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

**AEAH 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 19th century to the middle of the 20th 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**


**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 electronically using its Turnitin function. 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 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 Canvas (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 an 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 due date 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 Canvas. 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*—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 in order 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 disability that requires that you use a laptop or a recording device, 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.

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 the Turnitin function on Canvas.

Annotated Bibliography
In lieu of a final research paper, I will be requiring you 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 the Turnitin function on Canvas.

Examinations
You will demonstrate your grasp of the material we have covered in class by sitting two 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 the Turnitin function on Canvas. (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 two 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. 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, 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, 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.

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.

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

Students with Disabilities
The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable 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 reasonable accommodation for every semester and must
meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly
euenced to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by
appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during
their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information,
refer to the Office of Disability Access website at https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-
access. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

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 Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Course Schedule

01/17: Introduction/s; overview of course material.

01/19: What was/is modernism? followed by a discussion of art academies and academic style;

01/24: 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/.

01/26: Impressionism, followed by a primer on effectively integrating source texts; reading—
Arnason, pp. 24-41; Participation Assignment: Syllabus Agreement due, on-line submission, by
2:00 pm.

01/31: 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 2:00 pm.

02/02: 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

02/07: 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

02/09: Symbolism (cont.); reading—Arnason, pp. 58-69; G.-Albert Aurier, “Symbolism in Painting:
Paul Gauguin” (1891), supplementary reading available on Canvas.
02/14: The Arts and Crafts Movement, Art Nouveau, and the beginnings of Expressionism; reading—Arnason, pp. 70-89; **Textual Analysis Assignment #2** due, on-line submission, by 2:00 pm.

02/16: Art Nouveau and the beginnings of Expressionism (cont.): **Formal Interpretation Essay** assigned.

02/21: Fauvism and the early work of Matisse, followed by a primer on expository writing; reading—Arnason, pp. 90-106; Henri Matisse, “Notes of a Painter” (1908), in *AIT*, pp. 69-75.

02/23: Brancusi and early experiments in sculpture, followed by German Expressionism; 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: Class does not meet, but **Formal Interpretation Paper due (on-line submission)**, by 5:00 pm.

02/28: 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; **Annotated Bibliography assigned.**

03/02: Cubism, followed by a discussion of research tools; reading—Arnason, pp. 136-163; **Mid-Term Exam review sheet posted to Canvas.**


03/09: **Mid-Term Exam.**

03/14: Spring Break—class does not meet!

03/16: Spring Break—class does not meet!


03/23: 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 2:00 pm.


04/06: The School of Paris between the Wars; reading—Arnason, pp. 242-261.


04/14: Class does not meet as a group, but Annotated Bibliography due (on-line submission), by 5:00 pm.


04/20: Surrealism in sculpture and photography; reading—Arnason, pp. 326-337; Max Ernst, “What Is Surrealism?” (1934), in AIT, pp. 491-493; Textual Analysis Assignment #4 due, on-line submission, by 2:00 pm.


05/04: Pre-Finals Day—informal Final Exam review; attendance is optional; students will need to come prepared with questions/topics for review.

05/11 (Thursday): Final Exam, 1:30 pm-3:30 pm, ART 280.
*The instructor reserves the right to alter this syllabus at his discretion.