America in the Arts

Fall 2010

01:050:216:01

M/W 3:55 – 5:15
RAB 206

Course Description:
This course is designed to both promote a familiarity with America’s most famous and influential art movements, as well as to provoke an examination as to why these movements have become so closely associated with American culture. The definition of the “Arts” will be broadened to include fine arts, crafts, outsider art and decorative art, as well as music and the performing arts. Students should question what each artistic manifestation reveals about an American social consciousness. Reflections on the practice of art collecting and museum studies will also play a role throughout the course and the final assignment will include the option to create one’s own unique work of art in the style of topics we will cover.

Learning Goals:
Upon completion of this course students will be able to:
- Analyze arts and/or literatures in themselves and in relation to American history, values, cultures, and technologies.
- Engage critically in the process of creative expression.
- Understand the ways in which aesthetic elements function to produce meaning for various audiences.
- Critically question constructed histories and re-examine definitions of “American” culture.
- Recognize canonical American artists and musicians.

Graded work and expectations:
Participation: 10%
Writing Assignment One/Museum Project: 15%
Writing Assignment Two: 15%
Final Presentation: 10%
Final Project: 30%
Final Exam: 20%

**Plagiarism and academic honesty**
Please familiarize yourself with the definition of plagiarism in Rutgers’s official policy statement on academic integrity: [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml). As a student in this course, you are responsible for thoroughly understanding and adhering to the rules of academic honesty outlined in this statement. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade.

**Course materials and resources**

*Required readings*

You should purchase the following book, which has been ordered for you at the Rutgers University Bookstore. All other readings on our syllabus have been posted to Sakai.


**Course Expectations**

Due dates for your assignments are listed in the weekly syllabus below.

Detailed descriptions of individual writing assignments will be provided in separate handouts and will be posted to Sakai for your convenience. We will discuss their respective details in class thoroughly.

Attendance and prompt arrival at all classes is required; two or more unexcused absences will result in a half a letter grade reduction, per each unexcused absence that exceeds two class meetings.

Late work will receive a half a letter grade reduction per class; if two classes pass after the due date, your work will receive a failing grade.

Exceptions will be made in documented cases of illness, family emergencies, religious holidays, etc. Please be proactive in monitoring your attendance and keep me informed of any situations that might affect your performance in the course and result in late work.

Should you have a any form of a documented disability and require assistance please contact University Disability Services in order to be properly accommodated.

[http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html](http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html)

**Writing style/format**

All of the writing assignments for this course must be typed and should adhere to the following style: 12-point, Times New Roman font; double spacing; single-sided pages; and 1-inch margins on all side. Please include footnotes or end notes as needed, as well as a bibliography, both of which should adhere to either MLA or Chicago style. MLA and Chicago style guides are available in libraries.
throughout campus. See a librarian if you need assistance locating a guide. Either choice is fine, just be consistent with your format of choice.

**Course Schedule:** Please note the readings and schedule below is subject to change at the instructor’s discretion.

**Wed., Sept 1st:** Introduction to Course Objectives, Review of Syllabus

**Mon., Sept 6th:** NO CLASS

**Wed. Sept 8th:** Defining an “American” Art: America’s European Roots  
**In Class:** Visual Analysis Activity  
**Reading:**  

**Mon., Sept 13th:** Documenting “New Terrain” in a Familiar Style: American History Painting  
**Reading:**  
Groseclose, Barbara pgs 12-17 from “The Profession of the Artist” In *Nineteenth-Century American Art.*  

**Wed., Sept 15th:** Picturing the “Face of a New Nation”: American Portraiture  
**Reading:**  

**Mon., Sept 20th:** Breaking Tradition, Celebrating “America”: The Landscape Tradition  
**Reading:**  

**Wed., Sept 22nd:** A Minor Detail: The Decorative Arts in America

**Reading:**

**Mon., Sept 27th:** Defining a Different Tradition: American Folk and Outsider Art

**Reading:**
*In class viewing: The Quilts of Gee’s Bend*
Propokow, Michael J. “’The Quilts of Gee’s Bend’ at the Whitney Museum of Art: An Exhibition Review.” pgs. 57-66

