

**FMS 130: Freshman Seminar in the Fine Arts**  
**“Modern American Art through Controversy”**

**Spring 2011**  
**TR 9:30-10:45**

**Location**

**Instructor:** Jennifer Reich, Associate Director of CASA & Lecturer in the Department of Art  
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Office Hours: T 3:30-4:30, R 11-12, F 9-10 and by appointment

**Course Description:**

The history of modern American art has been shaped by themes and issues that have reappeared over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, frequently becoming highly publicized controversies. The rapid sequence of styles and movements (Realism to Abstract Expressionism to Pop Art to “art off the easel”) are woven together by an aesthetic of independence and individualism. American artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century simultaneously embraced and challenged standards of public taste. This course will examine many of the controversies that shaped modern American art, including the role of art critics, outsider art, public funding, and the role of museums.

**Student Learning Goals:**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Outline a brief history of modern American art, including demonstrating how art expresses the values of culture at a moment in time
- Explain how various controversies have shaped the history of modern art in America
- Discuss the major stylistic trends of modern American art, and identify the characteristics of these styles and their influences
- Evaluate art criticism
- Write clearly and concisely, constructing coherent arguments and utilizing proper citation methods

**Texts:**

Erika Doss, *Twentieth-Century American Art* (Oxford University Press, 2002)  
Patricia Hills, *Modern Art in the USA: Issues and Controversies of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Prentice-Hall, 2001)  
Henry M. Sayre, *Writing About Art*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition (Prentice-Hall, 2008)  
Various online readings available through Blackboard

**Grading:**

Personal definition of modern art	10%
Reading responses	20%
Class presentation	5%
Research paper	30%
Current events mini-essays	10%
Museum assignment	5%
<u>Class participation</u>	<u>20%</u>
	100%

A+	100-97	B+	89-87	C+	79-77	D+	69-67	F	Below 60
A	96-93	B	86-83	C	76-73	D	66-63		
A-	92-90	B-	82-80	C-	72-70	D-	62-60		

## Assignments:

1. Personal definition of modern art (10% total)  
What is modern art? What are some examples of modern art? What do you like about modern art? What do you dislike about modern art? Answer these questions in a brief (1-2 pages, typed and double-spaced) essay. You should not need to use outside sources to complete this assignment—rather, I really want to get to know *you* and what *you* think about modern art. This assignment will be assigned on the first day of class to be turned in on the second day of class (5%). Then, on the last day of class, we will revisit these definitions and you will have the chance to revise your personal definition if necessary (5%).
2. Reading responses (20%)  
Nearly every week, you will be responsible for answering a single question regarding some aspect of the weekly reading. These questions will be announced a week in advance in class and via Blackboard/email. Your response (1 page, typed and double-spaced) will be due Thursdays in class. Be sure to critically answer the question asked!
3. Class presentation (5%)  
Each Thursday, two students will be required to work together to introduce the reading response question of the day. This informal presentation should be designed to initiate the class discussion. The instructor will make presentation group and day assignments randomly at the end of the first week of class.
4. Two current events mini-essays (15%)  
You will write two short essays (2 pages, typed and double-spaced) relating a current event in the art world (found in a newspaper or Art journal like *ARTNews*) to a theme we have discussed in class. You should go beyond simply summarizing the current event. You need to make connections between the historical issue and the current event by interpreting and evaluating arguments. You should form a logical argument and provide support in a concise manner. You will receive feedback after the first mini-essay so that you will have the chance to improve for the next assignment.
5. Museum assignment (5%)  
The class will take a guided tour of the Weatherspoon Art Museum, UNCG's on-campus art museum. Following this tour, students will write a short (2 pages, typed and double-spaced) review of some element of the tour. Topics could include a specific exhibition/work/artist, the building itself, or anything else brought up during our tour.
6. Research paper (30% total)  
This assignment gives you an opportunity to explore a modern American art topic of your choice in greater depth. The paper must consist of original research and interpretation based in part on at least one pertinent work of modern American art. Your final paper should be 4-6 pages in length, typed and double-spaced. You should use Turabian style for citations. You are required to use at least four sources, only one of which may be an online source. The class will take a tour of Jackson Library in order to familiarize students with the resources available.
  - Prospectus (5%) – A prospectus is a proposal to undertake a research project. It should contain a clear, concise introduction to the topic of the research. You should state the main research question(s) that you hope to answer. Summarize the basic arguments that surround the research topic. You should provide at basic bibliographic information for at least two sources. Your prospectus should be 1 page, typed and double-spaced.
  - Rough draft (10%) – You will produce a rough draft at least four pages in length. You will participate in a peer workshop in class and follow-up with an instructor conference.

