CAS AH 356 Modern and Contemporary Art in Paris

Credits: 4
French Language Prerequisite: LF212 and above (or the equivalent)

Professor: Daniel Lesbaches (dlesbach@bu.edu)
Office hours: Mondays 3:00-3:30, and by appointment

Schedule: 16 two-and-a-half-hour sessions over 7.5 weeks
- 14 weekly sessions: Mondays & Wednesdays 3:30 - 6 pm
- 2 additional sessions: Friday, September 6th (12:30 -3 pm)
  Friday, October 4th (9:30 am -12 pm)
- Final exam: Friday, October 25th

Course visits:
- Musée d’Orsay
- Musée National d’Art Moderne (Centre Pompidou), Modern and Contemporary collections
- Contemporary art galleries (details TBD)

Tutoring for oral presentations
- Individual meeting with the professor two weeks before the oral presentation
- Individual rehearsal with the Program’s Language Coordinator one week before the oral presentation

Course material:
- A course pack with all required readings (to be purchased by each student).
- Two reference manuals available at the BU Paris Center (chapters on Blackboard):
- Additional documents posted on Blackboard:
  - slides of all studied works,
  - Art History glossary in French,
  - methodological tools,
  - art movement definitions,
  - diagrams about perspective, light and colors and the representation of art timeline,
  - additional articles and links.

Assessment for the course:
- class attendance, participation and preparedness (10%),
- two quizzes combining identifying works (slides) and answering definition or factual questions (20%),
- an oral presentation (analytical commentary) about a given work (20%),
- a 5-page essay analyzing a current exhibition (30%),
- a final exam consisting of two essay questions (20%).

Homework includes mandatory readings in French (chapters from the two manuals and writings by the artists themselves, by contemporary authors or intellectuals, or by art historians) for each session, preparation for in-class tests (quizzes and exams), as well as extensive research and reflection for the oral presentation and for the essay.

In-class sessions alternate between lectures illustrated with slides and videos, group discussions, students’ presentations, and are supplemented by commented group visits to museums and galleries.

This course is accessible to students with no previous experience in art history. This course, including assignments and additional visits, is conducted entirely in French.
I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Since 1850, art has evolved in a world that has transformed with each generation even more deeply and rapidly than ever before in human history. The 19th century Industrial Revolution, the two World Wars and the more recent globalization, as well as developments such as photography, cinema, computer science and the internet, are major historical and technological phenomena in which modern and contemporary artists have been both engaged witnesses and active participants.

The emergence of photography has forced painters (such as Impressionists, Cubists, Abstract artists) into redefining the possibilities of the painting medium as a tool for representing the real, psychic or spiritual world. Marxism as well as the democratization of society have led some artists from movements as diverse as Constructivism or Pop Art to reflect upon the social role of art. Others, following Marcel Duchamp’s Readymades or Conceptual Art, have explored a more philosophical questioning of the very nature of Art. Since the 1960s, in the context of a civilization struggling with multiple uncertainties, artists have created new genres such as installation, performance, video and digital art, which contribute in making Contemporary Art a vibrant laboratory where the new forms of our future are created.

This course focuses on Paris as one of the three global capitals of modern and contemporary art and culture (along with New York and London). Attracting and inspiring not only French but international artists, the city has contributed to the creation of major global art movements over the past two centuries, and has been instrumental in giving contemporary art a major place in world culture through dedicated museums and art centers (such as Centre Pompidou) as well as numerous galleries. The understanding of the principal art movements in Paris from 1850 to today, including painting, sculpture, photography, installations, and urbanism, in relation to the historical, economic, and sociocultural contexts of the time period, will allow us to develop a history of “modernity” (in the art historical sense) as Paris defined it and to examine what influence Parisian modernity has had on Western culture and how it has been interpreted and translated in other parts of the world.

Furthermore, the study of modern and contemporary art raises essential questions which are continuously addressed throughout the course:

- The question of beauty as a criterium of aesthetic value;
- The distinction between “real” and “ideal”
- The questioning of perfection as a goal and the distinction between evolution and transformation;
- The extension of art to non-artistic expressions/objects;
- The renewal of sources of inspiration, shifting from Greek and Roman Antiquity to other cultures;
- The rejection of Western society’s artificiality.

