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ART 234-01, American Art, Fall 2012

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Art 234: American Art
Rhodes College, Fall 2012
417 Clough, TTH: 12:30-1:45
CRN: 13669

David McCarthy
418 Clough, Ext. 3663
Office Hours: TTH: 2:00-
4:00 and by appointment.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION

The objectives of the course are as follows: (1) to provide students with a comprehensive overview of the major works, artists, and movements of American art from the colonial period to the mid-twentieth century; (2) to integrate these works of art within the broader social and intellectual history of the period; and (3) to help students develop their skills in visual analysis, image identification, and historical interpretation.

Among the issues we will examine are the following: the development of indigenous styles of architecture, the debt to European conventions in painting and sculpture, the place of the visual arts within a democracy, the attempt to define the experience of America through painting and sculpture, and the periodic attempt to break free of European precedent.

TEXTBOOKS

Barnet, Sylvan. *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*. 10th ed. New York: Pearson, 2011.
(Recommended)

Bjelajac, David. *American Art: A Cultural History*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2005.

REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and participation in lectures, discussions, and field trips. Students are allowed no more than two unexcused absences. With each additional class missed, your grade will drop by 3.3% (for example, from a B to a B-).

Readings as they are assigned. We will discuss these readings throughout the semester. Be prepared to assess the authors' arguments, evidence, methodology, bias, and organization. I will call on you randomly to lead discussion of these readings. You should come to class prepared to lead discussion.

Three examinations involving:

Slide comparisons (identification, iconography, formal vocabulary, historical context, art historical significance).

Students are responsible for ALL material presented in class even if it is not included in the textbooks. Works for identification and discussion will, however, be selected from those artists and images analyzed at length in class. The second examination is cumulative, although the emphasis will be on material covered since the first examination.

Makeup examinations are rarely given.

Four papers.

A short visual analysis of one work of art. No more than two pages in length.

A one-page proposal presenting the question you wish to pursue in your research paper, as well as your preliminary answer to that question (your thesis). Attach a copy of your working bibliography to the proposal. This proposal should grow from your visual analysis.

A ten-page research paper in which you will examine the meaning of the work in relation to broader historical, intellectual, and social issues. In addition to the ten pages of text, your paper must include endnotes, a full bibliography, a list of illustrations, and copies of any work of art you discuss.

A revision of your third writing assignment. When you submit this paper, you must also include the visual analysis, proposal, and ten-page draft that contain my comments.

Papers must be typed, double-spaced, numbered, and written according to the guidelines of the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Sylvan Barnet's book, *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*, is your source for proper citation, organization, research (archival, library, on line), appropriate voice, and any other questions about writing the history of art. You may also consult with me as often as necessary regarding your research and writing.

Late papers are not accepted.

Failure to complete any graded assignment will result in a failing grade for the course.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

Your first writing assignment in this class is to produce a two-page visual analysis of one work of art.

As the art historian Sylvan Barnet notes, visual analysis is not the same thing as description. Whereas a description answers the question, "What does x look like?," a visual analysis answers the somewhat awkward question, "How does x look?" To answer this question, you will have to resort to some description, but keep in mind that you must subordinate this to your analysis, which helps explain how and to what end your subject looks the way it does. Think of your essay as an argument that you wish to win. To do this you must advance a thesis and defend it.

Because this assignment deals with questions of composition, you will need to pay attention to visual form. This includes line, color, value, shape, texture, virtual space, and handling of paint (facture). Depending on your subject, you may need to address only some of these terms. You will find that careful attention to the art object will take time, and that you will see more the longer you look. If it helps, turn a reproduction of your subject upside down, or trace over it on tracing paper or clear plastic. Even sketching a copy of the work will help you move beyond description into analysis.

Keep in mind that this is not a research paper. All of your attention should be on the composition of the work because this is your primary evidence, the foundation that you will build upon for your research paper. As such,

YOU MAY NOT CONDUCT RESEARCH OF ANY FORM—WHETHER USING BOOKS, ARTICLES, OR ANY ONLINE SOURCES—IN THE WRITING OF THIS PAPER

When you turn in your paper, please append a good color image of the work. If you cannot secure a color copy, hand in the book in which you found your reproduction.

