ART 481 Abstract Expressionism through Postmodern Art

Spring 2018, MWF 11:00-11:50
Professor: Dr. David A. Lewis
Office Hours: M/W 3:30-4:45:pm, T/R 3:30-5:45pm, F 9:30-12:30am, and by appointment
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(Dr. Lewis does not use social media like Facebook or Twitter)

Text:
NOTE: Selected required or recommended readings may be provided as handouts or with a web reference.

Recommended resources:
For those who want or need reference to background source for this course in Modern Art (c 1865-1945), see the earlier chapters of the textbook, Arneson/Mansfield, History of Modern Art, 7th edition. Also very useful is Niko Stangos, editor, Concepts of Modern Art, from Fauvism to Postmodernism. Highly recommended for a fuller understanding American art of the 20th century: Patricia Hills, Modern Art in the USA, Issues and Controversies of the 20th Century. For graduate students, Harrison and Wood’s Art in Theory, 1900-2000 is unmatched as a comprehensive, single volume source for primary documents.

Course content:
ART 481/ART 502 (Abstract Expressionism through Postmodern Art) surveys the history of twentieth-century visual arts after WWII and the emergence of postmodernism in a global context. It examines art in relation to historical, cultural and sociopolitical developments within the context of various critical theories. The course will focus on developments in the US and Europe, but students are encouraged to consider for themselves developments in other parts of the world. Students will acquire a general understanding of various art movements, artistic strategies, and art historical methods. Students will also engage in more focused research and analysis of artwork in order to develop their own critical thinking and views on significant issues concerning high modern and postmodern art. While some of the artists featured in class may come from Asian and so-called “Third World” contexts, the class will focus principally on developments and issues primarily shaped by the impact of changing American and European culture and ideas, or, in reaction to these ideas. The Art of the 1940s and 1950s constitutes “High Modern” which concludes with Minimalism in the following decade. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Beat Generation and the Pop Art movement emerge to challenge the primacy of Modernism to form the basis of Postmodernism, which thrived during the 1970s ad 1980s, and morphed into what we now call, for want of a better name, “Contemporary Art.”

NOTE: This course will be, to some extent, fluid and dynamic. Study guides, with specific reference to terminology, artists, theorists, and important works and events will be provided prior to each exam. It is important to attend class regularly, and to keep up with the readings, including the handouts that will be distributed from time to time.
COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students who successfully complete ART 481/502 will demonstrate competency in understanding the core principles, events, theory and practice of High and Late modern art (Abstract Expressionism and related developments through Minimalism), Pop art and Postmodernism. They will demonstrate: 1) ability to identify and know the significance of major American and European Artists, 2) be able to identify representative works of painting, sculpture and some architecture of the major styles, 3) mastery of the core principles of modern and postmodern art as broad historical phenomena and 4) within the context of specific movements, including, Abstract Expressionism, L’Art informel, Art Brut, Minimalism, Postminimalism, Pop Art, Conceptual Art, and diverse aspects of Postmodernism.

Course evaluation will be determined by the combined score of three exams, (100 pts each) and administered at approximately one-third intervals throughout the term. The third exam will be given during the final exam period.

STUDENT EVALUATION:

Undergraduate Students will be assessed according to their performance on three exams (these consist of both objective and essay questions), class participation, and a term project (details will be announced later).

Undergraduate Grades: A 380-400; B 360-379; C 340-359; D 300-339
Exams— #1: 100 points; # 2: 100 pts.; Final #100 pts.; under grad optional term project optional with point values describe below; class participation, 100 pts.

Graduate Students will be expected to complete a more rigorous program of study, which will include, in addition to the above, more intensive examinations and more involved research.

Graduate Grades: exams count same as undergraduates, project 50 pts, class participation, 50 pts.

**Undergraduate Students Optional Term Project:** Student may elect to research and write an extra credit paper (a minimum of 5 pages of text). The topic of the paper must focus on some aspect of art since 1945 and be approved in advance by the supervising professor. Other parameters of the paper will be given to those who elect to do the extra credit paper at the time of the request. The paper will be worth between 0 and 15 points, depending on its quality as determined by the instructor, with those points (if any) added to the averaging score of the three exams at the end of the term. The decision to do an optional paper must be made no later than Monday, April 11th.

**Graduate Students Required Term Project:** The topic of the paper must focus on some aspect of art since 1945 and be approved in advance by the supervising professor. The paper will be worth between 0 and 50 points, depending on its quality as determined by the supervising professor, with those points calculated in the term averaging score along with the three exams.

The project topic must be determined Monday, March 7th, and an outline is to be submitted by Wednesday, March 25th.
ADVISORY: The content and images of some works shown in this course may be challenging and even disturbing—that is often the artists’ intention. Controversial subject matter ranging from graphic violence, representations of human sexuality, political incorrectness, critiques of religion and atheism, activism in response to environmental concerns, economic inequities, sexism, identity politics, racism, and alternate life are among the themes pursued by many modern and contemporary artists. Some of the works simply use “bad taste” deliberately to subvert traditional expectations. By remaining in this course the student agrees both to view and discuss (pro and con) the full range of such works. Note that the images and creeds of individual artists do not necessarily represent—and sometimes absolutely conflict with—the personal beliefs and esthetics sensibilities of the instructor.