Finally, the course will help students understand and apply art historical methodology through different exercises, such as an analytic commentary of a work (“Commentaire d’oeuvre”), a formal review of an exhibition and an analytical essay. It will also insist on the relevance of sources: the value of seeing an artwork on site vs. on line or on paper, as well as the distinction between good and poor reproductions; the differences in meaning between a text written by the artist (statement), a contemporary critique (immediate reaction), and an art historian (perspective); the necessity to use on-line reliable sources (Museums’ or universities websites, galleries’ on-line catalogues); the need to discriminate between informative and reliable sources and subjective judgments (press articles) serving as illustrations of a given time period mentality.

Each session focuses on a specific art movement, starting from its historical and cultural context, to analyze its main conceptions, the most important artists representing this movement and most notable art works by these artists, and their influence & posterity. The lecture part serves as a familiarization with concepts, ideas, methodology (both pertaining art history and interpretation of sources), terminology; preparation for each session, including mandatory readings of academic chapters from an art history manual (informative) and texts by the artists or contemporary intellectuals (aesthetical statements), reinforces and deepens these competencies. In-class discussions allow students to apply them. Students are provided with and expected to use additional tools such as an art history glossary and methodological hand-outs available on Blackboard.
II. HUB AREAS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Hub area: Aesthetic Exploration (1 unit)
1. Students will demonstrate knowledge and appreciation of notable works in literature and/or the arts, including the cultural contexts in which those works were created, and be able to identify their ongoing significance and relevance.
2. Students will demonstrate the reasoning skills and vocabulary necessary to interpret a work of art (literature, music, visual arts, etc.).
3. Students will produce evaluative and analytical works that demonstrate an understanding of the characteristics—such as genres, modes, styles, and cultural history—of at least one literary or artistic medium.

Hub area: Historical Consciousness (1 unit)
1. Students will create historical narratives, evaluate interpretations based on historical evidence, and construct historical arguments.
2. Students will demonstrate an ability to interpret primary source material (textual, visual, or aural) using a range of interpretive skills and situating the material in its historical and cultural context.
3. Students will demonstrate knowledge of religious traditions, intellectual paradigms, forms of political organization, or socioeconomic forces, and how these have changed over time.

More specifically, by the end of this course, students will be able to:

- trace and explain the timeline of Modern Art from Realism to contemporary developments; 
- describe and characterize the major movements of Modern and Contemporary Art; 
- define and recognize major artists’ contributions and key artworks, including a variety of artistic media, such as painting, sculpture, “readymades”, photography, installation, performance, and cinema; 
- understand and analyze theoretical texts about Modern Art written in English or in French, by identifying their main ideas and implications; 
- understand and apply French vocabulary specific to Art History, including media, techniques, movements, aesthetical analysis; 
- define, in general terms, artistic modernity as it was developed in Paris and describe Paris’ function as one of the three global capitals of contemporary art and culture, due to its institutions, the number and quality of its art centers and private galleries, and all the intellectuals and artists, French or not, who come from or live in the city; 
- examine the historical reception of works and identify how modern art has progressively come to occupy a central place in modern culture, both in France and in the world, notably through the creation of museums devoted to it; 
- follow and apply Art History methods thoroughly explained during the course through different written and oral exercises, which all include historical and cultural contextualization of the artworks/movements/artists/exhibitions as well as their reception, posterity and influence from artistic, historical, cultural, ideological perspectives, notably: o a formal analysis of a given artwork following the method used for the “Commentaire d’oeuvre”; o a critical review of an exhibition, analyzing how it develops specific themes and presents an artist’s work and think critically about how exhibitions and museums write history; o an analytical essay on a transversal aesthetical topic common to given art movements/artists/periods requiring both to explain the specificities of each movement/artist and to compare different approaches, in order to produce a reflection on how art has been transforming over time; 
- research, interpret and analyze the impact of the historical context (the Industrial Revolution, World-War 1 & World War 2, globalization, technological progress such as photography, cinema, computer science) when commenting on a work or on an exhibition; 
- relate Modern Art themes to others issues raised by social sciences (postmodernism, gender studies, globalization, urbanism...); indicate the main ideological movements specific to that period and their impact on artistic conceptions; determine how cultural, social and political paradigms related to art have changed from 1850 to today; 
- articulate a reflection on the distinction between the notion of “evolution” as a continuum towards perfection, and that of “transformation”; 
- articulate a reflection on how art has been questioning society and how society, historical events or sociocultural, political, economic, technological, ideological developments, have shaped the arts; 
- evaluate the historical scopes of texts written by the artists themselves (statements), comments from contemporary critiques and authors (immediate reaction), articles written by art historians (perspective).
III. ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Participation and preparedness: 10%
(Aesthetic Exploration · Outcomes 1/2 & Historical Consciousness · Outcomes 2/3)
In order to enrich the course with relevant comments, students are required to prepare each session through mandatory readings. This component of the grade takes into account the quality of a student’s presence in class, preparedness (readings), energy, relevance of comments in class, effort and progress in language proficiency, attendance and punctuality.

