

Instructor: Dr. Kurt Rahmlow

Office: ART 213

E-mail: Please use the messaging system on Canvas

Office hours: M 5:30-6:00 and W 2:30-5:00; also by appointment

ARTH 4848.001:

Art History Seminar—Symbolism and Art Nouveau

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Introduction to research methodologies and practices of scholarship relevant to the study of a topic in art history. Delivered as a seminar consisting of assigned readings, class discussion, and oral and written presentations. Taught on rotating basis by art history faculty annually. Prerequisite(s): ART 2350, ART 2360, and ART 2370; AEAH 4800; 9 hours of advanced art history; senior status within major.

COURSE CONTENT: This course will examine an important and intriguing, but frequently undervalued, trend in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century art: Symbolism. The class will acknowledge the essentially literary character of the movement, and it will underscore the role that writing and writers played in its development. As a consequence, we will consider representative works by authors such as Charles Baudelaire, J.-K. Huysmans, Oscar Wilde, and Stéphane Mallarmé. The primary focus, however, will be on the visual arts. We will begin by examining the work of the French academic painters Gustave Moreau and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, but much of the course will treat such avant-garde practitioners as Auguste Rodin, Camille Claudel, Paul Gauguin, Odilon Redon, and Edvard Munch. Since our definition will necessarily be an inclusive one, we will also explore closely related developments among the Decadents in England, including Aubrey Beardsley; the Vienna Secessionists, including Gustav Klimt; Les XX in Belgium; and the artists typically associated with Art Nouveau. This class is designed for students who have had substantial experience with art historical coursework—that is, it presupposes a good working familiarity with art historical terminologies, methodologies, and practices. Class meetings will involve some lecturing, but as this is a seminar, students will be charged with contributing to the course content by leading and more informally participating in discussions. Students will be required to complete a significant amount of reading each week, submit responses to the week's readings on Canvas, and author a substantial research-based essay.

COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. To learn about the theories and histories of Symbolism in a range of media and national contexts.
2. To develop research skills at the levels expected of art-world professionals.
3. To develop skills of reading, analysis, and critical thinking at the levels expected of art-world professionals.
4. To develop advanced writing skills at a level appropriate to art-world professionals.
5. To develop the skills necessary to organizing and carrying through a significant research project.

Course Textbooks

Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature*, translated by Robert Baldick (New York: Penguin, 2003).

This text is required. I have ordered it through the UNT bookstore. If you are sourcing it yourself, please be careful to purchase the assigned edition.

Edward Lucie-Smith, *Symbolist Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1972). This text is required.

Please note that it is out of print, so you will need to source a used copy. I have ordered it through the UNT bookstore and placed a copy on 2-hour reserve in Willis Library.

Using “Canvas”

I will post important documents on the course Website on “Canvas,” including this syllabus, informational sheets and handouts, and numerous reading assignments not contained in the course textbook. I will also post your grades on this site, and I will ask you to turn in your writing and participation assignments electronically. You can access “Canvas” by following these steps:

1. Go to the UNT homepage.
2. Click on the Canvas link.
3. Log in to the system using your EUID and password.

Course Requirements

Attendance—10% of final grade

Participation—30% of final grade

Presentation of Artist—10% of final grade

Research Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography—15% of final grade

First Draft of Research Paper—10% of final grade

Final Draft of Research Paper—25% of final grade

Attendance

Attendance and timely arrival are mandatory, and I will be taking attendance every meeting. If you cannot commit to attending class, or if you believe you will regularly be late to class or need to leave early, please drop this course. Please understand this: I consider all of you professionals-in-training. I will be expecting all of you to be taking this course seriously, as a part of your professional preparation. If you miss more than half a class meeting, you will be counted absent. If you arrive late and are not present when I call roll, or if you leave early, you will receive **partial credit for attendance (80%)**. Students who arrive late must remember to speak with me *before* we adjourn for the day in order to correct the roll; otherwise, they will not receive credit for attendance. Since this course only meets once per week, students may miss **one** class meeting without incurring an attendance penalty (this will be the only “excused” absence offered in this course)—it’s a very good idea to reserve that absence for when it is most needed. Please understand, however, that any in-class exercises/assignments completed by the group during an excused absence may not be made up.

Participation

It is *mandatory* that students arrive having carefully prepared the day’s assignments. I cannot emphasize this last point enough. This means that you must read the week’s assignments closely,

making written notes about items of interest, points of critique, possible connections to other materials that we have covered, etc. To this end, I will be requiring students to complete and submit a series of **four Critical Reading Questionnaires** in response to assigned readings. Everyone is required to complete a questionnaire for one reading on the Week 2 schedule. Thereafter, all students are required to complete three additional questionnaires on eligible readings over the course of the term (“eligible readings” will be marked with an asterisk on the course schedule portion of the syllabus). Questionnaires must be completed and submitted online before class begins. Please note that the submission link for these assignments will close promptly at 2:25 pm on class days, and no late submissions will be accepted. Questionnaires will count toward the participation grade. 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. If you are less comfortable participating spontaneously, please feel free to prepare a few questions or comments before coming to class. If the conversation flags noticeably, I will assign **in-class writing assignments** and **small-group discussion tasks**. These will count toward the participation grade. Please also note that I will periodically be assigning more formal **in-class exercises**; these will count toward the participation grade. Since the purpose of these exercises is to prepare students for discussion, these assignments may not be made up.

