



**Boston University Study Abroad**  
London

**Boston University Study Abroad London**  
**Exploring Art and Society: - The Value of Art**  
**CAS AH 411 (*Elective A*)**  
**Spring 2016**

**Instructor Information**

A. Name	Name Professor Robert Cumming
B. Time	Mondays, 1.15pm – 5.15pm (Plus Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup> April)
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**Course Overview**

What is the value of art? At has many values: aesthetic, commercial, social and personal, and our response to any of its values depends our own culture, education and life experience. Is art necessary?

The aim of this course is to examine these and other topics whose common focus is the relationship between art and society. Students will look in depth at a selected number of works of art across a wide range, and make site visits to selected London museums, galleries and commercial organisations. One of the purposes of the course will be to ask how best to reach out to the vast non-specialist audience who visit museums and galleries, and to examine what it is that seems to make experiencing art a necessity for that audience, and to ask why certain works of art can fetch such high prices today.. One of the features of the class will be the encouragement of mutual exploration and discussion of works of art, places, ideas, personal observation, and styles of writing. No previous knowledge of art or art history is required, and students from all disciplines are welcome.

Students will engage in the first hand scrutiny of works of art, make case studies, and visit museums and galleries in order to explore: art and perception; art and national identity; art and morality; art and money. In the class room students will study in detail a selected number of works of art which can be seen in London, and in the follow up field trips they will explore these works further in situ, as well analyse and assess the museums and institutions where they now reside

The core text for the Course is the much praised "The Value of Art", written by the renowned art dealer and market expert Michael Findlay. Born in Scotland, Findlay was one of the earliest dealers in SoHo, New York. Later he was International Director of Fine Arts at Christie's, New York, and is now a director at Acquavella Galleries, New York. Students will also explore the writings and/or television programmes of four best selling authors whose intended audience was / is not that of the specialist art historian, but the public at large. The selected writers are: the British scholar, collector, Museum Director, arts administrator and television celebrity, Kenneth

Clark (1903-1983); the American novelist, art and literary critic, John Updike (1932-2009); the Australian journalist, art critic for Time Magazine, and broadcaster, Robert Hughes (1938-2012); the contemporary British novelist, essayist and shopkeeper, Jeanette Winterson (b. 1959).

### **Course Methodology**

The course will be taught over ten 4-hour sessions, which will be equally divided between the classroom and field trips. Students will be expected to participate in group-discussions and will be asked to work individually or in groups, and make presentations. On field trips students should be dressed for all weather walking. Please note you may bring your camera. Mobile phones and MP3 players must be switched off at all times. Smoking is not permitted. Attendance at all classes and visits is mandatory – please see the attendance policy at the end of this syllabus.

### **Required Readings and Viewings**

The required reading for each class session is indicated in the Course Chronology. All readings are available through the BU London library.

### **Core texts to read (and re-read)**

- Michael Findlay: *The Value of Art*  
To see Michael Findlay in a live interview go to  
<https://vimeo.com/11343980>
- John Updike *Just Looking/Always Looking*  
There are many interviews with John Updike available in YouTube. Here is one of the most relevant  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RApWC3Mn3UA>
- Jeanette Winterson *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery*  
There are several interviews with Jeannette Winterson available in YouTube. Here is one of the most relevant  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDcGwOB1Cq4>
- Kenneth Clark: *Looking at Pictures;*  
*Landscape into Art*
- Robert Hughes; *Nothing if not Critical*

### **Core programme to view (and re-view)**

- Kenneth Clark *Civilisation: A Personal View*  
All episodes of this pioneering 13 Part television series are available on  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxsvroiUHik>  
It is also available in book form as: Kenneth Clark: *Civilisation: A Personal View*
- Robert Hughes: *The Shock of the New*  
This ground breaking 8 part television series is available on  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3ne7Udaetg>

It is also available in book form as: Robert Hughes: *The Shock of the New: Art and the Century of Change*

## Introductory Text

- Students new to the study of art /art history are recommended to read, as preliminary reading  
Lynton/ Smith / Cumming / Collinson: *Looking into Paintings*.

Additional readings may be posted on Blackboard:

<https://lms.bu.edu> (you must be logged in to view materials)

## Assessment Method

1. Essay and Presentation: During the first half of the Course students will be asked to hand in a 1,200 word formal essay on a given topic (with a bibliography/ further reading), and to give a 5 minute illustrated presentation on the same topic, followed by Q and A, in class. The essay counts for **25%** of the overall mark.
2. Questionnaire: During each Field Trip students will be asked to complete a questionnaire (see example at the end of this syllabus) and make recommendations. These will count together for **35%** of the overall mark.
3. Final Essay and Presentation: Students will be asked to write an essay, of 2,000 to 2,500 words in length, and make a presentation of the essay.

