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# Modern Art in London: From the Sublime to the Ridiculous?

COURSE DESIGNATOR LNDN 3232

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION English

NUMBER OF CREDITS 3

CONTACT HOURS 45

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines modern works of art from the late nineteenth century through to the present. The course begins by analyzing the ways in which the seeds of Modern Art were sown at the end of the nineteenth century, before moving on to work made during the twentieth century - particularly art produced in response to the First and Second World Wars; and culminates with reference to contemporary practice. Students will experience a diverse range of works on display in London, including painting, printmaking, mixed media, photography, sculpture, installation, film and video.

Core themes to be studied will include attitudes and ideas in Modern Art and the effect of historical events, sociological changes and advances in technology on the art world; materials and techniques – developing an eye and appreciation of similarities and differences; and the global art market: public and private collectors, thefts, the auction house, the value of art and the changing role of the artist. Additional topics will vary with the specific exhibitions showing during each semester but will be drawn as appropriate from the following themes: the impact of photography on art and artists; the influence of Primitive Art and Orientalism on twentieth-century art and the impact of multiculturalism on contemporary artists; visual and conceptual beauty – is beauty an important ingredient in twenty-first century art; and the influence of the World Wars and continuing global conflicts on art.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course will prepare students with the experiential, critical and analytical tools to understand the historical events, advances in technology and sociological changes that have shaped the visual arts of the late nineteenth century through to today. The course enables students to develop and improve upon their powers of perception. The course encourages students to develop their abilities to reflect on and analyze their experiences, as well as to improve upon their verbal and written skills.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course students will have the knowledge and skills to:

- Identify and define concepts underpinning modern and contemporary artwork.
- Gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the host culture where they are studying.
- Identify the main movements/periods of modern art and articulate how they are related to one another.
- Understand and articulate the significance of the cultural, political, economic and sociological contexts of the production of specific artworks.
- Appreciate the global context of the production of modern art and its global significance, for example its contemporary commodification.
- Analyze the relationship between modern artworks and the urban environments of the global city, for example in terms of their spaces of display and styles of curation.

## METHODOLOGY

The course alternates classroom and experiential learning and places an emphasis on actually seeing and analyzing the artworks under discussion wherever possible. Classroom sessions are intended to introduce students to relevant concepts, artists and works in order to contextualize subsequent gallery visits and related field studies, and will include both lecture and seminar material. Lectures will be supplemented by slide presentations and other audio-visual materials as appropriate. Discussion is strongly encouraged and student presentations are also important features during these sessions.

## RECOMMENDED READINGS

Mary Acton, *Learning to Look at Modern Art*. Routledge 2004  
Umberto Eco, *On Beauty*. Secker and Warburg, 2004  
*Art from the First World War*. Imperial War Museum.  
*Art from the Second World War*. Imperial War Museum.  
John Golding, *Paths to the Absolute*. Princeton University Press, 2000  
Frances Spalding, *British Art since 1900*. World of Art Thames and Hudson 1996  
Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New*, Thames and Hudson 1996  
Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography*. Allen Lee Publishing, 1968  
Nikos Stangos, *Concepts of Modern Art – From Fauvism to Postmodernism*. Penguin Books Ltd, 2009  
Sarah Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World*. Granta Publishing, 2009  
Susie Hodge, *Why Your Five Year Old Could NOT Have Done That – Modern Art Explained*. Thames and Hudson 2013

## GRADING

### PENALTIES FOR WORK SUBMITTED LATE

Assignments received after the due date will be reduced by five percent (5%) of the possible grade for the piece of work being assessed per day, up to seven (7) days after the due date. Work submitted more than seven (7) days after the due date will not be marked, unless arrangements have been made prior to the due date for an extension.

### CLASS PARTICIPATION

Your participation mark is based on your preparation for class and your input into group discussion in all classes (excluding the class of your presentation - for which you will get a separate mark). You will need to demonstrate that you have read and thought about the set material for each week. Participation in class discussion will be marked on the constructiveness of your input to the class discussion and debate.

