

**Art History 699: Gender and the American Artist, 1880-1940**  
Spring 2012 Tuesdays 4:30 to 7:10 Research Hall Room 402  
Prof. Ellen Wiley Todd Robinson B336  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00-3:00; Thursdays 3:00 to 4:00  
and by appointment  
[etodd@gmu.edu](mailto:etodd@gmu.edu) 703 993-4374

**Introduction.** This course examines women artists, their quest for professionalization, their interactions with a variety of media, and, with the onset of modernism, their representational strategies in the arts, and their negotiations within personal lives as they confront the social, cultural, and institutional changes in these decades. We will think historically and historiographically about these issues in American art by looking at interpretive literature on women artists alongside a series of primary documents and case studies. We will also take a week to think through some theoretical issues.

The central work of the course is a research paper. We will talk about this in our introductory session. To help guide your projects our discussions will focus as much on how our scholars did their research and conceptualized their projects as on their findings.

### **Required Texts.**

Wanda Corn, with Charlene G. Garfinkle and Annelise K. Madsen. *Women Building History: Public Art at the 1893 Columbian Exposition* (University of California Press, 2012).  
Kathleen Pyne. *Modernism and the Feminine Voice: O'Keeffe and the Women of the Stieglitz Circle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).  
Kirsten Swinth. *Painting Professionals: Women Artists and the Development of Modern American Art, 1870-1930* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2001)  
Laura Wexler. *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2000)

I have placed a number of additional readings Blackboard (BB) <http://courses.gmu.edu> (see schedule of readings below.) Other major texts, complimenting our books are Erica Hirshler. *A Studio of Her Own: Women Artists in Boston, 1870-1940* (Boston: MFA, 2001) and *American Women Modernists: The Legacy of Robert Henri, 1910-1945*. Both are available on Amazon, but as exhibition catalogs they have gone quickly out of print. I will include selected readings from them also on Blackboard.

**Course Procedures/Requirements.** During our first week of class I will provide a framework, and we will discuss our individual/class final project—basically orchestrating the rest of our class time. This is a reading/discussion/research class requiring the full participation of all class members. It demands active involvement with the material—with its assumptions, its arguments, its conceptual and interpretive frameworks as well as its absences. Engage, challenge, and embrace the readings at multiple levels—for information and interpretive insight. Requirements are as follows:

1. **Short Papers:** Each of you will write 3 short 3-4-page critical papers on the reading, due in class no later than the week after they appear in the syllabus. Select one topic from A or B or C; and then select one topic from D or E. Everyone should do the Theory Paper. (We will take the introductory session to parcel out the paper and presentation topics so that all topics are covered). Sometimes articles or chapters for a week of class will be

divided a bit differently. In addition pairs should take a leadership role each week, generating a brief outline of of key points covered and questions for discussion beforehand that can be distributed to the class—a 1 or page summary. Short papers will be a critical analysis of a chapter or group of readings—I've suggested topics in the syllabus below and these paper topics are also discussion topics. In general you will attend to the the relation between the thesis and the way a scholar has worked from a set of assumptions, followed particular forms of evidence, or relied on a theory or set of methodologies.

2. Final Project Paper: This will be a creative/scholarly research project, part individual, part collaborative. Each of us will take on the persona/biography of a woman artist and we will meet during the last weeks to imagine the lives we live, both personal and professional. It IS possible that in working on the artist, you will be considering/grappling with a discussion of a single work or a small group of works. We will discuss the various possibilities and constraints we encounter, bearing in mind the contingencies of the various generations we inhabit. Ideally we will “represent” a range of chronological and media-based possibilities, of artists fashioning lives from different personalities, desires, beliefs. Part of the project is to be self-conscious about our own positions/values now and with respect to the past. The final meeting will be on May 15 (the final exam period) with supper at my home.