One final thought: looking is the process of visual discovery. What did you find?

PROPOSAL

The second part of your writing assignment is a one-page proposal in which you will present a brief overview of your proposed research on the same work of art used for the visual analysis. Here you should pose the question or questions you will pursue at greater length in your research paper. You must provide a thesis, a statement of the methodology you will use, and some indication of why your topic is important for our understanding of modern art. Think of this assignment as an early draft of your introductory paragraph. With this assignment you must turn in a bibliography of books and articles you plan to use in your research.

RESEARCH PAPER

The third and fourth part of your writing assignment for this course is a ten-page, typed, double-spaced research paper. You must integrate this image within the broader social, political, cultural, and intellectual environment within which it was produced. Whereas the assignment for your first paper was to analyze an image visually, you should now place that image in a broader context. This means addressing the issues of subject matter, of expressive content (form and subject matter combined), and, most importantly, of meaning.

HONOR CODE

Remember that whenever you use another person's ideas or words, you must acknowledge that they belong to that person. If you choose to quote someone (I would advise only quoting primary sources, such as an artist's or critic's writings), place his or her words in "quotation marks" and note the exact source, including author's name, title of book or article, place of publication, date, and page number. Whenever you use another person's ideas, you must also acknowledge this in the same way. If you paraphrase another person's writing without proper acknowledgment, for instance by copying the structure and organization of an essay or an entry in an encyclopedia, this too is an act of plagiarism. No matter how much you rewrite the original source, downloading a paper from the internet (or any other form of cutting and pasting), is also plagiarism. Most of the recent cases before the Honor Council have involved plagiarism. According to the Rhodes College Student Handbook "ignorance is not an excuse for these violations."¹

If you are unclear about plagiarism, please consult the link listed in the footnote at the bottom of this page, and see me before you turn in the paper.

Plagiarized papers will be treated as incomplete assignments. The result will be automatic failure in the course and an appointment with the Honor Council.

¹ www.rhodes.edu/images/content/CampusLife/Honor_Constitution.pdf

GRADING OF WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Your grade for each assignment will depend on several factors. First, you must demonstrate sufficient mastery of the terms and ideas we have discussed in class and in our readings. To do this, you must apply these terms correctly to the work you choose to analyze. Second, the skill with which you organize and write your essay will affect your grade. I expect clearly and concisely written papers in which you convey your passion for your chosen subject. Do not turn in your first or second draft. Allow yourself enough time to edit what you have written. Remember that the writing assignments are your only chance to turn in polished work for this course. Take advantage of this opportunity.

GRADING

Grading is designed to measure the success of each student's understanding and assimilation of the materials presented in the course. I grade for improvement.

Each exam is worth 15% of your final grade. The combined paper assignments are worth 45% (visual analysis 10%, proposal 5%, combined average of research papers 30%), and class participation 10%.

WRITING A COLLEGE PAPER

S.Y.A.D.² Writing takes time.

Take NOTES as you conduct your research. Remember to record accurately your sources: author, title, date, place of publication, and page numbers.

DOUBLE CHECK quotations for accuracy. You probably made a mistake in writing down the quote.

Make an OUTLINE before you start writing.

INTRODUCTION. Set up your argument in your first paragraph. What is your thesis? What tone do you wish to project?

DOCUMENTATION. In the writing of art history, you must work with primary materials. Your most important evidence is the work of art (or works of art). Primary materials also include statements by the artist, preliminary studies, letters and diary entries. Many of these are already in published form. You can also find them in archives, such as the Archives of American Art (<http://www.aaa.si.edu/>). Reviews from the artist's life may count as primary evidence too. Historical studies are not primary evidence.

VOICE. Do not let other scholars speak for you. This means limiting how much you quote from secondary sources. If I want to know what Meyer Schapiro has to say about modernism, I will read his work. If you must quote someone in your text, then by all means tell your

²I borrow this sage advice from the Pulitzer Prize-winning author Richard Rhodes. See his book How to Write: Advice and Reflections (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 1-14.

reader who is speaking and why: “as the noted Warhol scholar [] remarks in her monograph, ‘ . . . ’”

TRANSITIONS. How do you get from one paragraph to the next?