### CRITERIA FOR GRADING AND GRADING STANDARDS

| Grading Rubric |       |  |
|----------------|-------|--|
| A              | 93+   | Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.   |
| A-             | 90-92 | Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.   |
| B+             | 87-89 |  |
| B              | 83-86 |  |
| B-             | 80-82 | Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.   |
| C+             | 77-79 |  |
| C              | 73-76 |  |
| C-             | 70-72 | Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.   |
| D+             | 67-69 |  |
| D              | 60-66 |  |
| F              | <59   | Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I. |

### GRADING FOR ASSIGNMENTS

|                   |     |
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| Participation     | 10% |
| Oral Presentation | 20% |
| Mid-Term Exam     | 20% |
| Research Paper    | 20% |
| Final Exam        | 30% |

## SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

| Course Topics |  |
|---------------|--|
| Week 1        | <p><b>Introduction to the course:</b><br/>A comparison of traditional and modern approaches to art in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century – looking at both painting and sculpture. It is important for students to understand traditional concepts of perspective, colour, realism, use of materials, composition and subject matter, painting and sculpture techniques in order to appreciate how these concepts develop and change over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first century. We shall also discuss the significance of advances in technology, historical events, sociological changes and patronage and subject matter.</p> <p><b>Reading:</b> British Art since 1900. Frances Spalding. Chapter 1 ‘Edwardian Reflections’</p> |
| Week 2        | <p><b>Landscape painting:</b><br/>Visit to Tate Britain looking at the landscape painting of John Constable and William Turner, the work of some of the Pre-Raphaelites and also experiencing 19th and early 20th century sculpture.</p> <p><b>Reading:</b> Research for Paper 1 and collecting information for presentations.</p>   |
| Week 3        | <p><b>Student presentations:</b><br/>Lecture/power point/DVD concentrating on the Impressionists and Post Impressionist painters and sculptors working in France at the end of the 19th century. Discussion of the impact of the new invention of photography; the change to a more modern subject matter; the rise of the ‘bourgeoisie’ in Paris and the impact of industrialization.</p> <p><b>Reading:</b> Art and Photography. Aaron Scharfe. Chapters 7 and 8; Shock of the New. Robert Hughes. Chapter 3. ‘The Landscape of Pleasure’</p>  |
| Week 4        | <p><b>Impressionism and Post-Impressionism:</b><br/>Visit to the National Gallery and the Courtauld Gallery to look at the work of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists.</p> <p><b>Reading:</b> Students to gather materials for first written assignment and for power point presentations.</p>   |
| Week 5        | <p><b>Student presentations:</b><br/>Powerpoint/DVD–Examination of work made at the beginning of the 20th century - Fauvism, Expressionism, Cubism and Futurism - paying special attention to the techniques of collage. Traditional aesthetics questioned, subject matter changes once again and Exotic Art starts to influence British and European painters and sculptors. Introduction to Official War Artists in the U.K., focusing on World War I.</p> <p><b>Reading:</b> chapters on Fauvism (Sarah Whitfield); Expressionism (Norbert Lynton) and Cubism (John Golding) from The Concepts of Modern Art.</p>   |
| Week 6        | <p><b>Midterm Exam</b></p>   |
| Week 7        | <p><b>Dada and Surrealism: Mid semester slide test. Student presentations.</b><br/>Lecture/power point/DVD – Dada and Surrealism – two extremely controversial art movements, both of which are still relevant today. Dada was the first anti-art movement and their ideas that ‘anything and everything can be considered art’ are still being explored today, especially by the Young British Artists of the 1990s. The seeds of Conceptual Art are sown.</p> <p><b>Reading:</b> ‘Duchamp and Conceptual Art’, Learning to Look at Modern Art, Mary Acton; ‘The Threshold of Liberty’, The Shock of the New, Robert Hughes.</p>  |
| Week 8        | <p><b>Mid-semester break</b></p>   |
| Week 9        | <p><b>Tate Modern I:</b><br/>Visit to Tate Modern to look at Dada and Surreal work in the permanent collection. Additional visit</p>   |