Your final paper (15-20 pages) should chart your journey through your available materials (on the artist but also on women's history from the period, or on related women who inhabited the artist's circle, including a full bibliography and notes) suggesting the kinds of conclusions you might make about your artist. Begin thinking about your artist as soon as possible: I would like to have Georgia O'Keeffe and Mary Cassatt off limits since they are iconic figures, but the literature on them is obviously crucial to our understandings of others. I will do a separate handout for this.

3. Participation. This consists of your attendance (mandatory at all sessions except for excused illness), your thoughtful questions and contributions in general discussion and your more formal engagement with material on leadership days and during our final presentations.

I will want to meet with you individually to discuss your projects—only one person should “be” a given artist.

**Expectations/Evaluation/Grading.** This an upper level graduate seminar for the M.A. in Art History. It will demand more by way of reading, writing, intellectual engagement, participation, and commitment to group goals a combined grad/undergrad course. Classes will vary somewhat depending upon the topic; for most we will engage in in-depth discussions of assigned readings and specific questions; for others we may have an in-class project, working through selected examples with slides. It is essential that you do all assigned reading, attend class every time and participate in class. No one should dominate; all should speak. The presentation format should make this easier OR we may decide we do not need this to be so formal.

The key to success is organization—both weekly and for the entire course. Start the reading for over the weekend. The readings are dense, occasionally difficult. Even “informational” readings require you to assimilate interpretive information; others ask that you read, for lines of argument, assumptions, evidence. You will also encounter difficult, often theoretical writing, but mostly in the theory week, and in Laura Wexler's text. Others are more straightforward in their writing.

Honor Code: This is found in the university catalog and applies to this and all other courses. Cheating, plagiarism are expressly forbidden. For quick reference, plagiarism can be defined as: (1) presenting as one's own the words, work, or opinions of someone else without proper acknowledgement or (2) borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgement. Every single "direct" quote must be footnoted, even if you use the author's name in a sentence.

**Every sequence of ideas from elsewhere must also be footnoted.** I have noticed increasing sloppiness with this latter habit. If you paraphrase an idea from your readings...footnote it. Otherwise it is an honor code violation. All sources must be footnoted, no matter how ephemeral. This includes ALL websites, all museum brochures, all wall panels or label texts in museums. THIS MEANS YOU MUST FOOTNOTE NOT ONLY DIRECT QUOTES BUT ANY PARAPHRASES OF IDEAS, INFORMATION.

<u>Grading:</u>	Participation	30%	
	Attendance/discussion contrib.		10%
	Presentation(s) (10% class 10% project)		20%
	Three Papers	30%	
	Final Project	<u>40%</u>	
	Annot. Bib 10% Paper 30%		
<u>Total</u>		100%	

I use pluses and minuses; my scale is indicated below. You will earn some form of numerical grade so you will always have a clear indication of where you stand. Good papers include a thesis, claims supported by examples, and evidence from relevant readings and images. All written work will be graded on grammar, style, content, organization, and clarity. Spellcheck and proofread all papers before submitting them. I will meet with each of you on research topics, and you should consult with me for any changes.

**A+ 100%; A 93-99%; A- 90-92%** This is awarded for superior understanding of all concepts and factual material, for superior presentation in written work, imaginative projects that go beyond the assignment, and regular class participation. For surprising me.

**B+ 87-89%; B 83-86%; B- 80-82%** While B+ indicates above average mastery of the material, clear and well-produced written presentation on all assignments, B is for average work, merely adequate understanding of factual material and merely competent written presentation. B- is hanging on the brink.

**C 70-79** This is a failing grade for graduate work if received as a final grade for the course. In order to receive a grade for the course, all work must be completed. PLEASE email me if you find you are struggling and we can work on some problem-solving strategies. If there are problems or if you need a moderate extension because of illness, contact me before the assignment is due. Email is the best resource for all communication.

