the right to alter this syllabus at his discretion.**