

## Syllabus: Art 395: Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Art



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Office: NFAC 193, off the northwest corner of the NFAC Courtyard.

Office Hours:  
On record: MWF 9:00-9:45 AM, or by appointment. In fact, I'm around a lot, as indicated in the schedule below, so feel free to drop by).

Here is my Weekly Schedule:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00-9:50	Office	Usually around somewhere	Office	Usually around somewhere	Office
10:00-10:50	Art 387: Baroque etc.		Art 387: Baroque etc.		Art 387: Baroque etc.
11:00-11:50	Art 395: 20 <sup>th</sup> C. American Art		Art 395: 20 <sup>th</sup> C. American Art		Art 395: 20 <sup>th</sup> C. American Art
12:00-12:50	Art 282 Western Survey: Section 1		Art 282 Western Survey: Section 1		Art 282 Western Survey: Section 1
1:00-1:50	Art 282 Western Survey: Section 2		Art 282 Western Survey: Section 2		Art 282 Western Survey: Section 2
2:00 ff	Available right at 2:00		Available right at 2:00		Available right at 2:00

Tuesdays and Thursdays I'm usually here 8:30-ish to 1:00-ish.

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### Catalogue Description:

Focus on the rise of Modernism and the birth of a modern art world in the United States, 1900-1920. Trace modernist philosophies, styles, and trends in both American and European Art through the end of World War II. Stieglitz, the Armory Show, Early American Modernists (including Georgia O'Keefe, Stuart Davis, et al.), Hopper, American Social Commentary, American Regionalist Schools, The Harlem Renaissance, European Dada, Surrealism, Russian/Soviet Constructivism, de Stijl, and the rise of the New York School are all fair game. Prereq: 283, or cons. Instr.

**Rental Textbook:** Wayne Craven, American Art: History and Culture

**What's *really* going on in this class (HEY!! READ THIS!!):** The century from the 1850s through World War II was a period of almost continuous, radical and spectacular artistic revolution, i.e., the rise of modernism, whatever that is. In Europe the rise of modernism was radical, revolutionary, antagonistic and dynamically successful. America, in contrast, was much more resistant. America couldn't hold out against modernism indefinitely, however, and watching the process by which the modern American art world came into being, will be our topic for these fifteen weeks. Fair warning: this means war! It will be a battle between deeply conservative elements, vaguely modernist elements, radically modernist elements, American working in Europe, Americans working in New York, Americans working (extremely differently) everywhere other than New York and a whole lot of Americans for whom modernism could never possibly make any sense (conservative too, but also completely clueless and proud of it). These are not interest groups that can easily agree with each other, and they won't. Actually, that's much too weakly stated: to one degree or another they will all try to wipe each other out. War. The nature of what art was, who got to decide what it meant and how they (yes, plural) did so were in constant flux, under the influence of individual characters, philosophies, social classes and governmental institutions that not only had not existed before 1900, but also were essentially unimaginable before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Europe did the same things a couple generations earlier, and we'll have to look at some of that too, but in particular we will have to consider how America ended up with an actually modernist art culture or art world. Artists alone couldn't do that. A gene pool of modernist patrons, critics and non-buyers who go to modern art galleries anyway has to be established, from scratch, and kept interested.

We can't possibly cover it all, but here's the initial plan, and then we'll do what we can until we run out of time. 1) Deep background, introducing the American Art World prior to 1900, which Art 283 does not cover. 2) The first attempt at a more contemporary art world by Robert Henri, The Eight, The Ashcan School etc. 3) The Armory Show of 1913. 4) Alfred Stieglitz and the birth of Art Photography in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (and tons else: Stieglitz is huge). 5) Modernist followers of Alfred Stieglitz, including several Americans based mostly in Europe (Dove, the Synchronists, Hartley and Weber). 6) Futurists and Surrealists, sort of (ex-patriot Europeans of one sort or another) 7) Stuart Davis and Georgia O'Keeffe. 8) Photography and Precisionism. 8) Social commentary painting (Marsh, Shinn, Soyer, Lawrence). 9) Edward Hopper. 10) Regionalists. If we get this far, it'll be amazing. But then, if you believe in fairies, clap three times and: 11) Lichitz, Smith, Gorky, Hofmann and the foundation of the New York School. Maybe even Calder.

