

ART H 309 A

The City and American Art

Autumn 2018
MWF 8:30–9:50 AM
003 Art Building

Professor Baradel
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Office: 365 Art Building
Office hours: Wednesdays 10:30 AM–12:00 PM, or by appointment

Course Description

This course examines various ways that the experience of the modern city has served as a stimulus for the development of American art from the late nineteenth century to the present. We will explore a range of topics within this theme, including how artists engaged the city as subject matter; how urban forms such as the skyscraper, rapid transit, modern plumbing, and graffiti impacted the formal qualities of artworks in a variety of visual media (painting, sculpture, prints, photography, early film, and multi-media installations); how the city has served as a "canvas" for works of public art; and even how the city itself has been conceived as a work of art, among other topics. We will look at work by artists who celebrated the city and its possibilities and by those who have treated its spaces as threatening and dangerous. Artists and art movements such as James McNeill Whistler, Childe Hassam, the City Beautiful movement, Alfred Stieglitz, Georgia O'Keeffe, Isabel Bishop, the Ashcan School, Marcel Duchamp, Joseph Stella, the Harlem Renaissance, Thomas Hart Benton, Andy Warhol, Jean-Michel Basquiat, and Kara Walker are among the subjects studied in this course.

Course Goals

In this class, students will:

- Learn about various ways that cities—and the idea of “the city”—have shaped the development of American art from the mid-19th century to the present
- Become familiar with art historical terms, concepts, and methodologies as well as medium-specific artistic processes
- Build skills in visual analysis, critical thinking, critical reading, and writing
- Engage directly with primary sources (first short paper assignment) and artworks
- Make connections between historical art and contemporary public art (second paper assignment)

Readings

PDFs of all required readings are available on the course Canvas site. For additional context, you may wish to consult the freely-available, open-access textbook *American Encounters* (<https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/books/39/>).

Canvas: In addition to the readings, all assignments, announcements, and other course material will be posted to Canvas. PDFs of the PowerPoint presentations from lecture will be posted to the “Lecture Images” page on the site each day after class. Please check Canvas regularly for important course information and updates.

Course Requirements

All scheduled lectures and readings are subject to change. You are responsible for any changes, which will be communicated in class and by email.

You must complete all assignments to receive a passing grade in this course. Grades are based on 1) your participation and engagement in the classroom, 2) meeting deadlines for all assignments, quizzes, and exams, and 3) the quality of the work you submit (work demonstrates mastery of the course material and communicates ideas clearly and effectively).

Class participation: Informed and consistent participation in class is expected. This requires completing assigned readings in advance of class; actively participating in in-class discussions; and helping to foster a respectful classroom environment. Electronic devices such as laptops should be used for classroom activities only. Please silence all phones and put them away during lectures. **10% of final grade**

Reading quizzes: Reading quizzes will test your comprehension of key concepts and arguments presented in the assigned readings. Quizzes will be multiple choice and may cover any of the readings due since the date of the previous quiz. In order to prepare for these quizzes, you should take notes on each article as you read, paying special attention to what the author argues (the thesis) and how the author supports his or her claims (the supporting evidence). Quizzes will be available on Canvas each week beginning Friday at 10 AM until 11:59 PM on Sunday, and you will have 30 minutes to take each quiz. The quizzes are “open book,” meaning that you may look at your class notes and readings while taking the quiz, but, due to the time limit, you should have completed the readings before beginning it. You may not consult other students (or anyone else) about answers before or while taking the quiz. There are no make-ups for missed quizzes, except for exceptional circumstances. Your highest five quiz scores will factor into your final grade (the lowest two scores will be dropped).

15% of final grade (3% each)

Exams (in class): There will be two exams during the class meetings on Monday, October 22nd, and Friday, November 30th. The exams will be designed to take approximately one hour, although you will have a full 80 minutes (8:30–9:50am) of class time to complete each exam. Be sure to bring blue books with you to the exams. The second exam is not cumulative and will only cover material from the second half of the course. Please do not make travel or any other plans that conflict with these exams. There will be no make-ups except in cases of documented illness or other emergency. A study guide, including a description of the exam format and a list of artworks you will be expected to know (artist, title, and date) for the slide identifications and comparisons, will be posted to Canvas in advance of each exam. Please note: there will not be a traditional final exam for this course during the University’s final-exam week.