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. This is a particular point of emphasis for me in a seminar classroom. I’m expecting students to behave like professionals-in-training. As for the use of electronics, **please refrain from using electronic devices, except in conducting course business**—taking notes, looking up titles of art works that we are discussing, etc. **If we begin to have problems with the use of electronics during a class meeting, I will change the course policy to ban them from the classroom.**

Presentation of Artist

Once during the course of the semester, each student will supplement class discussion by giving a formal **10-minute biographical presentation on a single artist and that artist’s work**. Students will sign up to present on a specific artist on the first day of class. Students will then be required to arrive on their designated day prepared with a rough script and a series of professional-grade PowerPoint images designed to illustrate their discussions. Please take these assignments seriously; you will be graded on how knowledgeable you are about your artist, as well as on how polished your discussion and slides are. If you are concerned about preparing for this task, *please see me*; I will be more than happy to help you along. Presentations will be scored on a 0-10 point scale.

Formal Research Proposal and Annotated Bibliography

At mid-term, each student will submit a formal, 300- to 500-word research proposal, complete with a working thesis and an annotated bibliography of 5-7 sources that you feel will be important to your project. Please note that proper bibliographic form is important here. You are, after all, putting together a bibliography. More specific instructions will be detailed on an assignment sheet, to be distributed as the course progresses. Submissions will be scored on a 0-100 point scale.

First Draft of Research Paper

Each student will write a carefully-researched and well-argued **essay of 2,750-4,000 words** (excluding footnotes, bibliography, etc.) on a topic closely related to the focus of this course. The project must be **object-driven** (focused firmly on a *specific* artwork—or a very limited grouping of artworks), and topics must be approved in consultation with the professor. Students must submit a *complete* draft of the essay (with all the fixin's) on the date listed below on the course schedule for *First Draft of Research Paper*. This will be graded as a *complete essay*, so please give it your best effort. Just to be clear on this: If you only turn in anything under 2,750 words, you cannot receive full credit. I will be circulating an assignment sheet later in the semester that will outline the specific requirements for the project. The primary focus here will be on degree of completion, but I will also be considering the overall quality of the draft. Submissions will be scored on a 0-100 point scale.

Final Draft of Research Paper

Having received feedback on a complete first draft, students will revise their work and submit a new and improved final draft of their research papers on the date listed on the course syllabus. The requirements stipulated for the first draft, of course, still apply, with one exception: Expectations will be higher for the final draft. My primary concern in looking over the first draft will be degree of completion; my primary concern in scoring the final draft will be quality of work. This submission will be scored on a 0-100 point scale.

Course Policies

Late and Missed Assignments

Informal participation assignments, including Critical Reading Questionnaires and in-class exercises, may not be made up, except as noted above. All major written assignments must be submitted in electronic form using the Turnitin function on Blackboard. (Turnitin is the plagiarism and AI detection software used by UNT.) These projects are due on the dates and at the times noted on their respective assignment sheets and on the course syllabus and Canvas. Any assignment submitted later than the time specified, even by one minute, will be counted late. Late submissions of major assignments will be accepted for two calendar days after the posted deadline. However, once the links close, late submissions will no longer be accepted. All late major assignments will be penalized **10 points for every calendar day** they are late, beginning immediately after the deadline passes. If you miss a submission deadline for a major assignment for a legitimate and *unexpected* reason, and you have a legitimate, documented excuse (for example, you became seriously ill), 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. Because of the scheduling difficulties relating to presentations, students may only be re-scheduled for this assignment to accommodate extreme and unforeseen circumstances, and these circumstances will need to be formally documented.

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 a paper, discussion post, part of an essay, etc. that you originally wrote to submit to another course. If you do resubmit material, you will receive a 0 for the assignment.

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 you cheating or plagiarizing, I will certainly fail you for the assignment, possibly for the course, and report you 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. Put simply, just bear in mind that your responsibility in this course is to earn your score by virtue of your own best effort.

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 potentially plagiarized.

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

University Policies

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. 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 Blackboard for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Course Schedule

Week 1

08/17: Course introduction; students sign-up for presentations; a primer on creating and delivering presentations; a primer on completing Critical Reading Questionnaires; introduction to Romanticism and Symbolism in the nineteenth century; reading (in-class):

Charles Baudelaire, "Correspondances," from *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), pp. 18-24.

