

# The Interwar United States

Fall 2019

ARTH 471 sec 001 / ARTH 599 sec 002

Thurs. 4:30 – 7:10 pm • Music Theater Building 1008

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Office Hours: Wed. 10:00 – noon;

Thurs. 2:00 – 4:00; or by appt.

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## **ARTH 471 Course Information:**

3 credit hours. Studies a particular area of American art, focusing on a form, such as landscape or genre painting; theme, such as nationalism, regionalism, or iconography of the family; or movement, such as American modernism. May not be repeated for credit. Recommended prerequisites: ENGL 302/ENGH 302 and 6 credits in Art History at the 300-level. Writing intensive in the major.

## **ARTH 599 Course Information:**

3 credit hours. Special topics in art history and the decorative arts. May be repeated for credit when topic is different. May be repeated within the term.

**Description:** This course considers the art, politics, and culture of the “interwar” years, defined for the purposes of this course as 1917-1939. At the beginning of this era, many critics believed art in the United States was destined forever to lag behind avant-garde production in Europe; however, by the end of this fruitful twenty-year period, the U. S. boasted a diverse kaleidoscope of artists, movements, and innovations. This course will cover the visual arts, primarily painting, photography, and film, in their social and political contexts to uncover the complexities of “American” identity in these years. The course will explore themes including: avant-garde art movements; regional and folk traditions; race, sexuality, and gender; responses to technology and industry; popular culture and entertainment; and government sponsorship of art.

## **Course Policies and Procedures**

**Goals:** By participating in this course, students should meet the following goals:

- synthesize information to articulate critical responses to objects and texts
- analyze and evaluate visual images and material culture objects
- develop skills of academic communication, both written and oral
- engage in high-level critical evaluation of secondary scholarly texts
- demonstrate mastery of a specific topic determined by the student’s research

**Writing Intensive in the Major:** This course fulfills all or in part the writing-intensive requirement for the Art History major. Among other requirements, writing intensive courses are ones in which:

- students revise at least one substantive assignment
- students receive instructor feedback on their writing
- writing assignments count substantially toward final grades
- writings assignments combine to a total of at least 3500 words

**Class Communication:** The best way to reach me is by email; I usually respond within 48 hours. I will communicate with you using GMU email via the Blackboard system. Please use my cell number *only* to send text messages in case of last minute absence, missing a scheduled meeting, etc. Do not call or leave voice mails with course-related questions; these are better answered over email.

**Required Text:** Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915-1935* (Univ. of California Press, 1999). All other readings will be online through the Blackboard site.

Grading for Graduate Students		Grading for Undergraduate Students	
Participation	10%	Participation	10%
Weekly Questions	15%	Weekly Questions	15%
Short Papers (2)	30%	Short Papers (3)	45%
Discussion Leader	15%	Final Project	30%
Final Project	30%		

Participation: Participation starts at a C (75/100), but when you participate, that will quickly go up. You can use electronics, but please don't text, post on Instagram, stream video, etc.

Weekly Questions: For each class meeting, bring at least 3-4 substantive questions about the readings. Questions could address issues you want to discuss in more detail, disagreed with, or were not sure about. These will be used to start discussion and will be collected at the end of class.

Short Papers: Papers based on specific course topics or activities, about 2-3 double-spaced pages each. Undergrads will write three papers and grad students will write two. Papers due Friday 9/13; Friday 9/27; and Friday 10/11. Use Blackboard to view prompts and submit.

Discussion Leader (Graduate students): You will read an additional text and summarize its main points in a presentation of about 15-20 minutes. You should include a PPT (if you discuss specific images) and a handout for the class with an outline of the reading and 3-4 questions for discussion.

Final Project: The final research project will result in 8-10 pages (2000-2500 words) for undergrads or 12-14 pages (3000-3500 words) for graduate students. You can choose from the following three options. Full instructions are on Blackboard.

- Option 1: Using Omeka.net or another online platform, develop an "exhibit" on a theme of your choice. (Recommended for students who are comfortable using tech tools or are interested in DH.)
- Option 2: Write a profile of an artist, including a bibliographic essay and extended visual analysis of a single artwork.
- Option 3: Traditional research paper on a topic of your choice.