TITLES of works of art are either underlined or *italicized*. Do not use “quotation marks” for titles.

ENDNOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY should follow the format outlined in the *Chicago Manual of Style*. All of this material is available for ready reference in Sylvan Barnet’s *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*.

Avoid OVERSTATEMENT, GENERALIZATION, and VAGUE language.

REPETITION: cut it out. In a paper of less than twenty pages, you do not need to repeat things. When I get to the point that I cannot remember what a student said a page or two previously, I will retire. This will be long after you, and your children, graduate.

CONCLUSIONS ARE NOT SUMMARIES. In this section of your paper you should point out what contribution your paper has made to the field of art history. Even at this stage of your training you should think about how your work will shape the field.

REVISION. Your paper will get better the more you revise.

STYLE. Pay attention to the craft of writing. Your goal, for this and all of your writing, is to put a glide in your readers’ stride and a dip in their hip so they’ll climb on board your rocket ship.³

IMAGE LIST (SUBJECT TO REVISION)

Parson Capen House, Topsfield, MA, 1683, Colonial.
Arthur Allen House (“Bacon’s Castle”), Surrey County, VA, c. 1655, Colonial.
San Estevan, Acoma, NM, c. 1642, Colonial, (exterior and interior).
Old Ship Meeting House, Hingham, MA, 1681, Colonial (exterior and ground plan).
Capitol, Williamsburg, VA, 1701-5, Georgian.
Peter Harrison, Redwood Library, Newport, RI, 1748-50, Georgian.
St. Michael’s Church, Charleston, SC, 1752-61, Georgian.
McPhedris-Warner House, Portsmouth, NH, 1718-23, Georgian.
Thomas Jefferson, Monticello, Charlottesville, VA, 1770-1809, Georgian.
_____, State Capitol, Richmond, VA, 1785-89, Federal.
_____, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, 1817-26.
Benjamin Latrobe, Baltimore Cathedral, 1805-18, Federal.
Thornton, Latrobe, Thomas U. Walter, U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC, 1792-1865, Federal.
William Strickland, Second Bank of the US, Philadelphia, PA, 1818-24, Federal.
Anonymous, Mrs. Freake and Baby Mary, c. 1674, Colonial.
Thomas Smith, Self-Portrait, c. 1690, Colonial.
John Smibert, The Bermuda Group, 1729, Colonial.

³This is how legendary 1960s New York DJ Frankie “Hollywood” Crocker would introduce the latest dance hit. The funk band Parliament later appropriated the line, changing “rocket ship” to “mother ship.”