Jean Moréas, "A Literary Manifesto—Symbolism," in *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Henri Dorra (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 150-152.

Week 2

08/24: Precursors—Romanticism; selecting a topic and developing a research question; **Syllabus Agreement Quiz Due, online, by 2:25 pm**; readings:

*Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, edited by Abraham Mills (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1844), 50-56, 72-113, 140-148, 157-158.

*John F. Moffitt, "A Pictorial Counterpart to 'Gothick' Literature: Fuseli's *The Nightmare*," *Mosaic* 35, no. 1 (March 2002): 173-196.

*Jason M. Kelly, "Turner's Golden Vision: Alchemy in the Works of J.M.W. Turner," *American Journal of Semiotics* 12, no. 1-4 (1995): 211-228.

Presentation (Henri Fusili): _____

Presentation (William Blake): _____

Presentation (Caspar David Friedrich): Cristal Rodriguez_____

Presentation (J. M. W. Turner): Ally Krejci_____

Week 3

08/31: Class does not meet—please use this time to explore possible research topics; **research topic (identifying a specific work of Symbolist/Decadent/Aesthetic art) and research question due, online submission, by 5:30 pm.**

Week 4

09/07: Labor Day—class does not meet!

Week 5

09/14: Defining terms—Symbolism, Decadence, and the Aesthetic Movement; discussion of research topics (students must be prepared to discuss their research topic and research question with the class); **Research Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography Assigned**; readings:

- *Robert Goldwater, from “Introduction,” in *Symbolism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979), pp. 1-46.
- *Patricia Townley Mathews, “Passionate Discontent: The Creative Process and Gender Difference in the French Symbolist Period,” *Bulletin (Allen Memorial Art Museum)* 43 (Summer 1988): 20-30.
- *John Reed, “Chapter One: Introduction,” in *Decadent Style* (Athens, OH: University of Ohio Press, 1985), 1-18.
- Oscar Wilde, “Preface,” in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, edited by Donald L. Lawler (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), pp. 3-4.

Presentation (Oscar Wilde): Zoe Balderrama

Presentation (J. A. M. Whistler): Liana Kusterer

Presentation (Aubrey Beardsley): Celeste Hughes

Week 6

09/21: Academic Symbolist Precursors—Gustave Moreau and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes; a discussion of research tools and strategies; readings:

- Edward Lucie-Smith, “Chapter 5: Gustave Moreau,” in *Symbolist Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1972), pp. 63-69.
- Edward Lucie-Smith, from “Chapter 7: Puvis de Chavannes and Carrière,” in *Symbolist Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1972), pp. 81-86.
- *Peter Cooke, “Gustave Moreau and the Reinvention of History Painting,” *The Art Bulletin* 90, no. 3 (September 2008): 394-416.
- *C. Mitchell, “Time and the Idea of Patriarchy in the Pastorals of Puvis de Chavannes,” *Art History* 10, no. 2 (1987): 188-202.

Presentation (Gustave Moreau): Hunter Myers

Presentation (Pierre Puvis de Chavannes): _Abby Hefele_____

Week 7

09/28: Symbolist Art in France—Odilon Redon and Suzanne Valadon; readings:

Edward Lucie-Smith, “Chapter 6: Redon and Bresdin,” in *Symbolist Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1972), pp. 71-79.

*Barbara Larson, “The Franco-Prussian War and Cosmological Symbolism in Odilon Redon's ‘Noirs’,” *Artibus et Historiae* 25, no. 50 (2004): 127-138.

*Patricia Mathews, “Returning the Gaze: Diverse Representations of the Nude in the Art of Suzanne Valadon,” *Art Bulletin* 73 (September 1991): 415-30.

Presentation (Odilon Redon): _Alena Holt_____

Presentation (Suzanne Valadon): _Elle Eckels_____

Week 8

10/05: A Different Sort of Symbolism—The Rose + Croix and “Thought Painting”; *CMoS* bibliographic form; readings:

Edward Lucie-Smith, “Chapter 9: The Rose + Croix,” in *Symbolist Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1972), pp. 108-125.

*M. H. Hand, “Carloz Schwabe’s Poster for the Salon de la Rose+Croix: A Herald of the Ideal in Art,” *Art Journal* 44, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 40-45.

*Jeffery W. Howe, “Symbolist Spirituality: Religious Themes in the Art of Fernand Khnopff,” *Religion and the Arts* 8, no. 4 (December 2004): 415-441.

Presentation (Arnold Böcklin): _Morganne Tison_____

Presentation (Carloz Schwabe): _Rameen Abul-Qader_____

Presentation (Armand Point): _Summer Jaser_____

10/09: Class does not meet, but **Research Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography due (online submission), by 5:00 pm.**

Week 9

10/12: Symbolist Art in France—Vincent van Gogh; a primer on academic writing; a primer on writing discussion questions; readings:

*G.-Albert Aurier, “The Lonely Ones—Vincent van Gogh,” in *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Henri Dorra (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 218-226.

