ART 487 American Art  
Class meets in AR 106, MW, 2:30—3:45pm  
Dr. David A. Lewis  
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468.4328  
Office hours: M/W/F 9:30-11:45am; M/W 3:30-4:30; T 10:00-10:45, or by appointment

**Course Description**

This course surveys American art from the seventeenth century to the mid-twentieth century, with more attention devoted to 19th and 20th century developments. Although the class will focus primarily on painting, sculpture, and printmaking, some discussion of photography, architecture and the decorative arts will be included to broaden the understanding of the stylistic development of the visual arts in America. The course will examine the dynamic interaction of American and European Art and explore the rapid growth and advancement of the nation on the world stage, from its modest beginnings to its emergence as a dominant economic, political and cultural force by the end of World War II.

*Prerequisite:* ART 282 or consent of instructor.

**Learning Outcomes:**

This Course meets the following School of Art Program Learning Outcomes:

Undergraduate students will comprehend basic principles, ideas and issues germane to the History of Art, through their foundation level art history instruction (Competency Reinforced and in upper level course).

Undergraduate students will exhibit proficiency in the application of technical and problem solving skills appropriate to their designated concentration, as well as developing individual creativity: Art Education, Art History and Art Studio (Advertising Design, Art Metal/Jewelry, Ceramics, Cinematography, Digital Media, Drawing, Painting, Photography, Printmaking, Sculpture).

Undergraduate students will compare their progress against models of excellence in the visual arts, which are provided through high quality extracurricular and extramural art activities.

Undergraduate students will design and implement art activities that increase the prominence, visibility and attendance to these events by the larger art community appropriate to their designated field.

This Course meets the following School of Art Student Learning Outcomes:

Students who successfully complete ART 487 will demonstrate competency in understanding the core principles, events, theory and practice of American art from the Colonial Period through 1950. They will demonstrate: 1) ability to identify and know the significance of major American Artists and 2) Art Critics, 3) be able to identify representative works of painting, sculpture and some printed media and architecture of the major styles, 4) mastery of the core principles of 19th-century and Early 20th-century American art as a broad historical phenomena and 5) within the context of specific periods/movements, including, Colonial, Federal and Antebellum (Romanticism, 19th-Century Realist styles), Impressionism, Symbolism and Art Nouveau, 20th Century Realism and Social Realism, Modernist styles from Synchronism through Precisionism, Regionalism, Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism. They will be able to address the seven questions noted below as key aspects to understanding 19th-century and Early 20th-Century American Art.

We will consider the following broad questions to gain a fuller understanding of the period:

What was the artist’s function in society?
What role did arts organizations and institutions have in shaping the art scene?
How did the development of art criticism and the rise of the popular press shape the art world of the 19th and 20th centuries?

How did artists’ understanding of: a) developments in science and technology; b) psychology and medicine; c) their level of engagement with philosophical, religious and political theory; and d) how their awareness of the major events of their times and may have effected their work (and vice versa)?

How did art in America reflect changing attitudes toward nature?
How did American art reflect changing notions of identity in terms of religion, and the politics of class, race, gender, and self-determination?
**Principal Text**  

**Recommended Texts:** These books provide selections of original source documents which reveal much about how artists lived, thought, worked, and how their art was received.  
Sarah Burns and John Davis, eds. *American Art to 1900, A Documentary History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009)  

**Grades**  
There will be three tests (including the final exam), and one writing assignment. The exams will be worth 75% (25% each), with the paper assignment constituting the remaining 25%. Failure to complete the paper or any of the exams will result in a zero for that grade. Attendance and class participation will also be taken into consideration when calculating the final grade. There will be one set time for make-up exams for each exam. Late papers will have a full letter grade deducted for each 24 hour period beyond the due date.

**Paper assignments**  
Suggestions for paper assignments will be announced in class—the topic is to be determined by the individual student, but must be approved in advance by the instructor.