40% of final grade (20% each)

Primary sources paper: variable length (depending on which option you select), submitted via Canvas, due Monday, October 15th. Each student will write a paper that engages turn-of-the-20th-century textual primary sources about American art and the city. You will have a choice of topic.
15% of final grade

Option 1 is to write a 2-3-page paper that considers the social and artistic function of public art, as it was understood through the City Beautiful movement, by drawing on texts published by the artists Karl Bitter and Edwin Blashfield (PDFs of both texts will be provided). Your essay should describe and analyze the artists' goals and vision for public art and consider the ways in which Lorado Taft's statue *George Washington* on UW's campus fulfills or departs from the ideal public art described by Bitter and Blashfield. Additional details about this assignment will be posted to Canvas.

Option 2 is to select two primary-source texts from the list of possibilities (to be provided) and stage an imaginary dialogue (3-4 pages; longer because of the dialogue format) between the authors of your two chosen texts and one artist whose work was discussed in lecture and/or in the assigned readings. The dialogue should reveal how the three "participants" think differently about the city as a stimulus for art-making. Additional details about this assignment will be posted to Canvas.

Public art paper & presentation: 2–3 pages, submitted via Canvas, due Friday, December 7th, and short oral presentation in-class (week of Dec. 3rd; you will sign up for a date midway through the quarter). Each student will write a paper that proposes a new work of public art in Seattle or an alteration to an existing work of public art in Seattle to re-contextualize it and/or change the viewer's experience of it. In your paper you should discuss how the artwork relates (or would relate) to the viewer and its site. You should also consider how your proposal relates to key artworks or themes discussed in this course. Each student will also give a very brief (~5 minute) oral presentation to describe their idea to the rest of the class. Students may choose to form groups of no more than four students and work together on a proposal. Groups will be required to submit a longer paper and give a slightly longer oral presentation. Additional details about this assignment will be posted to Canvas.

20% of final grade

Key Dates & Deadlines

Sundays 11:59 PM: Quiz submission deadline (Canvas)

10/15: Primary sources paper due

10/22: Exam 1

11/30: Exam 2

Week of 12/3: Public art presentations

12/7: Public art paper due

Course Policies

Submitting Assignments

All written assignments should be typed, double spaced in 12-pt Times New Roman font (or similar style), with 1-inch margins. You should cite sources using a standard citation style; the [Chicago Notes & Bibliography style](#) is preferred, but [MLA](#) is also acceptable.

You should submit all written assignments as Microsoft Word or PDF documents via Canvas by the beginning of the class period in which they are due (8:30 AM). Due dates are firm so that all students have the same amount of time to complete assignments. For each day (including weekends) that an assignment is late, the assignment grade will be marked down 5% of the maximum possible points, except in cases of documented emergency or illness or if you have arranged in advance for an extension. Extensions will be granted sparingly—such as in cases when you have multiple major assignments due the same day—and must be requested at least 72 hours in advance of the deadline to be considered for approval. Unless you have been granted an extension or have a documented emergency or illness, late assignments submitted more than 72 hours after the deadline will not be accepted.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is using the creations, ideas, words, inventions, or images of someone else in your own work without formally acknowledging them. All plagiarized assignments will receive a grade of zero points. Please see the UW [Statement on Academic Responsibility](#) for further guidance and/or consult with me if you have any questions.

Attendance & Participation

You are expected to attend class regularly in order to contribute to in-class conversations. Frequent absences will prevent your participation in class and may, therefore, negatively impact grades. The scope of material presented in lectures exceeds the scope of material covered in the assigned readings; content presented in lectures forms the bulk of the material tested in the exams. If you do miss any class meetings, you are responsible for the material covered in lecture, class discussions, and for completing all work on schedule.

Communication

I will occasionally notify you of information related to the course (changes, relevant lectures and events, etc.) by email and through the “Conversations” feature in Canvas. Please be professional in your electronic communications. For questions that require more than a brief “yes” or “no” answer or to discuss any course assignments, issues, or concerns, please come to office hours.

Equal Opportunity

The School of Art reaffirms its policy of equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, or status as a disabled veteran or Vietnam- era veteran in accordance with UW policy and applicable federal and state statutes and regulations.

Accommodations

If you would like to request academic accommodations due to a disability and/or health condition, contact the [Disability Services Office](#). During the first week of class, please provide me with a copy of your letter from Disability Services indicating you have a disability that requires assistance.