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|         | to a special exhibition if an appropriate one is showing.<br><b>Reading:</b> Collect information for power point presentations and for Paper 2.   |
| Week 10 | <b>Abstract painting and sculpture: Hand in Assignment 2. Student presentations</b><br>Lecture/power point/DVD concentrating on the development of abstract painting and sculpture in Europe and America after the First and Second World Wars. New ways of looking and responding to the world around us – both these disciplines carry the notion that NOTHING can mean SOMETHING. Students will be introduced to Kandinsky – De Blaue Reiter; Malevitch – Russian Suprematism; Jackson Pollock – Abstract Expressionism; Newman, Rothko and Still – the reductive image.<br><b>Reading:</b> John Golding, Paths to the Absolute – chapters depending on exhibitions on show, |
| Week 11 | <b>Tate Modern II:</b><br>Tate Modern looking at work in the permanent collections. Additional visit to a special exhibition if an appropriate one is showing.<br><b>Reading:</b> John Golding, Paths to the Absolute Students collecting information for presentations.  |
| Week 12 | <b>Pop Art and Post-modernism: Student presentations</b><br>Lecture/power point/ DVD concentrating on Pop Art and the use of collage and photography. Post-modernism and the revival of Conceptual art – anything and everything can be considered as an art object?<br><b>Reading:</b> Pop Art (Edward Lucie Smith) Concepts of Modern Art; ‘Culture as Nature’, Shock of the New, Robert Hughes.  |
| Week 13 | <b>Contemporary Art:</b><br>Visit to Tate Modern/Tate Britain to look at work in the permanent collections. Additional visit to a special exhibition if an appropriate one is showing.<br><b>Reading:</b> Students collecting information for presentations.  |

## ASSIGNMENTS

### PAPER

This assignment will combine ideas from the core themes that we will have studied in class with experiential reflection and analysis of the works in the galleries. Additional topics which will vary with the specific exhibitions showing each semester will be drawn as appropriate from the following themes: the impact of photography on art and artists; the influence of Primitive Art and Orientalism on twentieth-century art and the impact of multiculturalism on contemporary artists; visual and conceptual beauty – is beauty an important ingredient in twenty-first century art?; and the influence of the World Wars and continuing global conflicts on art.

There will be a series of research-based exercises that will be informed by visits to the galleries and The National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Each paper should relate to the specific topics covered in the class and demonstrate a firm understanding of the concepts and ideas being discussed. Papers should be analytical rather than descriptive and based on a clearly stated thesis and supported by specific details from the field classes, class handouts and readings. Whilst the primary source will be students’ own observations at the sites themselves, written analysis must be supported by a minimum of five secondary sources, which should be cited in the text and in a final bibliography.

### PRESENTATIONS

Presentations should be a maximum of 10 minutes duration, and students are encouraged to be creative in their presentation technique through the use of audio/visual display etc. Each time the class visits a gallery, a selected number of students will research a topic that relates to the time period/art movement/theme that is the focus of study that week. The selected artworks will be analyzed in relation to the theme in question and students will be expected to generate discussion with the class through the use of questions and discussion points.

### MIDTERM AND FINAL EXAMS

Exams will contain three parts. First, students will be asked to identify works of art from slides. Second, students will be asked to write essays which compare to works of art, high-lighting the key thematic issues relevant to both objects. And

third, a full essay response to a broader (and more theoretical) question posed by the instructor). Students should be prepared to sit for a full, 3-hour exam.

It is recommended that students visit TWO of the following venues outside of class time:

1. The Photographers' Gallery – 16-18 Ramillies Street. W1F 7LW  
Mon – Sat 10.00 – 6.00pm  
Thursday 10.00 – 8.00pm  
Admission Free. Nearest Tube – Oxford Street.  
[www.thephotographerdgallery.org.uk](http://www.thephotographerdgallery.org.uk)
2. Visit ONE of the many contemporary art galleries in London e.g. Pace Gallery, 6 Burlington Gardens W1; White Cube. 144 – 152 Bermondsey Street and 25 – 26 Mason's Yard W1; Hauser and Wirth, 23 Saville Row W1; Sadie Coles, 62 Kingly St W1; David Zwimer 24 Grafton St W1.  
See gallery websites for opening times and
3. Saatchi Gallery. Duke of York Headquarters, Kings Road SW3  
10.00-6.00 daily  
Nearest Tube – Sloane Square  
Admission - Free

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Students must attend all classes and gallery visits and be able to certificate genuine absences. Any absence should be justifiable in terms only of illness, religious holiday or an internship interview.

## **UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own, can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

### **SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY**

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

### **STUDENT CONDUCT**

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct and student needs. This information can be found on the Learning Abroad Center website.