### **Key Dates for the Course:**

Tue. Jan 31	Last Day to Drop with no tuition penalty. Last day to ADD
Feb. 14	Short Paper Topic A Due (Choose topic 1,2, or 3)
February 21	Decision on Final Project Artist Due—prelim bibliog
Feb. 28	Paper on Theory Due. Paper Topic chosen by this day
Fri. Feb. 24	Last Day to Drop
Mar. 10-16	<u>Spring Break</u>
Mar. 20/Mar 27	Short Paper Topic B Due (Wexler)
Mar. 27	Annotated Bibliographies due

Apr. 3/Apr 10	Short Paper Topic C Due	(Pyne/O'Keeffe)
Apr. 10/Apr 17	Short Paper Topic D Due	(indiv artists)
Apr. 17/Apr 24	Short Paper Topic E Due	(tropes of womanhood)
Apr. 24	Catch-up Day/Final Project Presentations Begin	
May 1 and 8	Final Project Presentations: Final Projects Due	May 8
May 15	Final Thoughts over supper	

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS: Subject to slight modification as we move through the course. BB is for the Folder for this course in Blackboard. (<http://courses.gmu.edu>) Then to course content folder. Several of the JSTOR readings are actually in here. Readings must be completed for the class under which they are listed.

### **WEEK #1: January 24**

#### Course Introduction and Set Up

I'll bring in some introductory material, we'll divide up course readings and discuss the final project. We will discuss the list of possible artists and a handout for the research topic.

### **WEEK #2: January 31**

#### American Women and Professionalization I:

##### Art Schools, the Market, and Criticism

**READ:** Swinth, Chs. 1-5 Sarah Burns, Ch. 5, "Outselling the Feminine" (on Cecelia Beaux) in *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America*, 159-186. BB

For Presentations: One person per chapter and two people on Cecelia Beaux

1. Chapter 1
2. Chapter 2
3. Chapter 3
4. Chapter 4
5. Chapter 5
6. Burns on Beaux.

### **WEEK #3: February 7**

#### American Women and Professionalization II:

##### The case of Boston

January 26

**READ:** Erica Hirshler. *A Studio of Her Own: Women Artists in Boston, 1870-1940*, pp. 53-117, (BB) and Bernice Kramer Leader, "Antifeminism in the Paintings of the Boston School." *Arts Magazine* 56 (Jan 1982): 112-119. Anna Lea Merritt, "A Letter to Artists: Especially Women Artists." *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* 65 (March 1900): 463-469; Olive Shreiner. "The Woman Question." *Cosmopolitan* 28 (November 1899): 45-54; All on BB. Mrs. Russell Sage. "Opportunities and Responsibilities of Leisured Women." *North American Review* 181 (November 1905): 712-21. On JSTOR

Presentations: 3 people on each of the three questions below

#### Short Paper Topic A: Three possibilities (Also Discussion Topics)

1. Compare the approaches to professionalization taken by Swinth and Hirshler, bearing in mind that one is a scholarly monograph, the other a book to accompany a major museum exhibition. Pay attention to how this affects their conceptualizations and arguments, and their forms of evidence.
2. In her chapter on the Boston School, Hirshler refutes much of Leader's argument on "antifeminism." Discuss their claims—lines of evidence and argument.

3. Compare and contrast the three period articles, one by an artist, (Merritt) one by a feminist (Shreiner) and one by a philanthropist (Mrs. Sage)

#### **WEEK #4: February 14**

##### American Women and Professionalization III: "Fair Women" The case of Women at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair

READ: Wanda Corn, with Charlene G. Garfinkle and Annelise K. Madsen. *Women Building History: Public Art at the 1893 Columbian Exposition* (University of California Press, 2012).

This week we will discuss this work as a group, considering its structure, its relation to Women's history and Art History. What does it mean to Stand back and compare a group of women to an exhibition opportunity Comes in the context of a larger cultural event?