*Albert Boime, "Van Gogh's *Starry Night*: A History of Matter and a Matter of History," *Arts Magazine* 59, no. 4 (December 1984): 86-103.

Kurt Rahmlow, "Co-opting the Cooperative: Vincent van Gogh's 'Studio of the South' and Nineteenth-Century Utopian Socialism," *Utopian Studies* 23, no. 1 (2012): 79-112.

Presentation (Theo van Gogh): Sai Mopuri

Week 10

10/19: The Literary Context of Symbolist and Decadent Art in France—Huysmans; a review of how to productively and responsibly use source texts; **two discussion questions due (online submission), by 2:25 pm**; reading:

Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature (A Rebours)*, translated by Robert Baldick (New York: Penguin, 2004).

Presentation (Jeanne Jacquemin): _____

Presentation (Joris-Karl Huysmans): _____

Week 11

10/26: Symbolist Art in France—Paul Gauguin and the Nabis; readings:

Edward Lucie-Smith, from "Chapter 8: Gauguin, Pont-Aven and the Nabis," in *Symbolist Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1972), pp. 90-107.

*G.-Albert Aurier, "Symbolism in Painting—Paul Gauguin," in *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Henri Dorra (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 192-203.

*Paul Gauguin, *Noa Noa: The Tahiti Journal of Paul Gauguin*, trans. O. F. Theis (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1994), pp. 1-55, 138-47.

Presentation (Paul Sérusier): Ava Ash

Presentation (Maurice Denis): Jaedyn Gerhardt

Presentation (Pierre Bonnard): Gabrielle Cox

Week 12

11/02: Art Nouveau in the Decorative Arts; a primer on CMOs footnote form; reading:

*Charlotte Ashby, "A New Style for a New Age: Innovations in Form, Materials and Ornament," in *Art Nouveau: Art, Architecture, and Design in Transformation* (Bloomsbury Academic 2021), pp. 24-41.

*Katherine Brion, "Solidarity by Design: Legitimizing Jules Chéret's Poster Aesthetic as Republican Civic Decoration," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2022): 57-84.

*Charles Frederick Frantz, “Le Décor Symbolique”: Claude Debussy and Emile Gallé, *Music in Art* 29, no. 1-2 (Spring/Fall 2004): 171-187.

11/05: Class does not meet, but **First draft of Research Paper Due, online submission, by 5:00 pm.**

Week 13

11/09: Peer Review Day—each student will read two classmates’ essays, as assigned by the instructor (please see the Peer Review module on Canvas for more information).

Week 14

11/16: Symbolist Sculpture—Auguste Rodin and Camille Claudel; readings:

Auguste Rodin, *Art: Conversations with Paul Gsell*, translated by Jacques de Caso and Patricia B. Sanders (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 9-13, 79-86.

Albert Elsen, “The Meaning of ‘The Gates of Hell’,” in *Rodin’s Gates of Hell* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985), pp. 92-96, 129-138.

*Claudine Mitchell, “Intellectuality and Sexuality: Camille Claudel, the Fin de Siècle Sculptress,” *Art History* 12, no. 4 (December 1989): 419-447.

Presentation (Auguste Rodin): _Dante Khamesi_____

Presentation (Camille Claudel): _____

Presentation (Medardo Rosso): _____

Presentation (George Minne): _Allie Moger_____

Week 15

11/23: Thanksgiving Break—class does not meet!

Week 16

11/30: The Secession Movements; readings:

*P. McDonnell, “The Kiss: A Barometer for the Symbolism of Gustav Klimt,” *Arts Magazine* 60 (April 1986): 65-73.

*Reinhold Heller, “‘Could Only Have Been Painted by a Madman’—Or Could It?” in *Edvard Munch: The Modern Life of the Soul*, ed. Kynaston McShine (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2006), pp. 17-33.

* Alix Beeston, “Photography: Gertrude Käsebier and the Maternal Line of Sight,” in *Gertrude Käsebier: The Photographer and Her Photographs*, ed. By Barbara L. Michaels (H. N. Abrams, 1992), pp. 155-174.

Presentation (Gustave Klimt): _Crystal Garrett-McEwen_____

Presentation (Edvard Munch): _Chaz Dassinger_____

Presentation (Edward Steichen): _____

Presentation (Gertrude Käsebier): _____

Presentation: (Anne Brigmann): _Olivia Westbrooks_____

Presentation: (Alfred Stieglitz): _____

12/04: Class does not meet, but **Final Draft of Research Paper due (on-line submission), by 5:00 pm.**

Please note: The instructor reserves the right to alter this syllabus at his discretion.