- Final paper (15%) – Based on comments from the peer workshop and instructor conference, you will revise and expand your paper.

#### 7. Class participation (15%)

Class participation is mandatory. Students should be ready to discuss each and every day. The instructor may call on students whether they volunteer or not. Please keep in mind that the quantity of contributions to the class discussion does not matter if the quality of the contribution is weak. You must have something significant to add! Additionally, part of participation in class discussion includes listening respectfully and critically to your classmates. Any cell phone usage during class will *NOT* be tolerated. It is disrespectful to your classmates and to me.

#### **Late work policy:**

I do not accept late work under *ANY* circumstance. If you will not be in class the day an assignment is due, you must make alternate arrangements to have your work submitted prior to class. Please plan ahead!

#### **Attendance:**

Seminars rely on student participation, and therefore attendance is extremely important. I will not keep track of excused vs. unexcused absences. Students are allowed three absences for whatever reason. After that, 5 points will be deducted from your final grade for each additional absence.

Once class has begun, you are tardy. Two late arrivals will count as the equivalent of one absence.

Any students reaching their 6<sup>th</sup> absence will receive a failing grade for the class.

When you do miss class, it is not my responsibility to let you know what you missed. You should contact a classmate or me, but I will not get in touch with you. It is your choice to miss class, and therefore, it is your choice to do something about it.

#### **Email and Blackboard:**

Email and Blackboard will be my primary means of communicating with you outside of class. This means that you should regularly check BOTH. Please note, I will be using your UNCG email account even if you have another account—you should get used to using the UNCG email since that is the account to which all official UNCG business is delivered.

#### **Academic Integrity Policy:**

Students are expected to abide by the Academic Integrity Policy (<http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/>). You should familiarize yourself with this policy in its entirety as ignorance of the policy is not an excuse. Please consult me with any questions you have regarding the policy before it becomes an issue.

Academic dishonesty can take many different forms: cheating, plagiarism, falsification, etc. If you engage in any of these behaviors during this course, you will fail the course. Any grade for an assignment, even a “bad” one, is better than an F for the entire course, so please, *DO NOT CHEAT!*

#### **Adverse Weather Policy:**

If the University delays opening until 10:00 AM on a class day, our class will begin at that time and run through 10:45 AM as scheduled.

You can get information about campus closings and delays from the following sources:

- UNCG homepage ([www.uncg.edu](http://www.uncg.edu))
- Campus Switchboard (336-334-5000)

- UNCG Adverse Weather Line (336-334-4400)
- University Police (336-334-5963)
- Local TV stations

**The University Writing Center:**

The University Writing Center offers UNCG students, staff, and faculty the opportunity for individual consultation at any stage of any writing project. Depending on where you are in your writing process when you visit the Writing Center and what your major concerns are, a consultation might involve deciding how to approach a particular assignment, identifying a thesis and sculpting a rough outline, reading a rough draft to check for general coherence and clarity, incorporating new material into a revision, addressing problems of grammar and sentence structure, learning how to cite sources properly – or any of a myriad of other questions about writing.

Located in 3211 MHRA Building, the Writing Center is open Sundays from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Thursdays 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Fridays 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Writers may call 334-3125 for an appointment or just drop in, bringing their work in progress, their assignments, and their questions.

**Special Needs:**

If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please let me know *early* in the semester. If you have questions about accommodations, contact the Office of Disability Services (336-334-5440).

