Instructor: Dr. Kurt Rahmlow  
Office: Art Building, Room 218  
Office phone: 940-369-7952  
E-mail: Please use the e-mail messaging system on Blackboard  
Office hours: M, W 10:30-12:00 and by appointment

Teaching assistant: Emily Wiskera  
Office: Art Building, Room 225  
E-mail: Please use the e-mail messaging system on Blackboard  
Office hours: M 12:00-1:00

**AEAH 4813-001:**  
Postmodernism and the Visual Arts, 1945-present*

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Explores the relationship of postmodernism in the visual arts, including the development, interpretation, and use of postmodern works, as well as historical, social and cultural conditions of "postmodernity" globally, ca. 1945 to the present.  
Prerequisite(s): ART 1200, 2350, and 2360; or consent of the instructor.

This course surveys important developments in art and architecture from 1945 to the present day. More properly, the class will focus on late Modernism, Postmodernism, and current trends within avant-garde or experimental artistic production. We will begin by considering Abstract Expressionism, and we will end by examining projects recently on view at major international exhibitions and currently on display at galleries around the world. In the process, we will explore such movements, schools, and strains as Minimalism, Post-Painterly Abstraction, Pop Art, Conceptual Art, Performance Art, installation art, video art, digital art, and works influenced by significant political and theoretical positions, including feminism, identity politics, post-structuralism, and post-colonialism. 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 be conducting this course primarily in a lecture format, but I will regularly require small-group work and I hope you will be comfortable asking questions and engaging other members of the classroom community in dialogue.

Please bear this in mind: Some of you may find this material disturbing. Graphic violence, alternative lifestyles, and explicit sexuality are themes pursued by a number of contemporary artists. By remaining in this course, you are committing yourself to viewing and discussing these works.

Please also bear this in mind: You may find this course quite challenging. The art of the post-war period tends to be, intellectually speaking, extremely sophisticated. We will be reading a series of critical and theoretical texts that will be very difficult to understand. It is by no means impossible to excel in this course, but if you are looking for that “easy A,” you may want to look elsewhere. This is not an “introductory” course.
COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES:
1. To learn about post-war art and artists, as well as the theoretical and philosophical principles that inform post-war 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

Using “Blackboard”

Students are required to check the course Website on Blackboard on a regular basis. I will be using the Blackboard e-mail style messaging system to communicate with the class rather than my UNT e-mail account, so please keep on top of your Blackboard 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 textbooks, too. Finally, you will be able to track your grades on this site, and I will require you to submit your formal writing assignments electronically using its Turnitin function. You can access “Blackboard” by following these steps:

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

To use the Turnitin function to submit your work, simply click on the appropriate assignment link on the “Course Content” portion of the course Website on Blackboard (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 do not receive a Blackboard e-mail message telling you that the submission was successful and giving you a submission ID number, your paper was NOT submitted properly.

When using the Turnitin function, please remember that it is your responsibility to (1) keep a copy of your submission, as well as proof of submission (your “digital receipt” paper ID number), (2) remember that your Turnitin submissions are final once the deadline has passed (you will be able to revise and resubmit your paper up until that point, but you will not be able to do so after), and (3) upload your paper in a timely fashion in advance of the deadline—it is not an excuse that the Turnitin 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
Turnitin link on Blackboard. If you are having difficulty uploading your paper, you must see me (or the T.A.) during office hours in advance of the deadline.

Course Requirements

Attendance—5% of final grade  
Participation—5% of final grade  
Textual Analysis Paper #1—10% of final grade  
Textual Analysis Paper #2—10% of final grade  
Exhibition Review—20% of final grade  
Exam #1—25% of final grade  
Exam #2—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 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. 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 in order to observe a religious holiday, I ask that you notify me in advance, by e-mail, 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. If the conversation flags noticeably, I reserve the right to give unannounced quizzes or assign discussion questions or in-class writing assignments. These will count toward your participation grade, and they may only be made up in cases of documented excused absence. On occasion, I will collect informal assignments—discussion questions, for example, or work produced during small group discussion. These will count toward your participation grade. Finally, I may give short homework assignments designed to get you 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 Blackboard.

I do not allow the use of cellular phones, pagers, laptops, iPads, or recording devices in this classroom, except by special permission. If you have a disability that forces you to use a laptop or a recording device, please provide me with the proper documentation (see below), and I will
gladly make an exception in your case. 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.