#### **WEEK #5: February 21**

##### Thinking through Theory: Feminist Art History and its Models: Then and Now Brief discussion of possible research topics

READ: Giles Edgerton (Mary Fanton Roberts). "Is There a Sex Distinction in Art? The Attitude of the Critic Toward Women's Exhibits." *The Craftsman* 14 (June 1908): 239-51; Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 91, No. 5 (Dec., 1986), pp. 1053-1075 JSTOR; Lisa Ticknor, "Feminism, Art History, and Sexual Difference," *Genders* 3 (November, 1988): 92-128; Janet Wolff, "Reinstating Corporeality: Feminism and Body Politics," in *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, Amelia Jones, ed. (Routledge, 2003): 414-426. All on BB

Theory Paper Topic/Discussion points to consider: How is the attitude of the earlier period considered in later theoretical works? How does Joan Scott, a historian, approach the question of Gender in comparison to Lisa Tickner? How Does Wolff's argument and area of discussion differ from Tickner's, a generation earlier? (2 people per article).

1. Mary Fanton Roberts.
2. Joan Scott
3. Lisa Ticknor
4. Janet Wolff

#### **WEEK #6: February 28**

Research Week I: Library Methods with Jennifer Rinalducci  
We will meet in the Library computer room, Johnson Center Second floor (stairs behind main information desk)

Final Project Artists should be selected by now. Prelim Bibliography  
THEORY SUMMARY PAPER on questions above Due here

#### **WEEK #7: March 6**

Research Week II: No Class: Individual meetings on research topics:  
Appointments can begin at 3:30 and go through class time and also be at other times this week

**Spring Break: March 10-March 18**

### **WEEK #8: March 20**

#### Women, Photography, and the Imperial Age

READ: Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism*

All read Introduction and Chs. 1-3 and then we will divide as follows:

Group 1: Ch. 4 on Johnston's Hampton Album (2 people)

Group 2: Ch. 5 on Kasebier's Indians (2 people)

Group 3: Ch. 6 on Alice Austen's immigrant photography (2 people)

Group 4: Ch. 7 on Jessie Tarbox Beals and the St. Louis World's Fair (2 people)

Short Paper Topic B: Examine your chapter and its discussion of a photographer's project in light of the frameworks Wexler sets out in the opening chapters.

### **WEEK #9: March 27**

#### Thinking Around Georgia O'Keeffe vs. Women Students of Robert Henri

READ: Modernism and Women Artists: Robert Henri's Students

Swinth, ch. 6 and epilogue plus in *American Women Modernists: The Legacy of Robert Henri, 1910-1945*. Everyone read Wardle, Ch. 1 for discussion BB

Kathleen Pyne: Modernism and the Feminine Voice

1: Presentation on Photo-Secession Chapter 1 (2 people)

2. Presentation on "The Speaking Body" Chapter 2 (2 people)

3. Presentation on the Feminine Voice and the Woman-Child 3 (2 people)

4. Presentation on The Burden and Promise of the Woman-Child 4 (2 people)

Short Paper Topic C: Both *American Women Modernists* and *Modernism and the Feminine Voice* are scholarly catalogs, designed to accompany museum exhibits. Compare their approaches and discuss the possibilities and limitations of this kind of scholarly monograph. (You can think again about Swinth and look back to Wexler). Can you make distinctions between the single-authored/multiple-authored approach?

### **WEEK #10: April 3**

NO CLASS THIS WEEK: WORK ON RESEARCH PROJECTS, CATCH UP

Papers on Topic C can be due next week or e-mailed to me

### **WEEK #11: April 10**

#### Individual Women and their Work: Case Studies

READ: Brandon Brame Fortune, "Not Above Reproach: The Career of Lucy Lee Robbins," *American Art* 12 (Spring, 1998): 40-65 BB/JSTOR; Griselda Pollock, "Mary Cassatt, Painter of Women and Children in Milroy and Doezeema," *Reading American Art* (Yale: 1998): 280-301BB; Whitney Chadwick, "Amazons and Heroes: Romaine Brooks and Her World," in *Amazons in the Drawing Room: the Art of Romaine Brooks*, (Chameleon Books: 2000), pp. 10-40 BB; Cecile Whiting, "Decorating with Stettheimer and the Boys," *American Art* 14 (Spring 2000): 24-49 JSTOR; Renee Ater "Making History: Meta Warrick Fuller's Ethiopia," *American Art* 12 (Fall, 2003): 12-31; Anna Chave, "O'Keeffe and the Masculine Gaze," *Art in America* 78 (Jan, 1990), 114-124, Ellen Wiley Todd, "The Question of Difference: Isabel Bishop's Deferential Office Girls," in Milroy and Doezeema, *Reading American Art* (Yale:

