Instructor: Dr. Kurt Rahmlow  
Office: Art Building, Room 217  
Office phone: 940-369-7952  
E-mail: Please use Blackboard  
Office hours: T, Th 12:45-1:45, W 10:00-11:00, as well as by appointment

**AEAH 4801:**  
**Topics in Art History—The Pop Art Tradition**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Selected topics in the history of art.

**COURSE CONTENT:** This course will consider the importance of mass culture to visual art in the post-war period. More specifically, though, it will be structured around an intriguing contradiction: While much contemporary art history views Pop as a radical break from Modernist approaches to art-making, one can identify a Pop tradition within avant-garde practice—one that Pop itself occasionally references. And yet it is also clear that, in many ways, Pop reformulates the very concept of tradition. To be sure, Pop Art self-consciously privileges an existing cultural context, much as Neo-Classical painters of the nineteenth century did, but Pop artists tend to lead our attention away from the revered masterworks of “high” culture and toward the common, the everyday, the “low.” Or if they reference high Modernism, they do so in a way that foregrounds the importance of popular culture to the history of avant-garde art. This peculiarity will frame our activities in this course. We will begin by briefly exploring the ways in which mass culture played a central role in Modernism—from Impressionist and Post-Impressionist depictions of magazines and popular novels to Cubist collages of newspapers and Dada and Surrealist appropriations of industrially produced commodities. The main focus of the course, however, will be on the new and important ways in which this tradition reasserts itself in the 1950s and 1960s. We will explore a range of contexts, including Pop Art in England, Neo-Dada in the U.S., the Nouveau Réalisme in Europe, and, of course, Pop Art in America. We will conclude by considering the continuing importance of this Pop tradition for contemporary practitioners. 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 PowerPoint lectures and large- and small-group discussions of critical texts and artworks. Students will be required to conduct a narrowed, independent course of research that will be focused by a series of short writing assignments.

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

Please also bear this in mind: You may also find this course intellectually challenging. The art of the post-war period tends to be, philosophically 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.
COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. To learn about the history of Pop Art—its precursors, its full flowering, and its influence.
2. To develop and hone research skills.
3. To develop and hone skills of analysis and critical thinking.
4. To develop advanced writing skills.
5. To develop the skills necessary to organizing and carrying through an extended project.

Course Textbooks


Using “Blackboard”

I will post a number of important documents to the course Website on “Blackboard,” including this syllabus, informational sheets and handouts, and 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 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.

Course Requirements

Attendance—5% of final grade
Participation—15% of final grade
Textual Analysis Paper #1—10% of final grade
Textual Analysis Paper #2—10% of final grade
Annotated Bibliography—20% of final grade
Mid-Term Examination—20% of final grade
Final Examination/Optional Research Paper—20% 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. 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 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 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.

Annnotated Bibliography
In lieu of a final research paper, I will be requiring all students to assemble an annotated bibliography of 5 to 7 critical or theoretical texts that relate to a specific work of art. I will describe this assignment in more detail as the term progresses. 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 Blackboard.
Textual Analysis Papers
As the term winds down, you will write two **600- to 800-word** essays treating the critical and theoretical readings listed on the course schedule. This project will be designed: 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 will be posted to Blackboard. These essays will receive a numerical grade 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.

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 and essay questions. Exams will receive a number grade ranging from 0 to 100. Corresponding letter grades will conform to the grading scale listed below.

Optional Research Paper
At the end of term, students will have the option of writing a short research paper (of **2,000-3,000** words) treating their chosen work of art instead of sitting the final exam (the research paper grade will replace the final exam grade). If you are an art history major or you want to work on developing your writing skills, you may want to consider this option. I will circulate an assignment sheet detailing the requirements later in the term. This project 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 Blackboard.

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 begun grading, late submissions will no longer be accepted. All late major assignments will be penalized **ten points (the equivalent of one full letter grade)** for every calendar day they are late. Homework assignments must also be submitted electronically, using the assignment function on Blackboard—please note that these will NOT be accepted late without documentation of hardship. 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, documented excuse (due to unavoidable circumstance—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 for **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, 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.

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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<td>A-</td>
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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 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.

_Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress_

Please be advised of the following university policy: A student must maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) to continue to receive financial aid. Students must maintain a minimum 2.0 cumulative GPA in addition to successfully completing a required number of credit hours based on total registered hours per term. Students cannot exceed attempted credit hours above 150% of their required degree plan. If a student does not maintain the required standards, the student may lose their financial aid eligibility. If at any point you consider dropping this or any other course, please be advised that the decision to do so may have the potential to affect your current and future financial aid eligibility. Please visit “http://financialaid.unt.edu/
satisfactory-academic-progress-requirements” for more information about financial aid
Satisfactory Academic Progress. It may be wise for you to schedule a meeting with an academic
advisor in your college or visit the Student Financial Aid and Scholarships office to discuss
dropping a course before doing so.