Reading Schedule

All readings and assignments are due on the dates listed

SEPT 26 INTRODUCTION

SEPT 28 COSMOPOLITANISM & THE CITY

Readings:

- Pyne, “Whistler and the Politics of the Urban Picturesque”

OCT 1 IMPRESSIONIST VIEWS

Readings:

- Broun, “Childe Hassam’s America”

OCT 3 PHOTOGRAPHY & THE CITY – PART 1

Readings:

- Stange, “Jacob Riis and Urban Visual Culture”

OCT 5 THE CITY BEAUTIFUL & MUNICIPAL ART

Readings:

- Savage, “Inventing Public Space”

QUIZ 1: READINGS DUE 9/28 – 10/5

OCT 8 TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY URBAN LEISURE & MASS AMUSEMENTS

Readings:

- Bogart, “Barking Architecture: The Sculpture of Coney Island”

OCT 10 ASHCAN ART – PART 1

Readings:

- Yount, “Consuming Drama: Everett Shinn and the Spectacular City”

OCT 12 ASHCAN ART – PART 2

Readings:

- Newman, “George Bellows’s *New York* and the Spectacular Reality of the City”

QUIZ 2: READINGS DUE 10/8 – 10/12

OCT 15 PHOTOGRAPHY & THE CITY – PART 2

Readings:

- Lukitch, “Alone on the Sidewalks of New York: Alfred Stieglitz’s Photography, 1892–1913”

Assignment due:

- **Primary sources paper due – 8:30 AM**

OCT 17 STIEGLITZ-CIRCLE MODERNISM & THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Readings:

- Chave, “Who Will Paint New York?”

OCT 19 EUROPEAN MODERNISTS & THE AMERICAN CITY

Readings:

- Corn, “Américanisme”

QUIZ 3: READINGS DUE 10/15 – 10/19

OCT 22 EXAM 1

OCT 24 PRECISIONISM, MACHINE AESTHETICS & URBAN VIEWS

Readings:

- Corbett, “The Problematic Past in the Work of Charles Sheeler”

OCT 26 PHOTOGRAPHY & THE CITY – PART 3

Readings:

- Shimizu, “Lofty Domains: Social Climbing and Visual Dominance in Elevated Urban Views”

QUIZ 4: READINGS DUE 10/24 & 10/26

OCT 29 AMERICAN SCENE – PART 1

Readings:

- Todd, “Question of Difference: Isabel Bishop’s Differential Office Girls”

OCT 31 AMERICAN SCENE – PART 2

Readings:

- Troyen, “‘The Sacredness of Everyday Fact’: Hopper’s Pictures of the City”

NOV 2 THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE & THE GREAT MIGRATION

Readings:

- Hills, “Home in Harlem: Tenements and Streets”
- Online: Browse the online exhibition [Harlem 1900–1940](#), organized by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

QUIZ 5: READINGS DUE 10/29 – 11/2

NOV 5 THE CITY & POSTWAR AMERICA

Readings:

- Simpson, “American Artists Paint the City: Katharine Kuh, the 1956 Venice Biennale, and New York’s Place in the Cold War Art World”

NOV 7 URBAN CONSUMER CULTURE, POP ART & THE CITY

Readings:

- Whiting, “Cruising Los Angeles”

NOV 9 THE CITY & NATURE

Readings:

- Lovell, “City, River, Mountain: Wayne Thiebaud’s California”

NOV 12 NO CLASS – VETERANS DAY

QUIZ 6: READINGS DUE 11/5– 11/9

NOV 14 FILM SCREENING: *DOWNTOWN 81* (dir. Edo Bertoglio, 2002, 72 minutes, R)

NOV 16 BASQUIAT, GRAFFITI & 1980S NEW YORK

Readings:

- Andersson, “Landscape and Gentrification: The Picturesque and the Pastoral in 1980s New York Cinema”

NOV 19 **UW SPECIAL COLLECTIONS: PNW COLLECTION PHOTOGRAPHS**
Meet in Maps/Special Collections Classroom, Suzzallo Library, [Rm B069](#)

NOV 21 NO CLASS

NOV 23 NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK

QUIZ 7: *DOWNTOWN 81*, READINGS DUE 11/16 & VISIT TO SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

NOV 26 LATE 20TH-/21ST-CENTURY PUBLIC ART

Readings:

- Storr, “*Tilted Arc*: Enemy of the People?”

NOV 28 GUEST SPEAKER: RURI YAMPOLSKY
Director of the Public Art Program, Office of Arts & Culture, Seattle

Readings:

- Transcript of Mitch Landrieu’s speech on Confederate monuments in New Orleans (available from the *New York Times*): <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/23/opinion/mitch-landrieu-speech-transcript.html>

NOV 30 **EXAM 2**

DEC 3 STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

DEC 5 STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

DEC 7 STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

Assignment due:

- **Public art paper due – 8:30 AM**