A drafting process involving multiple steps is intended to keep you on track. The individual steps are not graded but are used to provide feedback for revision and improvement. However, for each step you miss, 10 points will be deducted from your project's final grade.

- Paper proposal: Thursday 10/17
- Outline and bibliography: Thursday 10/31
- Rough draft: Thursday 11/14
- Meetings to discuss progress: Thursday 11/21
- Lightning presentations: Thursday 12/5

**Late work**: Penalized 5 points for each 24 hours past the due date. Extensions will be granted *if deemed appropriate* when students submit a request in writing at least one week before the due date.

**A Note on Attendance**: Excused absences include illness, family emergency, and religious observance. Chronic absenteeism without notification will result in the following penalties:

<u>Unexcused Absences</u>	<u>Result</u>
More than 2	Course grade drops by one letter
More than 4	Course grade drops by two letters
More than 6	F for the course

**Evaluation:** I use the following measurements for final grade calculation:

A+ (98-100)	A (93-97)	A- (90-92)	Clearly stands out as excellent performance
B+ (87-89)	B (83-86)	B- (80-82)	Level of work is good to very good
C+ (77-79)	C (73-76)	C- (70-72)	Level of work is satisfactory to average
D (60-69)			Work is below average and marginally acceptable
F (below 60)			Quality and/or quantity of work is unacceptable

**Policies for Submitting Written Work:** All assignments except weekly reading questions should be submitted using the Blackboard site and are due by 11:59 PM on the day they are listed. Double-space with standard margins and 12-point font and save in .doc, .docx, or .pdf format.

**Academic Honesty:** Academic dishonesty constitutes a serious violation of your learning process and your social contract with other students. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- failure to cite sources for quotations and ideas
- cutting and pasting text from other sources
- passing off another's work as your own
- purchasing or copying a paper found online
- reusing a paper you wrote for another course

I have a **zero tolerance** policy for academic dishonesty, whether intentional or not. Students who violate standards of academic honesty will earn a **zero** for the assignment and may risk failing the course or being subject to disciplinary action. More information, including definitions of cheating, lying, and plagiarism, can be found at the Office of Academic Integrity website at [oai.gmu.edu](http://oai.gmu.edu).

### Resources for Students

**Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities are entitled to request appropriate accommodations. Students should first register with Disability Services and then bring me the provided letter to receive the necessary accommodations. [ds.gmu.edu](http://ds.gmu.edu), or call (703) 993-2474.

**Help with Writing:** If you have struggled with writing in the past, or if English is not your first language, you may want to seek help from the Writing Center. They offer one-on-one tutoring and workshops throughout the semester. Robinson-A, Room 114, or [writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu)

**Emotional and Mental Support:** College life is complicated. Students may find it helpful to talk with a professional. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can help address both personal and academic concerns. Services are free and confidential. SUB I, Room 3129, or [caps.gmu.edu](http://caps.gmu.edu)

**LGBTQ Resources:** LGBTQ Resources “works to promote the academic success, health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students and their allies.” SUB I, Room 2200, or [lgbtq.gmu.edu](http://lgbtq.gmu.edu)

**Diversity:** The Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education provides support for an inclusive campus, including first-generation and undocumented students. [odime.gmu.edu](http://odime.gmu.edu)

**Bereavement:** Students dealing with loss are encouraged to speak with the Dean of Student Academic Life for their College. The Dean's office can help you contact your professors and deal with academic challenges of bereavement. CHSS students contact [chssdean@gmu.edu](mailto:chssdean@gmu.edu). Contacts for other Colleges are at: [registrar.gmu.edu/students/academic-standing/deans-and-directors/](http://registrar.gmu.edu/students/academic-standing/deans-and-directors/)

## Course Calendar

### Thurs. 8/29: Introduction to Course

### Thurs. 9/5: Plumbing

- Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing*, preface, introduction, and chapter 1
- Various authors, *The Blind Man 2* (May 1917): 4-6, 8, 10, 15 (texts relating to *Fountain*).
- Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, "The Modest Woman," *The Little Review* 7 (July-Aug. 1920): 37-40.

