

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

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Considers the emergence of "postmodernism" in the visual arts, exploring the development, interpretation, and use of postmodern works, while examining the historical, social, and cultural conditions of "postmodernity" globally, ca. 1945 to the present.

**Prerequisite(s):** ART 2350, ART 2360, and ART 2370; or consent of 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 or personally challenging. Graphic violence and explicit sexuality are themes pursued by a number of contemporary artists, in particular. Certain images may be considered blasphemous by some. By remaining in this course, you are committing yourself to discussing and viewing these works.

Please also bear this in mind: You may find this course intellectually challenging. The interpretation and analysis of art can be quite demanding, intellectually speaking. It is by no means impossible to excel, but if you are looking for that “easy A,” you may want to look elsewhere. Hard work CAN help you to excel, but please remember that it does not guarantee the sort of success you may be looking for.

**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

Arnason, H. H., and Elizabeth C. Mansfield. *History of Modern Art*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: 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 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 “Assignments” page 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

*Public Art Exercise*—5% of final grade

*Participation*—10% of final grade

*Textual Analysis Essay #1*—15% of final grade  
*Textual Analysis Essay #2*—15% of final grade  
*Exam #1*—25% of final grade  
*Exam #2*—25% of final grade

### *Attendance*

**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.

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.

### *Participation*

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. 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 Canvas.

### *Public Art Exercise*

In the second half of the term, I will ask students to identify, visit, and analyze a work of public art by drafting a short (**400-word**) informal response. An assignment sheet for this project will be posted to Canvas. This assignment will receive a numerical grade ranging from 0 to 100. Corresponding letter grades will conform to the grading scale below. The assignment must be submitted electronically using the Turnitin function on Canvas. Formatting requirements will be specified on the assignment sheet.

### *Textual Analysis Essays*

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 Canvas. 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 Canvas. Formatting requirements will be specified on the assignment sheets.

### *Examinations*

You will demonstrate your grasp of the material we have covered in class by sitting 2 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 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 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 (such as the Public Art Exercise) must also be submitted electronically, using the assignment function on Canvas—please note that these will NOT be accepted late without documentation of hardship. In-class participation exercises (such as Discussion Day Worksheets) will be submitted in hard copy and may not be made up or submitted 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 in its entirety 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:

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.

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*

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 encouraged 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

08/22: Introduction/s; overview of course material; first questions.

08/24: Abstract Expressionism (Action Painting); reading—Arnason and Mansfield, pp. 377-392; Jackson Pollock, “Interview with William Wright,” in *Art in Theory, 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, edited by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (hereafter identified as *AIT*), pp. 583-586.

08/29: Abstract Expressionism (Color Field Painting); reading—Arnason, pp. 392-400.

08/31: **Discussion Day #1: Abstract Expressionisms (please bring the readings to class with you today, in HARD COPY FORM)**; reading—Carl Gustave Jung, “On the concept of the ‘archetype’,” in *AIT*, pp. 378-81; Adolph Gottlieb, Mark Rothko, and Barnett Newman, “Statement,” in *AIT*, pp. 568-569; Harold Rosenberg, from “The American Action Painters,” in *AIT*, pp. 589-592; Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting,” in *AIT*, pp. 773-779; **Syllabus Agreement** due, on-line submission, by 2:00 pm.

09/05: Trends in American Sculpture and Photography, followed by a primer on thesis statements; reading—Arnason, pp. 400-410; **Textual Analysis (T.A.) Essay #1 assigned.**

09/07: Postwar European Art, followed by a primer on the proper use of source texts; reading—Arnason, pp. 411-443; Jean Dubuffet, “Crude Art Preferred to Cultural Art,” in *AIT*, pp. 605-608.

09/12: Pop Art in England; reading—Arnason, pp. 456-460; Richard Hamilton, “For the Finest Art, Try Pop,” in *AIT*, pp. 742-743.

09/14: Neo-Dada, followed by a primer on *CMoS* footnote form; reading—Arnason, pp. 460-466.

09/15: Class does not meet, but **T.A. Essay #1 due, on-line submission, by 5:00 pm.**

09/19: Happenings and Environments; reading—Arnason, pp. 466-470; Allan Kaprow, from *Assemblages, Environments and Happenings*, in *AIT*, pp. 717-722.

09/21: Pop Art in America; reading—Arnason, pp. 471-487.

09/26: Pop Art in America (cont.).

