CAS AH 356 French Art: Contemporary Art in Paris
Credits: 4

Professor: Daniel Lesbaches (dlesbach@bu.edu)

Schedule: 16 two-and-a-half-hour sessions over 7.5 weeks
(Monday & Wednesday – 3:30 to 6 pm + 2 additional sessions)

Office hours: Monday 3:00-3:30, and by appointment

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

Course material:
- A course pack with all required readings (to be purchased by each student).
- Two reference manuals available at the BU Paris Center (excerpts on Blackboard):

I. COURSE PRESENTATION AND OUTCOMES

This course has three objectives:

1. Students will be able to identify and understand the main art movements in Paris from 1850 to today, including painting, sculpture, photography, installations, and urbanism. We will give consideration to the historical, economic, and sociocultural contexts of the time period in order to develop a history of “modernity” (in the art historical sense) as Paris defined it, as well as its influence on Western taste. Three points will be emphasized:
   a. The influence of Parisian architecture and urbanism on modernity.
   b. The place of female artists in modernity.
   c. The reception of Parisian modernity.

2. By examining the current presentation “Modernités plurielles” at the Centre Pompidou, we will study how Parisian modernity has been interpreted and translated in other parts of the world.

3. Students will develop an understanding of art historical methodology through different exercises: analytic commentary of a work, essay, and review of an exhibition.

The course, including additional seminars and visits, is conducted entirely in French.

Outcomes

General knowledge

By the end of the course, students will have acquired
- a precise knowledge of Modern Art timeline from Realism to contemporary developments;
- the ability to describe and characterize the major movements of Modern and Contemporary Art;
- a knowledge of the major artists’ contributions and key artworks and the ability to recognize those artworks and artists;
• the ability to define in general terms artistic modernity as it was developed in Paris;
• an understanding of Paris’ function as one of the three global capitals of contemporary art
and culture (along with New York and London), due to its institutions (such as Centre
Pompidou), the number and quality of its art centers and private galleries, and all the artists,
French or not, who come from or live in the city;
• the capacity to relate Modern Art thematics to others issues raised by social sciences
(postmodernism, gender studies, globalization, urbanism...);

Art History methodological tools

By the end of the course, students will be able to
• formally analyze a specific work following a precise art history method (commentaire
d’œuvre) defined during the course and applying it to an oral presentation;
• understand and analyze theoretical texts about Modern Art written in English or in French,
by identifying their main ideas and implications;
• think critically about exhibitions and analyze how museums write art history and how
temporary exhibitions develop specific thematic or present an artist’s work;
• understand the historical reception of works and how modern art has progressively come to
occupy a central place, notably through the creation of museums devoted to it.

II. ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Visits: 10%
During the guided visits to museums and exhibitions, students will be asked questions about the
displays: both the works themselves and the setup of the work within the museum or gallery. About
30 minutes of each visit will be dedicated to this exercise, during which students provide written
answers.

Oral presentation: 20%
Working in groups of two, students will prepare a 10 minute presentation (including a PowerPoint)
on a given work of art, highlighting its principal characteristics and its importance of both the career
of its 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.

Essay: 30%
Students will visit an exhibition chosen by the professor and write a developed, analytic critique of it
in a 5-page paper. The essay also 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.

Slide quiz: 10%
Students will identify works studied in class and provide essential details (artist, movement, time
period, etc).

Final exam: 20%
The two-part final exam will cover the entirety of the course. It will be comprised of two essays: one
on a given work of art (analytical commentary) and one on a given movement or period of the history
of modern art.
Participation and preparedness: 10%
This grade takes into account the quality of a student's presence in class, energy, relevance of comments in class, effort and progress in language proficiency, and attendance and punctuality.

Attendance Policy
1 absence (class session or activity) = -1 point on the overall grade
4 or more unexcused absences = grade of F for the course
Missed assignment or test = grade of 0 for the assignment
Plagiarism on an assignment = grade of 0 for the assignment

NB: Excused absences must be justified by a doctor’s note or a scheduled internship interview.

Plagiarism (BU Policy)
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/.

III. CALENDAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 1</th>
<th>Topics and Readings</th>
<th>Assignments and Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Introduction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Methodology: analytic commentary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 2</th>
<th>Topics and Readings</th>
<th>Assignments and Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What is modern art?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Baudelaire and the painter of modern life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 3</th>
<th>Topics and Readings</th>
<th>Assignments and Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Realism</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Impressionism and Neo-impressionism</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Readings:</strong> Hamon-Dagen, p. 158-161 (Courbet), p. 164-165 (Olympia), p. 168-174 (Impressionnisme), p. 196-197 (Seurat)</td>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th>Session 4</th>
<th>Topics and Readings</th>
<th>Assignments and Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Post-Impressionism</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Matisse and Fauvism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session</td>
<td>Visit</td>
<td>Content</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Musée d’Orsay</td>
<td></td>
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| 6       | - Primitivism in Modern Art  
- Paul Cézanne  
- Cubism | Oral Presentation n° 1:  
Pablo Picasso,  
*Portrait of Kahnweiler*, 1910 |
|          | Readings:  
Guillaume Apollinaire, *Les Peintres cubistes*, 1912  
Pablo Picasso, *Statement to Marius de Zayas*, 1923  
Hamon-Dagen, p. 270-283.  
Lemoine, p. 34-41 |  |
| 7       | - Abstraction in Paris: the Delaunays, Kandinsky, Mondrian | Oral Presentation n° 2:  
Piet Mondrian,  
*Broadway Boogie-Woogie*, 1942-3 |
|          | Readings:  
Alfred H. Barr Jr., *Le Développement de l’art abstrait*, 1936  
Lemoine : Pages 42-43, Pages 54-57, Pages 84-87 |  |
| 8       | - Surrealism  
- *Guernica* and the 1937 *Exposition Internationale* | Oral Presentation n° 3:  
Pablo PICASSO,  
*Guernica*, 1937 |
|          | Required reading:  
André Breton, « Manif... |  |
| 9       | Musée Nationale d’Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, Modern Collections |  |
| 10      | - Dada in Paris  
- Marcel Duchamp and readymades  
- Yves Klein and New Realism | Oral Presentation n° 4:  
Marcel DUCHAMP,  
*Roue de bicyclette*, 1913/1964 |
|          | Readings:  
Marcel Duchamp, *Apropos of ‘Readymades’*  
Lemoine, p. 72-79 |  |
| 11      | Musée National d’Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, Contemporary Collections |  |
| 12      | - Daniel Buren and Institutional Critique  
- “*Mythologies individuelles*”: Christian Boltanski, Annette Messager, Sophie Calle | Oral Presentation n° 5:  
Daniel BUREN,  
*Les Deux Plateaux*, 1985-86  
ESSAY DUE  
SLIDE QUIZ |
|          | Readings:  
Daniel Buren, « Sur le fonctionnement des expositions »  
Lemoine : p. 228-229, 288-291 |  |
| 13      | Contemporary art gallery (TBD) |  |
|          | Readings:  
Lemoine, pages 228-229, pages 288-291. |  |
| Session 14 | Reception of modern art in France and the US  
- The role of American collectors: The Steins, Albert C. Barnes 
- The Amory Show, 1913  
- Creation of a modern art museum in New York: Société Anonyme, the Gallatin Collection, founding of MoMA in 1929  
- Creation of a modern art museum in Paris: the role of the government and the Ministry of Culture  
- Globalization of museums  

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

| Session 15 | Paris as a muse  

**Readings:**  
Lemoine, pages 222-227

| Oral Presentation n° 7:  
CHRISTO and JEANNE-CLAUDE,  
*Le Pont-Neuf emballé*, 1985

| Session 16 | Conclusion  
- Synthesis and review for Final Exam

| Last Friday | FINAL EXAM

### IV. REFERENCES

**Reliable on-line sources**  
*Avoid: Wikipedia, anonymous or tourists’ blogs and websites.*  
- **Recommended Museums websites**  
- **University resources**: www.jstor.org.  
- **Glossaries and general information**  
  www.larousse.fr/encyclopédie  
  www.moma.org/explore/collection/ (click on “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.archive.com/ (including the link “Theory & Criticism”)  
  www.googleartproject.com/fr/  
  http://plato.stanford.edu/  
- **Dictionaries**:  
  http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/  
  www.wordreference.com/
Additional bibliography

General art history

Specific artists and movements

Critical readings