Two quizzes: 20%
(Aesthetic Exploration · Outcome 1)
These quizzes focus on factual knowledge. Students are asked to identify artworks studied in class and provide essential details (artist, movement, time period, etc.) and answer factual questions about art movements and techniques.

Oral presentation: 20%
(Aesthetic Exploration · Outcomes 2/3 & Historical Consciousness · Outcomes 1/2/3)
Students will prepare a 10-minute presentation (including a PowerPoint) on a given work of art related to a corresponding session topic, highlighting its principal characteristics and its importance in both the career of the artist and the great movements of art history. The grade will take into account the quality of the presentation and the PowerPoint, the knowledge gained on the artist and the work, the analysis of the work, and the ease and clarity of the oral presentation. It will require students to put into practice techniques and terminology of art criticism in an oral context, and will be prepared through an individual oral rehearsal dealing with formal aspects of the presentation, including language.

This presentation requires students to apply the method of the “Commentaire d’oeuvre” which includes the following aspects:
- internal analysis, consisting first of a presentation of the artist and the art movement he/she is related to, then of a detailed study of all aspects of the given work, such as its subject matter, its specific iconography, its composition, the use of colors and light, the techniques used;
- external analysis, consisting of determining whether the given work is related to a specific art genre or movement, of identifying its sources in the artist’s as well as in the more general artistic and historical evolution, of explaining its influence and deeper meaning;
- reception of the work by contemporary public, press, artists, intellectuals and its posterity.

Aside from seeing the artwork where it is actually exhibited in Paris, research for this presentation must cover the historical, technological and artistic context, the artist’s general career, style, work, influence, and the artwork itself (internal and external analysis), as well as other artworks with which it can be compared. The study of a specific artwork must never be isolated from its context; it is recommended to go from the more general to the more specific and to use a chronological approach (past and contemporary context · the artwork · its reception · its posterity).

Essay: Review of an Exhibition: 30%
(Aesthetic Exploration · Outcomes 2/3 & Historical Consciousness · Outcomes 1/2/3)
Students will visit an exhibition chosen by the professor and write a developed, analytical critique of it in a 5-page paper. The essay allows students to develop their written French in an academic context and to put into practice techniques and terminology of art criticism in a formal register.

This essay requires students to apply the specific method used for an exhibition which includes the following aspects:
- reflection on the site where the exhibition is held (museum, art center, gallery), its history, its goals, its audience, its renown and influence;
- presentation of the artist(s) · biography, previous exhibitions, presence on the art market, main characteristics of his/her work · and of the exhibition organizer(s) · motivations for the choice of the artist(s), goals and meaning of the exhibition, questions and issues raised by the exhibition;
- internal and external analysis of the works (see above) and of the exhibition, including its size, media, scenography, interaction with space and with the public, reception in the French and international press, financial dimension (prices of the works for a private gallery);
- enlightened and justified personal opinion.