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to modification at the instructor’s discretion):


**Introduction:**
A. Concepts of Modernism and “High Modern” art during the period unfolding during the 1940s and 1950s.
B. The Dichotomy of the late 1950s and the 1960s: Modernist Abstraction and References to Figuration and Pop Culture.
C. Postmodernism in reaction to Modernism.
D. Art in the in the Information Age, the Virtual and the Actual, and the Reincarnation of the Sublime and the Beautiful.


**Part I. MODERNIST PAINTING AND SCULPTURE AT MID-CENTURY**

1. THE NEW YORK SCHOOL OF ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM
   **Action Painting**

Week 3. Feb. 4, 6, 8.

2. THE NEW YORK SCHOOL OF ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM
   **Color Field Painting**
   Readings: Arneson and Mansfield, Chapter 16, pp. 392-400.

3. POSTWAR AMERICAN ABSTRACT SCULPTURE
   Readings: Arneson and Mansfield, Chapter 16, pp. 401-407.

Week 4. Feb. 11, 13, 15.

4. POSTWAR EUROPEAN ART”—L’ART INFORMEL, ART BRUT, CoBrA
   Readings: Arneson and Mansfield, Chapter 17, pp. 411-433.
5. BRITISH AVANT-GARDE ART, 1940s-60s—NEO-ROMANTICS, MODERNIST SCULTORS, and POSTWAR EXPRESSIONISTS
   Readings: Arneson and Mansfield, Chapter 18, pp. 433-441.

Week 5. Feb. 18, 20, 22.

6-8. FIGURATIVE ABSTRACTION AND EXPRESSIONISM IN POSTWAR AMERICA; POST-PAINTERLY ABSTRACTION, and OP ART OF THE 1960s
   Readings: Arneson and Mansfield, Chapter 20, pp. 490-505.

   Section 7, continued; Review and FIRST EXAM, Feb. 26th

Week 7. March 4, 6, 8.

Part II. THE BEAT GENERATION, NOUVEAU REALISME, POP ART & RELATED TENDENCIES from the late 1950s through the early 1970s:

1. The Beats and Early Pop Art.
   Readings: Arneson and Mansfield, Chapter 19, pp. 456-487.

Week 8. March 11, 13, 15.

2. Nouveau Réalisme and Fluxus
   Readings: Arneson and Mansfield, Chapter 18, pp. 444-455.

Spring Break: March 16—24.

Part IV. KINETIC and MINIMALIST SCULPTURE, and MINIMALIST PAINTING, POST-MINIMALISM AND CONCEPTUALISM, SITE ART IN THE LATE SIXTIES & SEVENTIES:


1. Kinetic Sculpture and Light Art
   Readings: Arneson and Mansfield, Chapter 20, pp. 505-510.
2. Minimalist Sculpture
   Readings: Arneson and Mansfield, Chapter 20, pp. 510-520.
3. Minimalist Painting
   Readings: Arneson and Mansfield, Chapter 20, pp. 521-526.

Part V. POST-MINIMALISM, EARTH ART & the NEW IMAGISTS

1. Process Art, Antiform and Related Phenomena
   Robert Morris (b. 1931), Richard Serra (b. 1939), Eva Hesse (1936-1970)
   Readings: Arneson and Mansfield, Chapter 23, PP. 587-596.
Week 10. April 1, 3, 5.

2. Installations, Earth Works, Site Art—Sculptural forms of the late ‘sixties and ‘seventies;
   Readings: Arneson and Mansfield, Chapter 23, pp. 596-610.

3. Postminimalist trends, continued, Review.

Week 11. April 8, 10, 12. Second Exam, April 8.

**Part VI. CONCEPTUAL AND ACTIVIST ART**

1. Conceptual Art
   Readings: Arneson and Mansfield, Chapter 22, pp. 558-568.

2. Activist Art
   Readings: Arneson and Mansfield, Chapter 22, pp. 569-586.

Week 12. April 15, 17. [**Easter Break on Friday, April 19th**]

Part VII. POSTMODERNISM AND THE REASSERTION OF PAINTING IN THE SEVENTIES & EIGHTIES:

A. Realism, Superrealism, Hyperrealism and Avant-Garde Figurative Painting from the Late 1960s and after.
   Readings: Arneson and Mansfield, Chapter 21, pp. 610-618, 621-628.

**B. POSTMODERN PRAXIS—THE MERGER OF THEORY AND PRACTICE**


   **B1. Appropriation and other Postmodern Strategies**

   **B2. Neo-Expressionism & related Expressionist Art of the 1980s-1990s:**
   Readings: Arneson and Mansfield, Chapter 25, pp. 666-694.

Week 14. April 29, May 1, 3.

   **B3. Cultural Power and the Commodification of Art**
   The BritPack and the Larger Art World of the 1990s
   Readings: Arneson and Mansfield, Chapter 26, pp. 695-728.

Week 15. May 6, 8, 10. The End of Postmodernism? What is the Metamodern?

Final Exam (see official exam schedule online or as posted in Art Office)