**Nitty Gritty:** As usual, this syllabus constitutes **THE RULES** for this course. Both you and I are bound by these rules. If I make a mistake, it is my fault and it is up to me to correct it. You won't be left holding the bag. Ever. All exams and paper deadlines will take place as scheduled here too; the course requirements will not be summarily changed; no extra exams or exercises will be inserted, etc. You can count on this document. On the other hand, read this syllabus carefully, because if you run afoul of anything in it you will have no recourse: the class takes place according to these rules.

**Important announcements and other useful information concerning this class will be distributed by e-mail and a lot of stuff, including study images, will be posted to our D2L Site.** NB: announcements will use the UWSP e-mail distribution list, so please check your UWSP e-mail account regularly, at least once a week, even if you are in the habit of communicating by another address, Twitter, Facebook or whatever. This is a requirement.

Please feel free to come talk to me at any time about any aspect of this class. I am more than happy to help you in any way that I can. I will be on campus daily Monday through Friday, more or less 8:30-2:00, and most weekends 9:00-ish to 2:00-ish as well. If I'm around, I'm available. C'mon in! If I'm not in my office I will put a card in the name slot on my office door telling you where to come look for me. Don't be bashful: you are the reason professors exist, and some of us love to be useful. If you have trouble running me down during the day, just nab me before or after class and we can make an appointment.

**I do not return phone calls, however.** If you need to talk to me I am readily available as is: the ball is in your court. Please do not attempt to contact me at home. You hereby have my permission, in writing, to wait until the next day.

### **Course Requirements and Significant Dates:**

Lecture attendance and readings in the textbook.

Exam 1: 50 Minute Essay Exam: Monday 16 October (Week 7).

Exam 2: 50 Minute Essay Exam: Wednesday 15 November (Week 11).

Term Paper Due: Wednesday 22 November.

**Thanksgiving Break: Thursday 23 November – Sunday 26 November**

Alternative Due Date for Term Paper: Monday 27 November (see below)

**Final Exam:** Thursday 21 December, at 2:45 PM

I may create an alternative exam time for the Final Exam too, since ours is so late in the week, and I'll make that very clear if and when it happens.

**Please note: the Course Requirements are Requirements, not options: if you skip an exam, you will not have met the course requirements and will get an F for the semester regardless of your other scores.** There is wiggle-room on attendance, however, since all lectures will be recorded and posted on D2L. The textbook for this class is a good basic foundation, but it isn't very detailed. Assigned readings are part of the course and I expect everyone to do them. It is best to do them as close to the beginning of the coverage of a given artist as possible and, because the texts are brief, it'll be easy to find the time to do them. So do.

Exams will consist of slide IDs and essays (individual slides or comparison pairs), in standard Art History Essay format. If you don't recall this from Art 283, come chat. The exams will *not* be cumulative, including the final. There will NOT be other exercises, like Technical Term definitions, but I expect all relevant terms to be used appropriately in essays.

**Term Paper instructions** will be posted later in the semester. The Due Date for those is the day before Thanksgiving break. I strongly recommend taking it easy over break, as much as possible, and I don't want you working for this class during that time. But...

...**Alternative Due Date for Term Paper:** if you actually need extra time to work on the paper, let me know before November 22, and I'll let you hand it in the Monday after break instead. ***But, really, hand it in on time so you can use the break to take an actual break.*** With no other major break in the Fall semester, you really do need the opportunity to recuperate.

I do not take roll and I do not need any sort of excuse for missing a regular class meeting. If you miss a regular class meeting, that material will always be posted on D2L and you can catch up on it on your own.