**Textual Analysis Papers**

As the term progresses, you will write two **400- to 600-word** essays treating readings not contained in the survey text. The purposes of this exercise are: First, to encourage you to consider those readings more closely and thoughtfully, since we will not always have time to discuss them in lecture; second, to give you practice integrating other people’s scholarship into your own work in an effective and responsible manner. Assignment sheets for these papers will be posted to Blackboard. These assignments will receive numerical grades ranging from 0 to 100. Corresponding letter grades will conform to the grading scale below. These assignments must be submitted electronically using the Turnitin function on Blackboard. Formatting requirements will be specified on the assignment sheets.

**Exhibition Review**

At some point during the term, you will be required to visit a major exhibition at an area museum and review that show critically in an **850- to 1,000-word** essay. The purpose of this assignment is to encourage you to think about how and why a curator has put a show together in a particular way, and to think about the sorts of statements that selection and arrangement can make. Assignment sheets for this paper will be posted to Blackboard. The assignment will receive a numerical grade ranging from 0 to 100. Corresponding letter grades will conform to the grading scale below. This assignment must be submitted electronically using the Turnitin function on Blackboard. Formatting requirements will be specified on the assignment sheet.

**Examinations**

You will demonstrate your grasp of the material we have covered in class by sitting 2 in-class examinations (see the course schedule for the respective dates and times). The format will consist of some combination of multiple choice and short essay 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 the Turnitin function on Blackboard—Turnitin is the plagiarism detection software used by UNT. 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. Late submissions of major assignments will be accepted for several days after the posted deadline. However, once I have closed the link and begun grading, late submissions will no longer be accepted. All late major assignments will be penalized **one full letter grade for every calendar day** they are late. Any assignments due in hard copy in class are due at the beginning of class. These will generally be homework of some sort and will NOT be accepted late without documentation of hardship. If you miss class on a day when an in-class participation grade was assigned and collected, or if you fail to complete any participation assignment on time, you may NOT make up that assignment without documentation of hardship. If you miss a deadline of any sort due to absence, and you have a legitimate excuse (for example, you were seriously ill, or your car exploded in the parking lot of McDonald’s while you were inside getting breakfast on the way to class), 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, 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. Additionally, no matter what the cause of your absence, you MUST contact me no more than 24 hours after the exam concludes, either by phone or by e-mail, 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. Please note: **I do not give exams early.** If you are going to be leaving campus before the final exam is scheduled to be given, you will either need to rearrange your schedule or take a 0 on that exam.

**Resubmission of Work Originally Done for Other Courses**
All written work must be original to this course. That is, you may not submit a paper that you originally wrote to submit to another course. If you do so, you will receive a 0 for the assignment.

**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:

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<th>Grade</th>
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<td>A</td>
<td>94-96</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>87-89</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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University and Departmental Policies

Plagiarism and Cheating
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. 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.

Students with Disabilities
The College of Visual Arts and Design is committed to full academic access for all qualified students, including those with disabilities. In keeping with this commitment and in order to facilitate equality of educational access, faculty members in the College will make reasonable accommodations for qualified students with a disability, such as appropriate adjustments to the classroom environment and the teaching, testing, or learning methodologies when doing so does not fundamentally alter the course. If you have a disability, it is your responsibility to obtain verifying information from the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) and to inform me of your need for an accommodation. Requests for accommodation must be given to me no later than the first week of classes for students registered with the ODA as of the beginning of the current semester. If you register with the ODA after the first week of classes, your accommodation requests will be considered after this deadline. Grades assigned before an accommodation is provided will not be changed. Information about how to obtain academic accommodations can be found in UNT Policy 18.1.14, at www.unt.edu/oda, and by visiting the ODA in Room 167 of Sage Hall. You also may call the ODA at 940-565-4323.

Course Risk Factor
According to University Policy, this course is classified as a category one course. Students enrolled in this course will not be exposed to any significant hazards and are not likely to suffer any bodily injury. Students will be informed of any potential health hazards or potential bodily injury connected with the use of any materials and/or processes and will be instructed how to proceed without danger to themselves or others.

Building Emergency Procedures
In case of emergency (alarm will sound), please follow the building evacuation plans posted on each floor of your building and proceed to the nearest parking lot. In case of tornado (campus sirens will sound) or other weather related threat, please go to the nearest hallway or room on your floor without exterior windows and remain there until an all clear signal is sounded. Follow the instructions of your teachers and act accordingly.
Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities
Each University of North Texas student is entitled to certain rights associated with higher education institutions. See www.unt.edu/csrr for further information.

