

Brooklyn College
Fall 2017

Instructor: Joseph Henry
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ARTD.1010 – Art: Its History and Meaning

Overview:

This course introduces students to the visual arts, applied arts, and architecture of the world from the ancient period to the present day. Our goal is less to gain a proper “introduction” to art history than to understand how images and things construct culture as such. Through thematic lectures, frequent short writing assignments, and in-class participation, students will explore how aesthetic form can shape historical dynamics such as political power, religious belief, cultural identity, notions of temporality, the public sphere, understandings of the body, the avant-garde, and the ontological status of objects. Although we’ll practice art historical interpretive techniques and methods, we’ll also draw on basic concepts across the social sciences and humanities for our broad scope.

Evaluation:

Students will be expected to read all assigned material and come to class prepared to participate in discussion. Evaluation will consist of five, 500-word writing assignments, a revised version of any one of these assignments, and a final exam. The final grade will also factor in student participation and attendance

Each writing assignment tackles a different skill; the first asks students to conduct an “instinctual” analysis based on their feelings and questions toward a work of art; the second, a close formal analysis of an object; the third, an historical analysis of an object; the fourth, an architectural analysis of a building in their neighborhood; and the fifth, a comparison between two works. Toward the end of the semester, students will submit a revision of one of these assignments following a peer-editing process. More detailed instructions regarding these assignments will be conveyed as the semester progresses.

To encourage a relaxed and habitual attitude toward writing, these short essays will be graded casually and generously. However, *no late work will be accepted*. The objective is to get you to practice writing while enforcing and developing academic skills and discipline.

The final exam will cover the material of the entire semester. While the assignments will gauge your writing and interpretive skills, the final exam will measure how you’ve

engaged with lecture material, followed our readings, and generally learned something about the cultures we'll engage.

Attendance will be measured sporadically to evaluate attendance, through roll call or collected, in-class assignments. *Coming to class more than 15 minutes late will be considered an absence.* The final participation grade will be a holistic consideration of attendance, participation in class, consultation in office hours, and related activities.

Grading will follow a standard CUNY scale (A+: 97 - 100%; A: 93 - 96%; A-: 90 - 92%; B+: 87 - 89%; B: 83 - 86; B-: 80 - 82%; etc.).

- Assignments: 60% of the total grade (10% each)
- Final Exam: 30% of the total grade
- Participation: 10% of the total grade

Students can receive extra-credit for attending scholarly lectures and other academic programs throughout the semester, including those at Brooklyn College. Such events can be found at websites such as Platform for Pedagogy (*platformed.org*) or at institutions like NYU's Institute of Fine Arts. Students can receive *one point* if they write a 500-word description of the event's content and provide some proof of attendance, such as a signature or picture. Potential extra-credit events should be run by me first.

Class Content:

Each lecture will be centered around a particular theme, such as "Power," "Corporeality," or "Critique." These topics will help us situate the particular art under analysis in larger themes and even present-day cultural concerns. *Readings will all be available online:* they come mostly from the website Smarthistory and the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History (hereafter abbreviated as "HTAH").

Classroom Courtesy:

Computers will not be allowed during class: they not only distract your classmates but discourage the close, sustained looking required for each session. You should be able to bring notes on readings to class and to synthesize lecture material by hand. While I will not police cell phone use, constant texting or internet browsing will be noticed and taken into account for the participation grade. You are welcome to speak to me individually if any of these conditions poses issues.

Schedule and Readings:

- August 28: ***Class Overview and Study Skills***
- August 30: The Elements of Style
 - Marjorie Munsterberg, “Formal Analysis,” *writingaboutart.org*.
- September 4: ***No Class***
- September 6: Ancient Mesopotamian Art: “Power”
 - Marjorie Munsterbeg, “Historical Analysis,” *writingaboutart.org*.
 - Kim Benzel, Sarah B. Graff, Yelena Rakic, and Edith W. Watts, *Art of the Ancient Near East: A Resource for Educators* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010), p. 9-38.
- September 11: Ancient Egyptian Art: “Eternity”
 - “Ancient Egypt: A Beginner’s Guide,” Smarthistory (*read whole section*), various dates.
- September 13: Ancient Greek Sculpture: “Idealism”
 - “Ancient Greece: A Beginner’s Guide,” Smarthistory (*read whole section*), various dates.
 - Jean Sorabella, “The Nude in Western Art and its Beginnings in Antiquity,” HTAH, 2008.

- Colette Hemingway and Seán Hemingway, “The Art of Classical Greece (ca. 480-323 B.C),” HTAH, 2008.

September 18:

Instinctual Analysis due

Ancient Greek Architecture: “Idealism”

- Colette Hemingway, “Architecture in Ancient Greece,” HTAH, 2003.

September 25:

Ancient Roman Art: “Propaganda”

- “Ancient Rome: A Beginner’s Guide,” Smarthistory (first four links), various dates.

- Neil Faulkner, “The Official Truth: Propaganda in the Roman Empire,” *BBC*, February 2, 2011.

September 27:

Hindu Art: “Corporeality”

- Melody Rod-Ari, “Hinduism and Buddhism, an Introduction,” Smarthistory, 2016.

- Vidya Dehejia, “South Asian Art and Culture,” HTAH, 2007.

- Vidya Dehejia, “Hindu Art,” HTAH, 2007.

October 2:

Early Christian Art: “Program”

- Allen Farber, “Early Christianity, an Introduction” and “Early Christian Art,” Smarthistory, 2015.