Final exam: 20%
(Aesthetic Exploration · Outcomes 2/3 & Historical Consciousness · Outcomes 1/3)
The two-part final exam covers the entirety of the course and focuses on the ability to articulate global analysis and reflection. Students are required to write two essays:
- the first is an analytical commentary on a given work of art (same method as for the oral presentation);
- the second is an analytical essay consisting of a reflection on a transversal topic common to different art movements over the whole period covered in the course; based on theoretical ideas illustrated with specific examples (works), this essay requires students to comment on the specificities of each movement, in order to establish distinctions between these art movements, thus stressing the process of transformation characterizing the history of art; this essay must follow a precise outline consisting of an introduction, a 2/3-part argumentative development and a conclusion.

Paris Internship Program
Grading conversion (out of 100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FINAL GRADE FOR THE COURSE</th>
<th>GRADES FOR INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS/ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93-100: A</td>
<td>B+/A+ = 89,5</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-92,5: A-</td>
<td>A+ = 97</td>
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<tr>
<td>87-89,5: B+</td>
<td>B+ = 88</td>
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<tr>
<td>83-86,5: B</td>
<td>A/AA = 96</td>
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<td>80-82,5: B-</td>
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<td>C = 75</td>
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<td></td>
<td>D = 65</td>
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Attendance Policy

Our program is subject to French student visa laws where an active student status is mandatory. As the sponsor of your visa, Boston University has the legal obligation to ensure that you comply with visa requirements. If you do not attend classes or your internship as required, you will be considered to be in breach of your visa and can be deported. Any student who does not comply with this policy may be sent home from the program at the discretion of the program director, and may, as a result, forfeit credit and program costs for part or all of the semester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 absence (courses* or internship**)</th>
<th>-1 point on your final grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than 3 unexcused absences</td>
<td>F for the course</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unsubmitted written work</td>
<td>F (0 points) for the assignment in question</td>
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*Courses: class sessions, exposé preparation, in-class presentation

**Internship: EUSA meetings, BU Paris workshops, work placement schedule

EXCUSED ABSENCES = - Absence for illness excused by the certificate of a French doctor
- Internship interview
- Ofii medical visit (must have convocation)
- Professional imperative that conflicts with academic workshop

Documentation to be submitted to the Director the day following the absence

TARDINESS

The professor reserves the right to not admit a tardy student to class or to count a tardy arrival as either a half or whole unexcused absence. Late arrivals to class will impact the class participation grade. Leaving class before it ends is considered as tardiness. Late submission of written work will entail a penalty on the assignment grade. Written work submitted more than a week late will not receive credit (grade = F).

Students who do not complete a course on time will be given an F. There are no withdrawals from classes, the internship, nor the internship course.

PLAGIARISM

Simply stated, plagiarism is taking another’s work and presenting it as your own. It is, in fact, intellectual theft. It is one of the most serious forms of academic misconduct. Plagiarism committed by a student will certainly result in course failure and may result in suspension or dismissal. It can take many forms, including reproduction of published material without acknowledgement, or representing work done by others as your own. This includes the increasing common practice of purchasing and downloading work from the Internet “paper mills”. Plagiarism applies to all media - printed matter of all kinds, video, audio, and oral presentation. Even unacknowledged paraphrasing or use of another’s methodology, structure or management of material is plagiarism. You must use quotation when quoting even if you do the translating yourself.

All students are responsible for having read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that the penalty against students on a Boston University program for cheating on the examinations or for plagiarism may be “expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the dean”. Read the full Academic Conduct Code online at: http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/ as well as the Policy on Religious Observance.

Accommodations for Students with Documented Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at (617) 353-3658 or access@bu.edu to coordinate any reasonable accommodation requests. ODS is located at 19 Buick Street.