#### Graduate Student Presentation (optional for all except presenter):

- Paul B. Franklin, "Object Choice: Marcel Duchamp's Fountain and the Art of Queer Art History," *Oxford Art Journal* 23, no. 1 (2000): 25-50.

### Thurs. 9/12: France

Short Paper #1 due by Friday 9/13 at 11:59 PM

- Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing*, chapter 2
- Tirzah True Latimer, "Romaine Brooks: Portraits That Look Back," chap. 2 of *Women Together/Women Apart: Portraits of Lesbian Paris* (Rutgers, 2005), 43-67.
- *La Révolution Surréaliste* 7 (June 1926). Look at images and consider various types of texts.
- excerpts, "Why Do Americans Live in Europe?" *transition* 14 (Fall 1928).

#### Graduate Student Presentation (optional for all except presenter):

Barbara Zabel, "Expatriate Portraiture: Alexander Calder and Josephine Baker in Paris," chapter 6 of *Assembling Art: The Machine and the American Avant-Garde* (Univ. of Mississippi, 2004), 109-130.

### Thurs. 9/19: Manhattan

- Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing*, chapter 3
- Ellen Wiley Todd, "Art, the 'New Woman,' and Consumer Culture: Kenneth Hayes Miller and Reginald Marsh on Fourteenth Street, 1920-40," in *Gender and American History Since 1890*, ed. Barbara Melosh (Routledge, 1993), 127-54.
- Joseph Stella, "The Brooklyn Bridge," c. 1925

#### Graduate Student Presentation (optional for all except presenter):

- Anna C. Chave, "'Who Will Paint New York?': 'The World's New Art Center' and the New York Paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe," *American Art* 5, no. 1/2 (1991): 86-107.

### Thurs. 9/26: Négritude

Short Paper #2 due by Friday 9/27 at 11:59 PM

- Glenn Jordan, "Re-membering the African American Past: Langston Hughes, Aaron Douglas and Black Art of the Harlem Renaissance," *Cultural Studies* 25, no. 6 (2011): 848-91.
- Renee Ater, "Making History: Meta Warrick Fuller's *Ethiopia*," *American Art* 17, no. 3 (2003): 13-31.
- George Schuyler, "The Negro-Art Hokum," *The Nation*, June 16, 1926.
- Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," *The Nation*, June 23, 1926.

#### Graduate Student Presentation (optional for all except presenter):

- Krista A. Thompson, "Preoccupied with Haiti: The Dream of Diaspora in African American Art, 1915-1942," *American Art* 21, no. 3 (2007): 74-97.

### **Thurs. 10/3: Taste**

- Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing*, chapter 4
  - Kathleen Spies, “A ‘New American Taste’: Walt Kuhn, Modernism, and the Buckeye,” *American Art* 32, no. 3 (2018): 43-65.
  - Clement Greenberg, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” *The Partisan Review* (1939).
- Graduate Student Presentation (optional for all except presenter):
- Cécile Whiting, “Decorating with Stettheimer and the Boys,” *American Art* 14, no. 1 (2000): 24-49.

### **Thurs. 10/10: God**

Short Paper #3 due by Friday 10/11 at 11:59 PM (undergrads only)

- Robert L. Gambone, “Religion, Revivalism, and the American Scene,” chap. 1 of *Art and Popular Religion in Evangelical America, 1915-1940* (Univ. of Tennessee, 1989), 1-40.
  - Phoebe Wolfskill, “Migration, Class, and Black Religiosity,” chapter 3 of *Archibald Motley Jr. and Racial Reinvention: The Old Negro in New Negro Art* (Univ. of Illinois, 2017), 61-104.
  - James Weldon Johnson, *God’s Trombones* (1927). Read the poem “Listen, Lord—A Prayer” and look at the images by Aaron Douglas.
- Graduate Student Presentation (optional for all except presenter):
- Matthew Baigell, “Max Weber’s Jewish Paintings,” *American Jewish History* 88, no. 3 (2000): 341-360.