**Images**  
Many of the objects shown in class will not be illustrated in the textbook. Slide lists detailing the objects to be shown during exams will be distributed the week prior to the examination date.

**Attendance**  
Due to the nature of this course, attendance is mandatory. Upon reaching five unexcused absences, the student will be penalized one letter grade. At eight absences, excused or otherwise, the student will be required to retake the course or receive a failing grade.

**NOTE:** This syllabus is subject to modification at the instructor’s discretion.

**Week 1:** Aug. 26, 28

**Course Introduction**

Readings: American Encounters (hereafter AC), pages 57-83;  
Recommended: AC 84—119

Further Optional Readings: Burns & Davis, pp. 9—20 (top), 25—30 (top), 32 (bottom)—38 (top)

**Week 2:** Spt. 2, 4

**America Defining Itself**

Readings: AC, 120—131; AC 133—157;  
Recommended: AC 84—119

Further Readings: Burns & Davis, pp. 40—44, 57—68 (top), 70 (bottom)—74 (top), 76—81, 85—90, 96—132.
Week 3: Spt. 9, 11

Painting in the New Nation
Readings: AC 163—169; 189—192
Recommended: AC 157—163 (top).

The Occupational Self and Identity: Scenes of Everyday Life
Readings: AC 193—206.

Manifest Destiny and the Conflicting Representations of Otherness in 19th Century American Culture
Readings: AC 207—230 (top).
Recommended: AC 230—239.

Week 4: Spt. 16, 18

Transformative Nature and National Identity
Readings: AC, 241—263.

Week 5: Spt. 23, 25

American Light and Landscape: from Hudson River School to Luminism
Readings: AC, 263—266. (A Handout will also be provided)

Week 6: Spt. 30, Oct. 2

First Exam, Spt. 30.
Wrestling with the Self: Art and Content of the Abolitionist Movement;
Art and Identity during the Civil War and Reconstruction
Readings: AC 266—277; 279—297.

Week 7: Oct. 7, 9

Imaging the West: Shifting Boundaries, Local Identity and the National Agenda
Readings: AC, 298—319.

Industrial Strength: Realism, the Work of Art and the Art of Work
Readings: AC, 371—376, 384—387 (and Handout)

Week 8: Oct. 14, 16

Expositions—Architecture and Decorative Arts of the American Renaissance.
Readings: AC, 376—383

Cosmopolitan and Domestic Points of View: Impressionism, Tonalism, and Some Visionaries and Dreamers.
Readings: AC, 231—344.
Recommended: 344—355; 357—370

Week 9: Oct. 21, 23

“Read All About It”— The New Century, Printed Media and the Rise of Modernism: From Ashcan School to the Stieglitz Circle, Review
Readings: AC, 389—419.
**Week 10:** Oct. 28, 30
   
   **Second Exam, Oct 28**
   
   **The Armory Show, Modernity and Global Encounters, 1913—1940**
   
   Readings: AC, 421—449.
   
   Further Readings: Hills, pp. 33—42.

**Week 11:** Nov. 4, 6

   **Modernism and the Urban Avant-Garde**
   

   **American Modernism and the Visionary Landscape**
   
   Readings to be assigned.

**Week 12:** Nov. 11, 13

   **Art Between the Wars: The American Scene and the Corporate Counterpoint; Art Deco and Machine Age Visions of a “New and Improved” Eden**
   
   Readings: AC, 480—483; 485—500 (top); 540 (column 2)—549.
   
   Recommended: AC, 500—507.
   

**Week 13:** Nov. 18, 20

   **Art for the People: the Haarlem Renaissance; Social Realism, and Anti-Fascist Activism**
   
   Readings: 507—515, 526—529; 517—526, 530—540.
   

THANKSGIVING BREAK, NOV 23—DEC 1.

**Week 14:** Dec. 3, 5

   **American Art at Mid-century: from American Surrealism to the Triumph of Abstract Expressionism**
   
   Readings: AC, 551—585
   

**Week 15:** Final Exam: consult official schedule on-line and check art Office door to confirm.