October 4:

Formal Analysis due

Byzantine Art: “Iconomania”

- “Byzantine: A Beginner’s Guide,” Smarthistory (whole section), various dates.

- Sarah Brooks, “Icons and Iconoclasm in Byzantium,” HTAH, 2009.

- “Byzantium & Iconoclasm,” *Faith, Imagined*, Columbia University.

October 11:

Indigenous Mesoamerican Art: “Theatricality”

- “La Venta,” “Teotihuacan,” “Teotihuacan: Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon,” “Tenochtitlan,” “Tenochtitlan: Templo Mayor,” HTAH (various dates).

- October 16: Indigenous Northwest Pacific Art: “Transformation”
 - “Native North American Art after 1600: A Beginner’s Guide,” Smarthistory (*both sections*), various dates.
 - “Northwest Coast,” Smarthistory (*both sections*), various dates.
- October 18: Chinese Art: “Abstraction”
 - Maxwell Hearn, “Chinese Painting, HTAH, 2008.
 - “Landscape Painting in Chinese Art” and “Painting Formats in East Asian Art,” HTAH, various dates.
- October 23: ***Historical Analysis due***
Romanesque Art: “Publics”
 - “Romanesque: A Beginner’s Guide,” Smarthistory (*whole section*), various dates.
 - Julien Chapis, “Romanesque Art,” HTAH, 2002.
 - Melanie Holcomb, “Medieval European Sculpture for Buildings,” HTAH, 2001.
- October 25: Art of the Benin Empire: “Sovereignty”
- October 30: Islamic Architecture: “Ornamentation”
 - “Arts of the Islamic World, 640 to Now: A Beginner’s Guide,” Smarthistory (*whole section*), various dates.
 - “Vegetal Patterns in Islamic Art,” Smarthistory, 2001.
- November 1: Islamic Applied Arts: “Ornamentation”
 - Marika Sadar, “The Arts of the Book in the Islamic World, 1600-1800,” HTAH, 2003.
 - “Calligraphy in Islamic Art,” “Geometric Patterns in Islamic Art,” and “Figural Representation in Islamic Art,” HTAH, various dates.
- November 6: Italian Renaissance: “Convention”
 - Beth Harris and Steven Zucker, “How to Recognize Italian Renaissance Art,” Smarthistory, 2017.
 - “Renaissance in Italy: 1500s: A Beginner’s Guide,” Smarthistory, (*whole section*), various dates.
 - “The Rediscovery of Classical Antiquity” and “Architecture in Renaissance Italy,” HTAH, various dates.

- November 8: ***Architectural Analysis due***
Italian Baroque: “Emotion”
 - Steven Zucker and Beth Harris, “Introduction to the Protestant Reformation (part 4 of 4): The Counter-Reformation,” Smarthistory, 2015.
 - “Baroque Art: 1600s: A Beginner’s Guide,” Smarthistory (*whole section*), various dates.
 - Jean Sorabella, “Baroque Rome,” HTAH, 2003.
 - “The Papacy and the Vatican Palace,” HTAH, 2002.
- November 13: Dutch Baroque: “Secularism”
 - Jennifer Meagher, “Genre Painting in Northern Europe,” HTAH, 2008.
 - Walter Liedtke, “Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675),” “Landscape Painting in the Netherlands,” and “Still-Life Painting in Northern Europe, 1600-1800,” HTAH, various dates.
- November 15: Shinto Architecture: “Purity”
 - “Shinto,” HTAH, 2002.
- November 20: Photography: “Indexicality”
 - Parme Giuntini, “Becoming Modern, an Introduction,” Smarthistory, 2015.
 - Malcolm Daniel, “Daguerre (1787-1851) and the Invention of Photography” and “William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877) and the Invention of Photography,” HTAH, 2004.
 - Lisa Hostetler, “International Pictorialism” and “Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946) and His Circle,” HTAH, 2004.
- November 22: French Realism: “Proletariat”
 - Jason Rosenfeld, “The Salon and the Royal Academy in the Nineteenth Century,” HTAH, 2004.
 - Ross Finocchio, “Nineteenth-Century French Realism,” HTAH, 2004.
 - Kathryn Calley Galitz, “Gustave Courbet (1819-1877),” HTAH, 2009.
- November 27: ***Comparison Assignment due***
French Impressionism: “Temporality”
 - “Impressionism: A Beginner’s Guide,” Smarthistory, various dates.
 - Margaret Samu, “Impressionism: Art and Modernity,” HTAH, 2004.
 - Laura Auricchio, “Claude Monet (1840-1926),” HTAH, 2004. ‘
 - Ruth Schenkel, “Edgar Degas (1834-1917): Painting and Drawing,” HTAH, 2004.
- November 29: The International Style: “Reduction”

- Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Philip Johnson, and Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Jr., introduction to *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1932), 12-28.

December 4:

Dada: "Critique"

- Nan Rosenthal, "Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968)," HTAH, 2004.
- Tristan Tzara, "Dada Manifesto 1918," 1918.
- *The Blind Man* 2 (May 1917): 4-6.

December 6:

Postwar American Art: "Experimentation"

- "Conceptual Art: An Introduction," Smarthistory, 2015.
- Virginia P. Spivey, "Performance Art: An Introduction," Smarthistory, 2015.
- Douglas Eklund, "Conceptual Art and Photography," HTAH, 2004.
- Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," 1967.

December 11:

Contemporary Art: "Technology"

- Virginia P. Spivey, "Contemporary Art, an Introduction," Smarthistory, 2015.
- Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image," *e-flux* 10 (November 2009).

December 13:

Revision Assignment due

December 20:

Final Exam