**I do require prior notification and a valid excuse if you are going to miss an exam. The WORST THING YOU CAN DO IN THIS CLASS is simply not show up for an exam and expect to talk your way out of it afterwards.** I regularly fail students who try to do this. If you have a conflict with one of my exams, like a field trip, sports team commitment, etc., come chat **in advance** and we'll make arrangements. Even if you had a flawless excuse, if you don't come work out a solution in advance, you're dead (viz, "the worst thing you can do in this class", above). **If a substantial emergency crops up at the last minute, you must document both the emergency itself and its last-minute timing.** Colds, laryngitis and other minor ailments are not an excuse. If an emergency crops up, leave me an e-mail or answering machine message, **BEFORE** the exam (e-mail & voicemail record the arrival times of messages, so that will prove that you made the deadline). Then come in when you're better and we'll get matters straightened out. Exams usually must be made up within a calendar week of the scheduled date, unless we arrange otherwise.

**Class discussion and visual analysis** of works will be important components of this course. I will feel free to raise your grade based on your in-class performance, but I will never lower your grade due to *good-faith* participation in class discussions. Conversely, **I do reserve the right to lower the grade, fail or eject from the course anyone who disrupts the lectures or discussions. Conversing with the person next to you can qualify as disruption, even if it has to do with the subject at hand; if it's not part of the whole group's discussion it must wait until after class.**

**I do not allow the use of cell-phones, smart-phones, computers, netbooks, MP3 Players, I-Pods, I-Pads, any other sort of "pad" or ANY other electronic communication, recording or sound devices of any kind in class.** Lecture recordings, Power-point PDFs and other study materials will all be posted in D2L.

#### **General Grading Criteria:**

**A: Superior Work.** Demonstrated detailed command of the subject, including historical, social and cultural interpretation, thoughtfully related to imagery and style. Creatively and lucidly expressed, consistently using appropriately sophisticated terminology and with everything spelled right. Obviously cares about the material, including well formulated personal opinions where appropriate. (etc. etc.; this is a notably demanding standard and I don't give very many A's.).

**B: Good Work.** Demonstrated a solid command of the subject, in good detail, clearly expressed, with nothing important left out. Enough cultural context to make sense of the style, and a good command of appropriate terminology. Correct grammar and spelling. Clear, orderly, knowledgeable essay. Most essays by students who put serious focus into this class get grades in the B range.

**C: Competent Work.** A reasonable job. Learned most of the facts and can reproduce some appropriate interpretation of them. Reasonable spelling. NB: Everything you say in a given essay can be correct and you can still earn a C if you leave out much. This is a pretty common essay grade.

**D: Less than Competent Work.** Mostly correct, but insufficient. Didn't learn all the basic facts, couldn't make detailed arguments with the facts that were learned, etc. Indifferent spelling and key art terms not used. Discussion of style alone, with no cultural context to explain it, earns a D, even if the style is very well handled. Visually winging an essay just by looking at the slide is very dangerous. It is better than leaving a complete blank, but that's what it takes to make a winged essay look good.

**F: Failure.** A diligent junior high school student could do better. Cheating earns an F too (0%).

**Documented Learning Disabilities:** I'm happy to accommodate students who have documented learning disabilities. If you need an accommodation you are certainly entitled to it. Everyone needs a fair shot at this class. Variations in testing format, etc. are all very easy to do. Come talk to me about your needs and I'll explain the procedure, or else go directly to the Disability and Assistive Technology Center in the LRC (Library) Room 609 (phone extension -3365). If you qualify, Disability Services will provide you with appropriate documentation that you will then bring to me for my signature. It is your responsibility to provide the documentation BEFORE exams start. Absolutely no accommodations can be made without it (that's the law: students with documented learning disabilities are entitled to accommodation, but they are also required to take care of the documentation in order to obtain it). Documentation submitted after an exam has been graded will not change the grade of the exam. I'm happy to help you with appropriate accommodation, but a learning disability does not absolve you of basic responsibility. Don't be bashful about this issue. Don't do badly on an exam before you get the accommodation to which you are entitled.