Course Schedule

08/28: Introductions; overview of course material

08/30: The Art Academies and the Role of Tradition

09/01: Defining Pop Art; Defining Culture: High vs. Low

Gans, Herbert J. Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of

09/04: Labor Day—class does not meet!

09/06: Nineteenth-Century Pop Precursors—Realism

“Realism” on Blackboard

Schapiro, Meyer. “Courbet and Popular Imagery.” In Modern Art, 19th and 20th

09/08: Nineteenth-Century Pop Precursors (cont.)—Impressionism; Annotated Bibliography
Assigned

“Impressionism” on Blackboard

09/11: Impressionism (cont.)

Isaacson, Joel. “Impressionism and Journalistic Illustration.” Arts Magazine 56 (June

09/13: Twentieth-Century Pop Precursors—Cubism; Textual Analysis Paper #1 assigned;
topic of Annotated Bibliography due on Blackboard.

“Cubism” on Blackboard


09/15: Cubism (cont.), followed by a primer on academic writing

09/18: Twentieth-Century Pop Precursors (cont.)—Dada

“Dada” on Blackboard


09/20: Twentieth-Century Pop Precursors (cont.)—Surrealism

“Surrealism” on Blackboard

Breton, André. From the “First Manifesto of Surrealism” (1924). In *AIT*, pp. 447-453. On Blackboard.


09/22: Early Thought on Art and Mass Culture, followed by a primer on using Turnitin and a primer on CMoS footnote form


09/25: Early Thought on Art and Mass Culture (cont.), followed by a discussion of research tools; *Textual Analysis Paper #1 due*


09/27: Neo-Dada


09/29: Neo-Dada (cont.)


10/02: The Advent of Commodity Culture

10/04: Readings on Commerce and Culture


10/06: The Beginning of Pop in England

Livingstone, pp. 33-45.


10/09: The Beginning of Pop in England (cont.); Mid-Term Exam review materials distributed


10/11: Nouveau Réalisme

Livingstone, pp. 47-61.


10/13: Nouveau Réalisme (cont.)


10/16: Mid-Term Exam

10/18: Pop Art in America, the Early Years

Livingstone, pp. 63-91.

10/20: Pop Art in America, the Early Years (cont.)


10/23: Pop Art in America, the Early Years (cont.), followed by more thoughts on kitsch


10/25: The Second Wave of Pop in England, followed by a primer on *CMoS* bibliographic form

Livingstone, pp. 93-113.

10/27: Pop in America, 1962-64

Livingstone, pp. 115-139.

10/30: Pop in America, 1962-64 (cont.)

11/01: Pop Art in America, 1962-64 (cont.)


11/03: Pop Art in Europe, 1960 and after; Annotated Bibliography due

Livingstone, pp. 141-159.

11/06: Pop Art in Europe, 1960 and after, followed by a primer on effectively integrating source texts; Textual Analysis Paper #2 assigned


11/13: Pop Art in America, 1965 and After

11/15: Pop Art in America, 1965 and After (cont.)

11/17: Modernism vs. Postmodernism
   Jameson, Fredric. “Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.” In
   *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke

11/20: Movie Day! In-class screening of *Exit Through the Gift Shop* (2010); Textual Analysis
   Paper #2 due

11/22: Movie Day! In-class screening of *Exit Through the Gift Shop* (2010)

11/24: No class today; Thanksgiving break!

11/27: Pop’s Legacy in the 1980s
   Livingstone, pp. 221-248.

11/29: Pop’s Legacy in the 1980s (cont.)
   Blackboard.

12/01: Pop’s Legacy in the 1980s (cont.); Final Exam review materials distributed.

12/04: Pop’s Legacy in the 1990s; post an artist’s Website to the Blackboard Discussion Board
   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 and why you think her or his
   work relates to the theme of this course. Please make the artist’s name the title of your post.
   To find the Discussion Board, click on the “Communications” button on the Blackboard
   menu.
   Forgacs, Eva. “Toys Are Us: Toys and the Childlike in Recent Art.” *Art Criticism* 16, no.

12/06: Pre-finals Day—discussion of contemporary artists’ websites (review your classmates’
   postings, and come to class prepared with two suggestions for review and discussion as a
   group)
12/08: Reading Day—class does not meet!

12/11 (Monday): Final Exam, 10:30 am-12:30 pm.

*The instructor reserves the right to alter this syllabus at his discretion, with or without notice.*
AEAH 4801:  
Topics in Art History—The Pop Art Tradition

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, 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, with or without notice.

___________________________________________
Signature

___________________________________________    _______________________
Printed name                                      Date

__________________________________________________________
Student ID Number or EUID

Note: The return of this syllabus agreement is required for continued enrollment in the course. Students who return a signed agreement without being issued a reminder will receive credit for a participation grade. If I have to remind you to return this form (by issuing e-mails, etc.), you will not receive credit for a participation grade.