**Wed., Sept 29th:** The “Other” American Art: American Orientalism, The Native American and the African American

**Reading:**
Linda Nochlin, “The Imaginary Orient,” *Art in America* 71, no. 5 pgs. 118-31, 186-91
Oleg Grabar, “Roots and Others,” in *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930,* edited by Holly Edwards, 3-10
Hight, Kathryn S. “’Doomed to Perish’: George Catlin’s Depictions of the Mandan.” In *Reading American Art.* pgs. 150 – 162.

**Mon., Oct 4th:** Collecting America: The formation of American Museums

**Due in class: Proposed topic or general idea for final project**

**Reading:**

**Wed., Oct 6th:** CLASS CANCELED IN LIEU OF FRIDAY MUSEUM VISIT

**Reading:**

**FRIDAY, Oct 8th – Museum Visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art - DETAILS TBD**

**Mon., Oct 11th:** Late 19th Century American Art: American Impressionism, The Ashcan School, and “The Expatriates”

**Reading:**
Gerdts, William “Americans and Impressionism.” In *American Impressionism* pgs. 29 –53
Linda Merrill, “Whistler in America,” in After Whistler: The Artist and His Influence on American Painting, pgs. 10-31

**Wed., Oct 13th:** Performing America: An Overview of Early American Music
Due in class: Writing Assignment One/Museum Project
Reading:

**Mon., Oct 18th:** Vaudeville and American Musical Theatre
Reading:
In class viewing: “Broadway!” Documentary film

**Wed., Oct 20th:** America at the Movies: Early American Film
Reading:
In class viewing: Selections of Early Silent film clips

**Mon., Oct 25th:** The New American Sound: Jazz
Reading:
In class viewing: “Jazz” Documentary Film by Ken Burns

**Wed., Oct 27th:** American Icons of Masculine Music: Elvis Presley and Frank Sinatra
Reading:
In class viewing: Selections of singing performances

**Mon., Nov 1st:** Hip-Hop
Reading:
In class viewing: “Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes”
Keyes, Cheryl L. “The Roots and Stylistic Foundations of the Rap Music Tradition” In The Hip Hop Reader. pgs. 3-16.

Reading:
Doss, Erika “Avant – Garde Art and Experimentation” In Twentieth Century American Art pgs. 53 – 72.

Mon., Nov 8th: Modernism in the City: The Harlem Renaissance, Georgia O’Keefe
Due in class: Writing Assignment Two
Reading:
Doss, Erika “Modernism and the Interwar Years” In Twentieth Century American Art. pgs. 75 – 95.

Reading:
Doss, Erika. “Abstract Expressionism.” In Twentieth Century American Art pgs. 119 – 137
Pollock, Jackson “Statements” pgs. 1-20

Mon., Nov 15th: Answering Abstract Expressionism: Andy Warhol, America’s Artist Celebrity and The Pop Art Movement
Reading:
Doss, Erika “Neo- Dada and Pop Art” In Twentieth Century American Art pgs. 139 - 159
Selected Interviews with the Artist

Wed., Nov 17th: The Aesthetics of Adversity: American Art meets Politics, Race, and Gender
Reading:
Doss, Erika “Minimalism and Conceptual Art” In Twentieth Century American Art pgs 161 - 179
Doss, Erika “Feminist and Black Art” In Twentieth Century American Art pgs. 181 – 201
Mulvey, Laura “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”

Mon., Nov 22nd: Contemporary American Art: The Art World Today
Reading:
Wed., Nov 24th: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK

Mon., Nov 29th: Student Presentations

Wed., Dec 1st: Student Presentations

Mon., Dec 6th: Student Presentations

Wed., Dec 8th: Student Presentations

Mon., Dec 13th: Student Presentations
FINAL PROJECTS DUE IN CLASS

Final Exam: as Scheduled by University
(Currently Scheduled: Dec 16th 8 AM- 11AM)
http://finalexams.rutgers.edu/