09/28: **Discussion Day #2, Pop Art (please bring the readings to class with you today, in HARD COPY FORM)**; reading—Andy Warhol, “Interview with Gene Swenson,” in *AIT*, pp. 747-749; Claes Oldenberg, from *Documents from The Store*, in *AIT*, pp. 743-

- 747; Lawrence Alloway, "The Arts and the Mass Media," in *AIT*, pp. 715-717; Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in *AIT*, pp. 539-549.
- 10/03: Europe's New Realism; reading—Arnason, pp. 444-452; **exam review sheet distributed.**
- 10/05: The Snapshot Aesthetic in American Photography, followed by Post-Painterly Color Field Abstraction, Hard Edge Painting, Op Art, and trends in sculpture; reading—Arnason, pp. 487-510.
- 10/10: International Style architecture and other developments in post-war modern architecture; reading—Arnason, pp. 527-557.
- 10/12: **Mid-Term Exam.**
- 10/17: Minimalism; reading—Arnason, pp. 510-526.
- 10/19: **Discussion Day, Minimalism (please bring the readings to class with you today, in HARD COPY FORM);** reading—Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," in *AIT*, pp. 824-828; Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, 1-3," in *AIT*, pp. 828-835; Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," in *AIT*, pp. 835-846.
- 10/24: Monuments and public sculpture (**we will be spending some time today in large-group discussion, so please bring the readings to class with you, in HARD COPY FORM);** reading—Arnason, pp. 606-610; Hilde Hein, "What is Public Art? Time, Place, and Meaning" (supplementary reading available on Canvas); Tom Wolfe, "The Worship of Art: Notes on the New God" (supplementary reading available on Canvas); **Public Art Exercise assigned.**
- 10/26: Figurative art in the 1970s, followed by Pattern and Decoration and the New Image; reading—Arnason, pp. 610-628.
- 10/31: Conceptual Art, Performance Art, and Body Art; reading—Arnason, pp. 452-455, 558-575; Lea Vergine, from "The Body as Language," *AIT*, pp. 906-910.
- 11/02: Feminist Art and Art and African-American Art in the 1970s; reading—Arnason, pp. 575-586; Laura Mulvey, from "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *AIT*, pp. 982-989; Barbara Jones-Hogu, "The History, Philosophy, and Aesthetics of AFRICOBRA" (supplementary reading available on Canvas).
- 11/03: Class does not meet, but **Public Art Exercise due (on-line submission), by 5:00 pm.**
- 11/07: **Discussion Day, Postmodernism (please bring the readings to class with you today, in HARD COPY FORM);** reading—Jean-François Lyotard, "Introduction to *The Postmodern Condition*," in *AIT*, pp. 1122-1123; Craig Owens, from "The Allegorical



Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism,” in *AIT*, pp. 1025-1032; Fredric Jameson, “The Deconstruction of Expression,” in *AIT*, pp. 1046-1051.

11/09: Process Art and Earthworks; reading—Arnason, pp. 587-605; Rosalind Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field” (supplementary reading available on Canvas); **T.A. Essay #2 assigned.**

11/14: Appropriation in the 1980s; reading—Arnason, pp. 658-665; Sherrie Levine, “Statement,” in *AIT*, pp. 1038-1039; Barbara Kruger, “‘Taking’ Pictures,” in *AIT*, pp. 1041-1042.

11/16: Postmodernism in Architecture; reading—Arnason, pp. 629-657.

11/17: Class does not meet as a group, but **T.A. Essay #2 due (on-line submission), by 5:00 pm.**

11/21: Thanksgiving Break—class does not meet!

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

11/28: Neo-Expressionism, Neo-Geo, and Graffiti Art; reading—Arnason, pp. 666-694; Joseph Beuys, Jannis Kounellis, Anselm Kiefer, Enzo Cucchi, from “The Cultural-Historical Tragedy of the European Continent,” in *AIT*, pp. 1143-1146; Gerhard Richter, from “Interview with Benjamin Buchloh,” in *AIT*, pp. 1147-1157; Peter Halley, “Nature and Culture,” in *AIT*, pp. 1042-1045.

11/30: Commodity Art, Installation Art, recent abstract sculpture, film as art, art history as art, the art of biography; reading—Arnason, pp. 695-728; Donald Judd, “from ‘... not about master-pieces but why there are so few of them,’” in *AIT*, pp. 1139-1143.

12/05: The globalization of the art world; reading Arnason, pp. 729-760; Edward Said, *From Orientalism*, in *AIT*, pp. 1005-1009; Homi K. Bhabha, “On ‘hybridity’ and ‘moving beyond,’” in *AIT*, pp. 1110-1116.

12/07: Pre-Finals Day—informal Final Exam review; attendance is optional; students will need to come prepared with questions/topics for review.

12/12 (Tuesday): **Final Exam**, 1:30 pm-3:30 pm, ART 288.

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