1998): 409-439. Ellen Wiley Todd, "Remembering the Unknowns: The Longman Memorial and the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, *American Art* 23 (Fall 2009): 60-81. (All on BB) (For Presentations, 2 on each article)

1. Fortune
2. Pollock
3. Chadwick
4. Whiting
5. Ater
6. Chave
7. Todd/Todd

Short Paper Topic D: Compare two of the above articles as scholarly pieces on individual artists and their work. Consider the questions articles pose, and how the authors marshal theory, and visual/historical evidence to make their case.

Short Paper Topic C Due No Later than Here

### **WEEK #12: April 17**

#### Tropes of Womanhood, Traditional, New, and Bad

READ: Caroline Ticknor. "The Steel-Engraving Lady and the Gibson Girl." *Atlantic Monthly* 88 (July 1901): 105-10; Margaret Deland. "The Change in the Feminine Ideal." *Atlantic Monthly* 105 (March, 1910): 289-302; Rafford Pyke. "Strength in Women's Features." *Cosmopolitan* 38 (November 1904): 111-114. (will email) Bram Dijkstra. A chapter from VIII to XI in *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin de Siecle Culture*; (CR); Kathleen Pyne, "Evolutionary Typology and the American Woman in the Work of Thomas Dewing." *American Art* 7 (Fall 1993): 13-30. Annette Stott. "Floral Femininity: A Pictorial Definition." *American Art* 6 (Spring 1992): 61-78; Amanda Glesmann, "Reforming the Lady: Charles Dana Gibson and the 'New Girl' in *Women on the Verge: The Culture of Neurasthenia in Nineteenth-Century America*," (Stanford: Cantor Center, 2004): 53-68. All on BB except where otherwise indicated.

Short Paper Topic E: Compare one of the pieces from the period with one of the more recent articles to get a sense of how authors deploy period evidence and/or rhetoric. Ticknor with Glesmann, for example; Deland and Pyke with Pyne and Stott.

Two on each topic for presentations

1. Ticknor with Glesmann
2. Pyke with Pyne
3. Deland with Stott

### **WEEK #13: April 24**

The Week we need to catch up with ourselves because there has been altogether too much to read, say, and do

AND possibly begin Final Project Presentations

### **WEEK #14: May 1**

Final Project Presentations, cont'd

### **WEEK #15: May 8: Final Exam Period**

Final Project Presentations, cont'd

Final Projects Due in Class

### **WEEK #16: May 15: Final Exam Period**

List of Artists from which you can choose for your final paper. There are plenty of others so please check with me.

Berenice Abbott  
Marie Boyd Allen  
Alice Austen  
Peggy Bacon  
Jessie Tarbox Beals  
Margaret Bourke-White  
Cecilia Beaux  
Theresa Bernstein (Meyerowitz)  
Isabel Bishop  
Romaine Brooks  
Margaret Lesley Bush-Brown  
Imogen Cunningham  
Kathleen McEnery Cunningham  
Maria Oakley Dewing  
Elsie Driggs  
Abestenia St. Leger Eberle  
Lydia Field Emmett  
Gertrude Fisk  
Wanda Gag  
Anna Vaugan Hyatt Huntington  
Frances Benjamin Johnston  
Gertrude Kasebier  
Dorothea Lange  
Mary Fairchild Macmonnies Low  
Ellen Day Hale or Lilian Westcott Hale  
Elizabeth Olds  
Marie Danforth Page  
Lila Cabot Perry  
Emily Sartain  
Sarah Choate Sears  
Henrietta Shore  
Jessie Wilcox Smith  
Alice Barber Stephens  
Florine Stettheimer  
Minerva Teichert  
Candace Wheeler  
Marguerite Zorach