The essay will be in the form of a letter to a well-known personality of your choosing. The letter is to recommend that the chosen personality visit one of the London museum / galleries that we have visited in the Class, explain why it is worth visiting, why the personality might find a visit worthwhile, and what is especially appealing about the museum / gallery. The letter will also advise looking in depth at one of the works we have studied in class, and one other that we have not studied, from the same gallery/ museum, and explain in some detail why it is worthwhile to do so. The letter is intended to encourage the personality to have a fulfilling art and museum / gallery experience, and to engage with the two works. The letter is also to recommend that the personality engages with one of the authors one the Core Reading list (other than the one you have discussed in your first essay), and explain why your chosen personality might benefit from / appreciate the attitudes of this author.

As well as the written letter, which is to be handed in on exam day – students will present the contents of the letter in an illustrated presentation followed by Q and A, to the Class on the Final Exam Day, explaining in addition why the particular personality has been chosen. This will count for **40%** of the overall mark.

**NB. It is essential that the 2 works specified above are discussed in the letter, as well as the author.**

## Grading

Please refer to the Academic Handbook for detailed grading criteria and policies on plagiarism:  
<http://www.bu.edu/london/current-semester>

*\* Final Grades are subject to deductions by the Academic Affairs Office due to unauthorised absences.*

## Course Chronology

### **Class One: Wednesday, January 13, 2016, 1:15-5:15pm**

**Meeting place:** Classroom

- Introduction to the Course and the Course participants.
- Topic One: Art and Perception. Two late 19<sup>th</sup> century paintings from the Courtauld Collection will be examined in depth and in detail as a group discussion. Through them the differences between observation and perception will be addressed.
- The Core readings and viewings for the Course will be discussed and the personalities, careers, and attitudes of Michael Findlay, Kenneth Clark, Robert Hughes, John Updike, and Jeanette Winterson will be introduced by means of short extracts from the television series *Civilisation* and *Shock of the New*, plus short television interviews with Findlay, Updike and Winterson.

### **Recommended Readings and Viewing for Classes 1-2**

*Set text book Reading for Classes 1 and 2:*

- Kenneth Clark *Civilisation*. Episodes 1-3 / Chapters 1-3
- Robert Hughes: *The Shock of the New*. Episodes 1-2 / Chapters 1-2
- John Updike *Just Looking: What MoMA Done Tole Me* pp 3-19  
*Always Looking: A case of monumentality et al* pp 162-192
- Jeanette Winterson *Art Objects* Imagination and Reality pp 133-151  
*Paul Johnson- the objectivity of history.*

<http://www.jeanettewinterson.com/journalism/paul-johnson/>

*John Carey "What is art for"*

[www.jeanettewinterson.com/journalism/john-carey/](http://www.jeanettewinterson.com/journalism/john-carey/)

For Courtauld Gallery and paintings discussed see:

<http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/gallery/index.shtml>

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### **Class Two: Monday, January 18, 2016, 1:15-5:15pm**

**Meeting:** Courtauld Galleries, Somerset House

- Students will explore further and in situ the two paintings discussed the previous week, making a critical assessment of their display and, presentation, their relationship with other works of art, and the information made available to the public.
- Students will also critically assess the purpose and organisation of, and visitor behaviour and perceptions in the Courtauld Galleries.

**Set Readings and Viewings:** See Class 1

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### **Class Three: Tuesday, January 19, 2016, 1:15-5.15pm**

**Meeting place:** Classroom

**Topic:** Art and national identity.

- The visit to the Courtauld Galleries will be reviewed Two paintings from the National Gallery will be examined in depth and in detail as a group discussion.
- There will be a discussion on experiencing art and the different values that are inherent in art.