Robert Feke, Isaac Royal and His Family, 1741, Colonial.
 John Singleton Copley, Boy with a Squirrel, 1765, Colonial.
 _____, Governor and Mrs. Thomas Mifflin, 1773, Colonial.
 _____, The Copley Family, 1776-77, Colonial.
 _____, Watson and the Shark, 1778, Grand Manner.
 Charles Wilson Peale, The Artist in His Museum, 1822, Federal.
 Benjamin West, Agrippina Landing at Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus, 1768, Neoclassical.
 _____, Death of Wolfe, 1770, Grand Manner.
 John Trumbull, Declaration of Independence, 4 July 1776, 1786-97, Grand Manner.
 John Vanderlyn, Caius Marius Amidst the Ruins of Carthage, 1807, Neoclassical.
 _____, Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos, 1812, Neoclassical.
 Washington Allston, Elijah in the Desert, 1818, Romanticism.
 _____, Moonlit Landscape, 1819, Romanticism.
 John Neagle, Pat Lyon at the Forge, 1827.
 William Strickland, Merchant's Exchange, Philadelphia, 1832-34, Greek Revival.
 A.J. Davis, Lyndhurst, Tarrytown, NY, 1841-1867, Picturesque.
 _____, William Rotch House, New Bedford, MA, 1845, Picturesque.
 A. J. Downing, Villa in the Italian Style, from Cottage Residences, 1842, Picturesque.
 Richard Upjohn, Trinity Church, New York, 1839-46, Gothic Revival.
 _____, Trinity Church, Warsaw, NY, 1854, Gothic Revival.
 Frank Furness, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, 1872-76, Victorian Gothic.
 Richard Morris Hunt, Griswold House, Newport, RI, 1862-63, Stick Style.
 McKim, Mead and White, Isaac Bell House, Newport, RI, 1882-83, Shingle Style (facade and plan).
 H.H. Richardson, Stoughton House, Cambridge, MA, 1882-83, Shingle Style (facade and plan).
 Thomas Cole, Falls of the Kaaterskill, 1826, Hudson River School.
 _____, Course of Empire: Savage State; Pastoral State: Consummation; Destruction; Desolation, 1833-36, Hudson River School.
 _____, The Oxbow, 1836, Hudson River School.
 Asher B. Durand, Kindred Spirits, 1849, Hudson River School.
 Frederic Edwin Church, West Rock, New Haven, 1849, Hudson River School.
 _____, Niagara Falls, 1857, Hudson River School.
 Albert Bierstadt, The Rocky Mountains, Landers Peak, 1863, Hudson River School.
 William Sidney Mount, Eel Spearing at Setauket, 1845.
 George Caleb Bingham, Fur Traders Descending the Missouri, c. 1845.
 William Rush, Water Nymph and Bittern, 1809.
 Horatio Greenough, George Washington, 1832-41.
 Hiram Powers, The Greek Slave, 1847.
 John Quincy Adams Ward, Freedman, 1863.
 Thomas Ball, The Emancipation Group, 1876.
 Augustus St. Gaudens with Charles McKim, The Shaw Memorial, 1884-97, Boston, American Renaissance.
 Thomas Eakins, Max Schmitt in a Single Scull, 1871.
 _____, The Gross Clinic, 1875.
 Winslow Homer, Snap the Whip, 1872.
 _____, Northeaster, 1895.
 James Whistler, The Little White Girl: Symphony in White No. 2, 1864.

_____, Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket, c. 1875.
 Mary Cassatt, Lady at Tea Table, 1885, Impressionism.
 Albert Pinkham Ryder, Toilers of the Sea, before 1884.
 McKim, Mead and White, Public Library, Boston, 1887 -98, American Renaissance (façade and plan).
 William Le Baron Jenney, Home Insurance Building, Chicago, 1883-85, Chicago School.
 Louis Sullivan, Wainwright Building, St. Louis, 1890-91, Chicago School (facade and plan).
 _____, Carson, Pirie, Scott, Chicago, 1899-1906, Chicago School.
 Frank Lloyd, Robie House, Chicago, 1909, Prairie Style (facade, plan, interior).
 _____, Kaufmann House (Falling Water), Bear Run, PA, 1936.
 George Howe and William Lescaze, PSFS Building, Philadelphia, 1931-32, International Style.
 Robert Henri, Street Scene with Snow (57th Street, New York), 1902, Ashcan School.
 John Sloan, Hairdresser's Window, 1907, Ashcan.
 Alfred Stieglitz, The Steerage, 1907.
 _____, Equivalent, 1922.
 Max Weber, Rush Hour, New York, 1915.
 John Marin, Lower Manhattan, 1922.
 Arthur Dove, Abstraction No. 2, 1910.
 Marsden Hartley, Portrait of a German Officer, 1914.
 Georgia O'Keeffe, Black Iris, 1926.
 Francis Picabia, Portrait of a Young American Girl in a State of Nudity, 1915, Dada.
 Marcel Duchamp, Fountain, 1917, Dada.
 Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, God, 1918, Dada.
 Stuart Davis, Lucky Strike, 1921.
 _____, Report from Rockport, 1940.
 Edward Hopper, House by the Railroad, 1925, American Scene.
 Thomas Hart Benton, City Activities, 1931, Regionalism.
 Grant Wood, American Gothic, 1930, Regionalism.
 Aaron Douglas, Aspects of Negro Life: Song of the Towers, 1934, Harlem Renaissance.
 William H. Johnson, Café, ca. 1940, Harlem Renaissance,
 Jacob Lawrence, Migration of the Negro Series, No. 52: One of the Largest Race Riots Occurred in East St. Louis, 1940-41, Harlem Renaissance.
 Andrew Wyeth, Christina's World, 1948.
 Jose Clemente Orozco, Epic of American Civilization: Cortez and the Cross and The Machine, Dartmouth, College, Hannover, N.H., 1932-34, Social Realism.
 Philip Evergood, American Tragedy, 1937, Social Realism.
 Ben Shahn, The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti, 1931-32, Social Realism.
 _____, Nocturne, 1949, Social Realism.
 David Smith, Medal for Dishonor: Propaganda for War, 1938-40.
 Jackson Pollock, Male and Female, 1942, Abstract Expressionism.
 _____, Number 1, 1948, Abstract Expressionism.
 Willem de Kooning, Woman I, 1950-52, Abstract Expressionism.