# COURSE OUTLINE

## **Tuesday, January 11: Welcome and overview**

## **Thursday, January 13: What is modern art?**

- READ: Doss, p. 9-17
- ASSIGNMENT: Personal definition of modern art

## **Tuesday, January 18: The Ashcan School**

- READ: Doss, p. 35-51 (Ch. 2); Hills, p. 1-11

## **Thursday, January 20: The Ashcan School**

- READ: Hills, “John Sloan’s Images of Working-Class Women” (on Blackboard)
- ASSIGNMENT: Reading response #1

## **Tuesday, January 25: Becoming a good writer (Writing Center Tour)**

- READ: Sayre, Introduction and Ch. 1

## **Thursday, January 27: How to look at art**

- READ: Sayre, Ch. 2
- ASSIGNMENT: Reading response #2

## **Tuesday, February 1: Using resources effectively (Library Tour)**

- READ: Sayre, Ch. 3

## **Thursday, February 3: Putting it all together**

- READ: Sayre, Ch. 4
- ASSIGNMENT: Reading response #3

## **Tuesday, February 8: The Armory Show and Modernism**

- READ: Doss, p. 53-72 (Ch. 3); Hills, p. 11-13 and p. 32-42

## **Thursday, February 10: The Armory Show and Modernism**

- READ: Mancini, “One Term is as Fatuous as Another” (on Blackboard)
- ASSIGNMENT: Reading response #4

## **Tuesday, February 15: Abstract Expressionism & the Role of Art Critics**

- READ: Doss, p. 119-137 (Ch. 6); Hills, p. 140-160
- ASSIGNMENT: Current events mini-essay #1

## **Thursday, February 17: Abstract Expressionism & the Role of Art Critics**

- READ: Greenberg, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch” and “Modernist Painting” (on Blackboard)
- ASSIGNMENT: Reading response #5

## **Tuesday, February 22: Pop Art**

- READ: Doss, p. 139-159 (Ch. 7); Hills, p. 218-236

## **Thursday, February 24: Minimalism**

- READ: Doss, p. 161-179 (Ch. 8); Hills, p. 236-252
- ASSIGNMENT: Reading response #6

**Tuesday, March 1: Conceptualism & Earth Works**

- READ: Hills, p. 253-267

**Thursday, March 3: Assemblage, Installations, Happenings, Events, and Performance Art**

- READ: Hills, p. 205-218
- ASSIGNMENT: Research paper prospectus

**Tuesday, March 8: NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)**

**Thursday, March 10: NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)**

**Tuesday, March 15: Feminist Art**

- READ: Doss, p. 181-201 (Ch. 9); Hills, p. 316-334

**Thursday, March 17: Black Art**

- READ: Hills, p. 305-316
- ASSIGNMENT: Reading response #7

**Tuesday, March 22: Culture Wars**

- READ: Doss, p. 203-225; Hills, p. 335-338 and p. 408-423
- ASSIGNMENT: Current events mini-essay #2

**Thursday, March 24: Culture Wars**

- READ: Meyer, "The Jesse Helms Theory of Art" (on Blackboard)
- ASSIGNMENT: Reading response #8

**Tuesday, March 29: Museums in action (Weatherspoon Art Museum tour)**

- READ: Meecham and Sheldon, Ch. 8 "The Museum of Modern Art," from *Modern Art: A Critical Introduction* (on Blackboard)

**Thursday, March 31: Museums in action**

- READ: Doss, p. 227-248 (Ch. 11); Hills, p. 423-433
- ASSIGNMENT: Reading response #9

**Tuesday, April 5: Sensation**

- READ: Three "Issues & Commentary" articles from *Art in America*; "Tolerance, Trust, and the Meaning of 'Sensation'" from *Museum News* (on Blackboard)

**Thursday, April 7: Rough Draft Workshop**

- ASSIGNMENT: Research paper rough draft

**Tuesday, April 12: Instructor Conferences**

**Thursday, April 14: Art in Public Spaces**

- READ: Hills, p. 433-454
- ASSIGNMENT: Reading response #10

**Tuesday, April 19: Art in Public Spaces**

**Thursday, April 21: What is modern art? (revisited)**

- ASSIGNMENT: Final research paper