- Topics for student presentations in Classes Five and Six will be assigned and discussed

### **Readings and Viewings**

Kenneth Clark *Civilisation*: Episodes 4-6 / Chapter 4-6

Kenneth Clark *Landscape into Art*: Chapter IV: Ideal Landscape pp 54-73; Chapter V: The Natural Vision pp 74-96 ; Chapter VI: Northern Lights pp 97-112

*Looking at Pictures* Constable pp111-123;

Robert Hughes *The Shock of the New* Episodes 3-4 / Chapters 4-6

Robert Hughes *Nothing if not Critical*: John Constable 78-81

John Updike: *Always Looking*: The Clarity of American Art pp3-26; The Love of Facts: pp 36-51

John Updike *Just Looking*; Some Rectangles of Blue; Violence at the Windows pp 113-125

John Updike *Still Looking* "O Beautiful for Spacious Skies" pp 26-45; An oil on canvas pp xi - xv

Jeanette Winterson *Art Objects* pp 3-24

Website for National Gallery:

<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/>

### **Class Four: Monday, January 28, 2016, 1:15-5:15pm**

**Meeting:** National Gallery, Trafalgar Square

- Students will explore further and in situ the two paintings discussed the previous week, making a critical assessment of their display and, presentation, relationship with other works of art, and information made available to the public.
- Students will also critically assess the purpose and organisation of, and visitor behaviour and perceptions in the National Gallery.

**Reading and Viewings:** See Class 3

### **Class Five: Tuesday, January 26, 2016, 1:15-5:15pm**

**Meeting place:** Classroom

- Students will make their presentation on the topics assigned at the end of Class 3.
- Presentation by RAC on "Why did National Galleries come into existence?"
- Discussion on aesthetics and the five senses.

**Set Reading and Viewings :** See Classes 1-4

### **Class Six: Monday, February 1, 2016, March 23, 2015, 1:15-5:15pm**

**Meeting place:** Classroom

- Students will make their presentation on their chosen work of art as assigned at the end of Class 3.
- Topic: Art and money. Two works from the Wallace Collection will be examined in depth and in detail as a group discussion.
- There will also be opportunity to discuss the visit to the National Gallery.

### **Readings and Viewings:**

Kenneth Clark *Civilisation* Episodes 7-9 / Chapters 7-9

Kenneth Clark *Moments of Vision* Bernard Berenson pp 108-130

Robert Hughes *Shock of the New* Episodes 6-7 / Chapters 6-7

Robert Hughes *Nothing if not Critical* Bernard Berenson pp 352-367

John Updike *Just Looking* Is Art worth It? pp79-93; Something Missing pp 46-65

*Always Looking: The Artful Clarks* 50-67

John Updike: *Still Looking* Jackson Whole pp 200-211

Jeanette Winterson: *Art Objects* Art and Life pp 153-164; A work of my own pp 165-192

For Wallace Collection website see:

<http://www.wallacecollection.org/>

### **Set Reading and Viewings : See Class 5**

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#### **Class Seven: Tuesday, February 2, 2016 , 1:15-5:15pm**

**Meeting place:** Wallace Collection

- Students will explore further and in situ the two works discussed the previous week, making a critical assessment of their display and, presentation, relationship with other works of art, and information made available to the public.
  - Students will also critically assess the purpose and organisation of, and visitor behaviour and perceptions in the Wallace Collection
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#### **Class Eight: Monday, February 8, 2016, 1:15-5:15pm**

**Meeting place:** Classroom

- **Topic:** Art and morality. Two paintings from Tate Britain will be examined in depth and in detail as a group discussion.
- The visit to the Wallace Collection will be discussed.
- Discussion on the art market and the relationship of art and money.

### **Readings and Viewings**

Kenneth Clark *Civilisation* Episodes 10-13 / Chapters 10-13

Kenneth Clark *Moments of Vision: Art and Society* pp 63-82; *Art History and Criticism as Literature* pp 82-91

*Ruskin Today: Ruskin's writings on Art and Architecture* pp 123-136

Robert Hughes *Shock of the New* Episode 8 / Chapter 8

<http://www.newrepublic.com/article/books-and-arts/105862/the-decline-the-city-mahagonny>

John Updike *Just Looking* Writers and artists pp 191-200

John Updike *Always Looking: Whistler in the Dark* pp 82-95

J A M Whistler *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (1890) Whistler v. Ruskin: Art and Art Critics

Jeanette Winterson *Art Objects* The Semiotics of Sex pp103-118; The Psychometry of Books pp 119-132; *Writer, Reader, Words* pp 25-44

*Eva Hesse* <http://www.jeanettewinterson.com/journalism/eva-hesse/>

Website for Tate Britain  
<http://www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-britain>

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**Class Nine Tuesday, February 9, 2016 , 1:15-5:15pm**

**Meeting place:** Tate Britain

- Students will explore further and in situ the two works discussed the previous week, making a critical assessment of their display and, presentation, relationship with other works of art, and information made available.
- Students will also critically assess the purpose and organisation of, and visitor behaviour and perceptions in Tate Britain.