Course Schedule

01/13: Introduction/s; overview of course material.

01/15: Modernism before WWII; reading—Arnason and Mansfield, pp. xiii-xxxii.


01/20: MLK Day; no class today!


01/24: Abstract Expressionism (cont.); Exhibition Review Assigned.


02/03: Postwar European Art (cont.), followed by a primer on the proper use of source texts; reading—Arnason, pp. 431-443.

02/05: Pop Art in England and Neo-Dada, followed by a primer on using Turnitin; reading—Arnason, pp. 456-466; Richard Hamilton, “For the Finest Art, Try Pop,” in AIT, pp. 742-743.

02/07: Neo-Dada (cont.); T.A. Paper #1 due.

02/10: Happenings and Environments; reading—Arnason, pp. 466-471; Allan Kaprow, from Assemblages, Environments and Happenings, in AIT, pp. 717-722.

02/12: Pop Art in America; reading—Arnason, pp. 471-487.
02/14: Course release day (class does not meet)—in consideration of the travel/time required to make your museum visit to write your exhibition review later in the term.

02/17: Pop Art in America (cont.).


02/21: Europe’s New Realism; reading—Arnason, pp. 444-455.

02/24: Europe’s New Realism (cont.); **exam review sheet distributed**.


02/28: Post-Painterly Color Field Abstraction and Hard Edge Painting; reading—Arnason, pp. 490-503.

03/03: Op Art and trends in sculpture, including kinetic sculpture and light and space art; reading—Arnason, pp. 503-510.

03/05: **Mid-Term Exam**.

03/07: International Style architecture and other developments in international architecture; reading—Arnason, pp. 527-557.

03/10-03/14: Spring break; class does not meet!

03/17: Minimalism; reading—Arnason, pp. 510-526.


03/21: Conceptual Art; reading—Arnason, pp. 558-566.


03/26: Performance Art and Body Art (cont.); **Exhibition Review due**.


04/04: Figurative art in the 1970s; reading—Arnason, pp. 610-618.

04/07: Pattern and Decoration and the New Image; reading—Arnason, pp. 618-628.


04/18: Graffiti Art and Commodity Art; reading—Arnason, pp. 687-700; Jean Baudrillard, “The Hyper-Realism of Simulation,” in AIT, pp. 1018-1020; Donald Judd, “from ‘… not about master-pieces but why there are so few of them,’” in AIT, pp. 1139-1143; T.A. Paper #2 due.


04/23: Art History as Art in the 1990s; reading—Arnason, pp. 710-722.

04/25: Art and Biography, followed by New Approaches to Abstraction; reading—Arnason, pp. 722-728.

Blackboard Discussion Board thread labeled “Contemporary Artists’ Websites” by 5 p.m., along with a brief explanation of why you think her or his work is interesting/worthy of study. Please make the artist’s name the title of your post; review sheet distributed.

04/30: Contemporary Practitioners; reading—Artists’ Websites, posted to Blackboard by your classmates; please come to class with a list of three of these artists that you would like to discuss as a group.

05/09 (Friday): Final Exam (10:30 am-12:30 pm, ART 223).

*The instructor reserves the right to alter this syllabus at his discretion.*
AEAH 4813-001:
Postmodernism and the Visual Arts, 1945-present

I have read this syllabus. I agree to comply with all of the provisions it describes. I understand the course structure, grading and attendance policies, as well as the risk factor rating. I understand that this class includes a substantial amount of reading and discussion. I understand the attendance and late policies, and I am aware that absences and late work will result in a lowered final grade. By taking this course, I agree not to commit acts of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, cheating, and failing to cite sources. I understand that, at a minimum, any act of academic dishonesty will result in a grade of “F” for the assignment. I further understand that Dr. Rahmlow will pursue disciplinary actions against me with the University of North Texas should I commit any act of academic dishonesty. These disciplinary actions may range all the way from an “F” for the assignment to an “F” for the course, even to suspension or expulsion from the University. I acknowledge that Dr. Rahmlow reserves the right to alter his syllabus at his discretion during the course of the semester.

______________________________________________________________________________

Signature

_______________________________________________________        __________________
Printed name                     Date

___________________________________________________________________

Student ID Number

The return of this syllabus agreement is required for continued enrollment in the course.