### **Thurs. 10/17: Ecology**

Paper/project proposal due

- Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing*, chapter 5
  - Mark Andrew White, “Alexandre Hogue’s Passion: Ecology and Agribusiness in *The Crucified Land*,” in *A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History*, ed. Alan C. Braddock and Christoph Irmscher (Univ. of Alabama, 2009), 168-188.
  - Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor, *An American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion* (1939).
- Graduate Student Presentation (optional for all except presenter):
- Jason Weems, “Adaptive Aeriality: Grant Wood, the Regional Landscape, and Modernity,” chap. 3 of *Barnstorming the Prairies: How Aerial Vision Shaped the Midwest* (Minnesota, 2015), 127-83.

### **Thurs. 10/24: Craft**

- Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing*, chapter 6
  - Erika Doss, “American Folk Art’s ‘Distinctive Character’: The Index of American Design and New Deal Notions of Cultural Nationalism,” in *Drawing on America’s Past: Folk Art, Modernism, and the Index of American Design* (National Gallery, 2002), 61-73.
  - Van Wyck Brooks, “On Creating a Usable Past” (1918)
- Graduate Student Presentation (optional for all except presenter):
- W. Jackson Rushing, “Marketing the Affinity of the Primitive and the Modern: René d’Harnoncourt and ‘Indian Art of the United States,’” in *The Early Years of Native American Art History: The Politics of Scholarship and Collecting*, ed. Janet Catherine Berlo (Univ. of Washington, 1992), 191-225.

### **Thurs. 10/31: Machines**

Bibliography and outline due

- John F. Kasson, “Dances of the Machine in Early Twentieth-Century America,” in *A Modern Mosaic: Art and Modernism in the United States*, ed. Townsend Ludington (UNC, 2000), 153-173.
- Barbara Melosh, “Masculine Expertise: Science and Technology,” chap. 5 in *Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theater* (Smithsonian, 1991), 111-34.
- watch clip from [Modern Times](#) (Charlie Chaplin, 1936)

**Graduate Student Presentation (optional for all except presenter):**

- Sharon Corwin, “Picturing Efficiency: Precisionism, Scientific Management, and the Effacement of Labor,” *Representations* 84 (2003): 139-165.

### **Thurs. 11/7: Government**

\*\*class meets at Special Collections Resource Center, second floor Fenwick Library\*\*

- Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz, “New Deal for Public Art” in *Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context, and Controversy*, ed. Harriet Senie and Sally Webster (Smithsonian, 1998), 128-41.
- Philip Evergood, “Concerning Mural Painting”

### **Thurs. 11/14: Politics**

Rough draft due

- Alejandro Anreus, “Ben Shahn and the Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti,” in *Ben Shahn and the Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti*, (Jersey City Museum, 2001), 110-123.
- Helen Langa, “Two Antilynching Art Exhibitions: Politicized Viewpoints, Racial Perspectives, Gendered Constraints,” *American Art* 13, no. 1 (1999): 10-39.
- Louis Lozowick, “Towards a Revolutionary Art,” *Art Front* 2, no. 7 (July-Aug. 1936).

**Graduate Student Presentation (optional for all except presenter):**

- Patricia Hills, “Art and Politics in the Popular Front: The Union Work and Social Realism of Philip Evergood,” in *The Social and the Real: Political Art of the 1930s in the Western Hemisphere*, ed. Alejandro Anreus, Diana L. Linden, and Jonathan Weinberg (Penn. State, 2006), 181-200.

**Thurs. 11/21:** Individual meetings to discuss progress. Use online signup.

**Thurs. 11/28:** No class. Thanksgiving Break.

**Thurs. 12/5:** Course Evaluations, Lightning Presentations (5 minutes)

**Thurs. 12/12:** Final draft of project due

It is the student’s responsibility to keep track of due dates for readings and assignments. The instructor reserves the right to change this class schedule and pledges to notify students of any changes in a timely manner.