**Set Reading and Viewings : See Class 8**

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**Class Ten Friday, February 12, 2016, 1:15-5:15pm**

**Meeting place:** Visit to auction house and West End Dealer, tbc

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**\*\* Contingency Class Date: Friday 5<sup>th</sup> February.** Students are obligated to keep this date free to attend class should any class dates need to be rescheduled

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**Exam: Tuesday, February 16, 2016, 11:30- 1.30pm**

**Final Essay and Presentation**

You are asked to write a letter to a well-known personality of your choosing, of 2,000 - 2,500 words in length, and to make a presentation. The letter is to recommend that the chosen personality visit one of the London museum / galleries that we have visited in the Class, explain why it is worth visiting, why the personality might find a visit worthwhile, and what is especially appealing about the museum / gallery. The letter will also advise looking in depth at one of the works we have studied in class, and one other that we have not studied, from the same gallery/museum, and explain in some detail why it is worthwhile to do so. The letter is intended to encourage the personality to have a fulfilling art and museum / gallery experience, and to engage with the two works. The letter is also to recommend that the personality reads one of the 4 authors on the reading list (other than the one you have discussed in your first essay), and explain why your chosen personality might benefit from / appreciate reading this author. As well as the written letter, which is to be handed in on exam day – students will present the contents of the letter in an illustrated presentation followed by Q and A, to the Class on the Final Exam Day, explaining in addition why the particular personality has been chosen. This will count for **40%** of the overall mark.

**NB. It is essential that the 2 works specified above are discussed in the letter, as well as the author.**

*\*\*Exam timetables will be posted on the BU London website two weeks prior to exams.*

## Attendance Policy

### **Classes**

All Boston University London Programme students are expected to attend each and every class session, seminar, and field trip in order to fulfill the required course contact hours and receive course credit. Any student that has been absent from two class sessions (whether authorised or unauthorised) will need to meet with the Directors to discuss their continued participation on the programme. This may result in the student having to take a medical leave of absence from the programme or withdraw from the programme.

#### *Authorised Absence:*

Students who expect to be absent from any class should notify a member of Academic Affairs and complete an Authorized Absence Approval Form 10 working days in advance of the class date (except in the case of absence due to illness for more than one day. In this situation students should submit the Authorised Absence Approval Form with the required doctor's note as soon as possible). **Please note: Submitting an Authorised Absence Approval Form does not guarantee an authorised absence**

Students may apply for an authorised absence only under the following circumstances:

- Illness (first day of sickness): If a student is too ill to attend class, the student must phone the BU London Student Affairs Office (who will in turn contact the student's lecturer).
- Illness (multiple days): If a student is missing more than one class day due to illness, the student must call into to the BU London Student Affairs Office each day the student is ill. Students must also provide the Student Affairs office with a completed Authorised Absence Approval Form and sick note from a local doctor excusing their absence from class.
- Important placement event that clashes with a class (verified by internship supervisor)
- Special circumstances which have been approved by the Directors (see note below).

**The Directors will only in the most extreme cases allow students to leave the programme early or for a significant break.**

#### *Unauthorised Absence:*

Any student to miss a class due to an unauthorised absence will receive **a 4% grade penalty** to their final grade for the course whose class was missed. This grade penalty will be applied by the Academic Affairs office to the final grade at the end of the course. As stated above, any student that has missed two classes will need to meet with the Directors to discuss their participation on the programme as excessive absences may result in a 'Fail' in the class and therefore expulsion from the programme.

#### *Lateness*

Students arriving more than 15 minutes after the posted class start time will be marked as late. Any student with irregular class attendance (more than two late arrivals to class) will be required to meet with the Assistant Director of Academic Affairs and if the lateness continues, may have his/her final grade penalised.

## **Terms and Conditions**

Promptness and punctuality are expected, slackness in this respect is discourteous and disruptive, and will be penalised. Weekend trips and family visits are not acceptable reasons for either lateness or absence. Students must check their e-mail and the weekly Student Newsletter for field trip updates and reminders.

### *Additional Readings*

#### 1 On Line Readings

For Robert Hughes see:

- The Decline of the City Mahagonny  
June 25, 1990  
Art, money, New York, the 1980s: a jeremiad.  
<http://www.newrepublic.com/article/books-and-arts/105862/the-decline-the-city-mahagonny>
  - On Art and Money  
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1984/dec/06/on-art-and-money/?pagination=false>
  - Whistler  
<http://www.artchive.com/artchive/W/whistler.html>
  - Poussin  
<http://www.artchive.com/artchive/P/poussin.html>
  - Edouard Manet -Still Fresh As Ever  
<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,102958-1,00.html>
  - Bernard Berenson - Only in America  
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1979/dec/20/only-in-america/?pagination=false>
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For John Updike see:

- “What is American about American art?”  
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2008/jun/26/the-clarity-of-things/>
  - All his reviews for The New York Review of Books  
[www.nybooks.com/contributors/john-updike/](http://www.nybooks.com/contributors/john-updike/)
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For Jeannette Winterson see:

- Her writings on the visual arts are posted on her website  
<http://www.jeanettewinterson.com/publication/visual-arts/>

2 Readings posted on Blackboard

John Updike *Museums and Women and other Stories*: Museums and Women pp 3-17

*Still Looking*: An oil on canvas pp xi - xv

Emil Zola *Edouard Manet*

### Further Reading

- E H Gombrich *Art and Illusion*
- Robert Cumming *Annotated Art*
- Robert Cumming *Great Artists*
- Robert Cumming *Art (2015)*
- Robert Cumming *My dear BB*
- Robert Cumming et al *Looking into Paintings*
- Kenneth Clark *Another Part of the Wood; The Other Half*
- Kenneth Clark: *100 details from Pictures in the National Gallery*
- John Pope Hennessy *Learning to Look*
- Robert Hughes *American Visions - The Epic History of Art in America*
- Robert Hughes *Things I didn't know*
- Thomas Hoving *Making the Mummies Dance*

## Museum/ Gallery Survey Template

Date of Visit..... Name of surveyor.....

Museum/ Gallery visited .....

### Exercise 1: observation and perception

(To be completed immediately)

<b>Identity of work</b>	
Please record the information on the gallery label.	
What is your initial observation/ perception in front of the work of art compared with your observations /perceptions in class? Please note particularly any thing that you can now see that you could not see or did not notice before.	
Having seen and experienced the work at first hand, is there any thing you would now like to have answers to, or explanations for?	
What do you think of the display of this work?	
How easy was it to have a good look at it?	
Describe the context / Room in which it is displayed?	

<p>What do you think of the information available in this Room? eg</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Did it provide answers to what you might want to know?</li> <li>○ Did it make you want to look further at this work?</li> <li>○ Did it make you want to look further at other works?</li> <li>○ Did the information available tell you anything you did not know already? If not, why not?</li> </ul>	
<p>How many visitors are there in this Room?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What are they doing?</li> <li>○ How long on average do they look at any one individual work?</li> <li>○ How long do they stay in the gallery?</li> <li>○ Is there any one work which attracts more attention than the others</li> </ul>	

## Identity of work

<p>Please record the information on the gallery label.</p>	
<p>What is your perception in front of the work of art compared with your perception of it in class? Please note any changes in perception, and any thing that you can now see that you could not see or did not notice before.</p>	
<p>Having seen and experienced the work at first hand, is there any thing you would like to have answers to, or explanations for?</p>	
<p>What do you think of the display of this work?</p>	

<p>How easy was it to have a good look at it?</p>	
<p>Describe the context / Room in which it is displayed?</p>	
<p>What do you think of the information available in this Room? eg</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Did it provide answers to what you might want to know?</li> <li>○ Did it make you want to look further at this work?</li> <li>○ Did it make you want to look further at other works?</li> <li>○ Did the information available tell you anything you did not know already? If not, why not?</li> </ul>	
<p>How many visitors are there in this Room?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What are they doing?</li> <li>○ How long on average do they look at any one individual work?</li> <li>○ How long do they stay in the gallery?</li> <li>○ Is there any one work which attracts more attention than the others</li> </ul>	

## Museum/ Gallery Survey Template

Date of Visit..... Name of Surveyor .....

Museum/ Gallery visited .....

**Exercise 2: observation of and critical commentary**  
 (to be started during the visit and completed later)

Have you been before?	
What were your expectations?	
What were your first impressions?	
How easy was it to find the works you were looking for?	
How helpful are the staff?	
How good is the signage?	
If you can, discreetly follow a visitor entering the museum/ gallery and record what they do and in what sequence?	
Which Rooms /areas of the Museum attracted	

<p>the most interest from visitors?</p>	
<p>Which Rooms /areas of the Museum attracted the least interest from visitors?</p>	
<p>What is your assessment of the public facilities eg bookshop/ toilets/ café</p>	
<p>Have your expectations been fulfilled/ exceeded/ altered?</p>	
<p>What do you think of the Museum Gallery website? What aspects would you rate highest, and which lowest?</p>	
<p>What recommendations you would make for</p>	

<p>improving/ refocusing the visitor experience</p>	
<p>Between the Field Trip and the next Class please note any changes of view in your perception and understanding of the two works and the institution where they now are.</p>	