WEEK 1

Reading: Bjelajac, 13-113.

August 23 Introduction: Themes and Problems in American art history.

WEEK 2

August 28 Americans and the Visual Arts.
Reading: W. J. T. Mitchell, "Representation," from Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, *Critical Terms for Literary Study*.

August 30 Colonial architecture.
Reading: Alexis de Tocqueville, "In What Spirit the Americans Cultivate the Arts" and "Why the Americans Raise Some Insignificant Monuments and Others that are Very Grand," from *Democracy in America, Vol. II*.

WEEK 3

September 4 Federal architecture.

September 6 Colonial painting.
Readings: Samuel Willard, "Two Sermons," and John Singleton Copley, "Correspondence," from John W. McCoubrey, *American Art 1700-1960*.

VISUAL ANALYSIS TOPIC DUE.

WEEK 4

Reading: Bjelajac, 115-61.

September 11 Grand Manner.
Readings: Joshua Reynolds, "Discourses on Art," from Joshua C. Taylor, *Nineteenth-Century Theories of Art*; and John Galt, "The Life and Studies of Benjamin West," from *American Art 1700-1960*.

September 13 Grand Manner.

WEEK 5

September 18 Review.

September 20 EXAMINATION.

WEEK 6

Reading: Bjelajac, 163-91.

September 25 19th-Century Architecture.

September 27 19th-Century Architecture.

VISUAL ANALYSIS DUE.

WEEK 7

Reading: Bjelajac, 191-229.

October 2 Hudson River School.
Readings: William Cullen Bryant, "To Cole, the Painter, Departing for Europe," and Thomas Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," from *American Art 1700-1960*.

October 4 Genre.

PROPOSAL DUE.

WEEK 8

Reading: Bjelajac, 231-95.

October 9 Sculpture.
Readings: Alexander Everett, "Greenough's Statue of Washington," and Nathaniel Hawthorne, "A Visit to the Studio of Hiram Powers," from *American Art 1700-1960*.

October 11 End of the Century.
Readings: Thomas Eakins, "On His Teaching Methods," and John W. Beatty, "Recollections of Winslow Homer," from *American Art 1700-1960*.

WEEK 9

October 16 Fall Recess.

October 18 End of the Century.
Reading: James Abbot McNeill Whistler, "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies," from *American Art 1700-1960*.

WEEK 10

October 23 American Renaissance.

October 25 Review.

WEEK 11

October 30 EXAMINATION.

November 1 Modern Architecture.

WEEK 12

Reading: Bjelajac, 297-346.

November 6 Early 20th century.

Readings: Walt Whitman, from “Democratic Vistas,” from *Walt Whitman: Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*; and Robert Henri, “The New York Exhibition of Independent Artists,” from *American Art 1700-1960*.

November 8 Early American Modernism.

November 9 RESEARCH PAPERS DUE.

WEEK 13

Reading: Bjelajac, 346-68

November 13 Early American Modernism.

November 15 Regionalism.

Reading: Thomas Hart Benton, “On Regionalism,” from *American Art 1700-1960*.

Evening: Public Lecture, Professor Melody Barnett Deusner (Rhodes 1999), “Whistler, Aestheticism, and the Networked World.”

WEEK 14

November 20 American Scene.

November 22 Thanksgiving Recess.

WEEK 15

November 27 Art and Politics in the 1930s.

November 29 Postwar Modernism.

WEEK 16

December 4 Review.

RESEARCH PAPERS DUE.

December 7 EXAMINATION. 5:30 pm.