Paris Internship Program
## IV. CALENDAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topics and Readings</th>
<th>Assignments and Activities</th>
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</table>
| Session 1| - Introduction  
- Methodology: work commentary - internal analysis  
- Methodology: research - how to find reliable sources                                                                                                                                                     |                            |
| Session 2| - What is modern art?  
- Baudelaire and the painter of modern life  
- Methodology: work commentary - external analysis (social and cultural context; reception and influence)                                                                                                        |                            |
|          | **Readings:**  
| Session 3| - Realism  
- Impressionism and Neo-impressionism  
- Methodology: the comparative approach                                                                                                                                                                 |                            |
|          | **Readings:**  
| Session 4| - Post-Impressionism  
- Paul Cézanne  
- Primitivism in Modern Art  
- Methodology: review of an exhibition                                                                                                                                                                           | **QUIZ 1**                  |
|          | **Readings:**  
| Session 5| VISIT: Musée d’Orsay                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                            |
| Session 6| - Fauvism  
- Cubism                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                            |
|          | **Readings:**  
Guillaume Apollinaire, *Les Peintres cubistes*, 1912  
Pablo Picasso, *Statement to Marius de Zayas*, 1923  
Henri Matisse, *Notes d’un peintre*, 1908 (extraits).  
Hamon-Dagen, p. 270-283.  
Lemoine, p. 34-41.                                                                                                                                                                                      |                            |
| Session 7| - Abstraction in Paris: the Delaunays, Kandinsky, Mondrian                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | **Oral Presentation 1:**  
Sonia DELAUNAY [1885-1979], *Prismes électriques*, 1914.                                                                                                                                                |                            |
|          | **Readings:**  
Alfred H. Barr Jr., *Le Développement de l’art abstrait*, 1936  
Lemoine : Pages 42-43, Pages 54-57, Pages 84-87                                                                                                                                                      |                            |
| Session 8| - Surrealism  
- Guernica and the 1937 Exposition Internationale                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | **Oral Presentation 2:**  
Pablo PICASSO, *Guernica*, 1937                                                                                     |                            |
|          | **Readings:**  
André Breton, « Manifeste du Surréalisme », Paris, 1924  
Lemoine, pages 116-123                                                                                                                                                                                      |                            |
| Session 9| VISIT: Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, Modern Collections                                                                                                                                              |                            |
### Session 10
- **Dada in Paris**
- Marcel Duchamp and readymades

**Readings:**
- Marcel Duchamp, *Apropos of ‘Readymades’*  
  Lemoine, p. 72-79

**Oral Presentation 3:**
- Marcel DUCHAMP, *Roue de bicyclette*, 1913/1964

**QUIZ 2**

### Session 11
- Yves Klein and New Realism

**Readings:**
  Lemoine : p. 202-205

**Oral Presentation 4:**
- CÉSAR, *Compression Ricard*, 1962

### Session 12
**VISIT:** Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, Contemporary Collections

**Readings:**
- Daniel Buren, “Sur le fonctionnement des expositions”  
  Lemoine : p. 228-229, 288-291

### Session 13
- Daniel Buren and Institutional Critique
- “*Mythologies individuelles*”: Christian Boltanski, Annette Messager, Sophie Calle

**Readings:**

**ESSAY DUE**

**Oral Presentation 5:**

### Session 14
**VISIT:** Contemporary art gallery (TBD)

### Session 15
- Paris as muse
- Globalization of museums

**Readings:**
- Françoise Cachin, Jean Clair, Roland Recht, « Les musées ne sont pas à vendre ».
  Lemoine, pages 222-227

**Oral Presentation 6:**

### Session 16
- Conclusion / Synthesis and review for Final Exam

### Last Friday
- FINAL EXAM

## V. REFERENCES

### Reliable on-line sources

Avoid: *Wikipedia, anonymous or tourists' blogs and websites.*

- **Recommended Museums websites**
  - The National Gallery (Londres), National Gallery of Art (D. C.), Boston Museum of Fine Arts.
  - Musée du Louvre, Musée d’Orsay, Musée Picasso, Musée Rodin, Centre Pompidou.

- **University resources:**
  - www.jstor.org.

- **Glossaries and general information:**
  - www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie
  - www.moma.org/explore/collection/ (“Index of art terms”)  
  - www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/glossary/  
  - www.metmuseum.org/toah/ (~ Timeline of Art History ~)
  - http://arthistory.about.com/od/glossary/Art_History_Glossary.htm

- **Texts and pictures:**
  - www.archives.com/ (including the link “Theory & Criticism”)  
  - www.googleartproject.com/fr/  
  - http://plato.stanford.edu/

- **Dictionaries :**
  - http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/  
  - www.wordreference.com/

*Paris Internship Program*
Additional bibliography

General art history

Specific artists and movements

Critical readings