

Professor Nika Elder  
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Lectures: M – Period 4  
W – Period 3 & 4  
Location: FAC 201

**ARH 3620: American Art  
Spring 2016**



Frederic Church, *Twilight in the Wilderness*, 1860

**Course Description**

This course surveys fine art, visual culture, and material culture produced in the New World from European encounter through the mid-twentieth century. This two-hundred-year period witnessed the advent of institutions, issues, and concerns that continue to shape our lives today: such as slavery and abolition, the American Revolution, the exploration of the Western frontier, the emergence of consumer culture, the rise of the modern city, and New York's ascension to cultural capital of the world. Although, today, each of these things occupies an established place within the history of the United States, in their own days, their benefits, consequences, and futures were hotly debated. This course examines paintings and sculptures as well as popular images and practical things that represent and reveal a range of different perspectives on these and other historical phenomena and, thereby, explores the complex relationship between art, politics, and economics. Artists addressed include William Bartram, John Singleton Copley, Frederic Church, Winslow Homer, Timothy O'Sullivan, Thomas Eakins, Georgia O'Keeffe, Aaron Douglas, Jacob Lawrence, Edward Hopper and more. The class will make several visits to the Harn Museum of Art and Special Collections in Library East.

## Course Requirements:

### 1) COMMUNICATION

#### A. Attendance

Attendance is required at every lecture. Students are expected to arrive on time. Roll will be taken at the start of lecture, and late comers may not be allowed to sign in once lecture has begun. **More than one unexcused absence or continued lateness will adversely affect your attendance grade.** The University attendance policy can be found here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx#absences>

In cases of religious observance, please notify me in advance of your absence and arrange to get notes from someone else in the class.

#### B. Participation

Participation is an integral component of the course and will be graded. Participating means:

1. **Taking extensive notes on lecture.** Lectures go well beyond material covered in the textbook and will be the basis of all exams, so it is to your benefit to be as thorough in your note-taking as possible. Notebooks may be collected without advance warning to ensure best practices. See Appendix A for a discussion of productive note-taking.

2. **Engaging in class discussions on readings and artworks.** Engaging in class discussion can take several different forms: answering questions, posing questions, agreeing or disagreeing with other students' comments.

Feel free to draw connections to contemporary events and issues, personal experience, other classes, and material covered at any point in the semester. Offering opinions that differ from those presented in lecture or in comments by classmates is encouraged. Pose questions on the lectures, statements made by other students, etc. These contributions will enrich the classroom experience for all involved.

#### C. Electronics Policy

Cell phones and other electronic devices, including laptops, should be placed on silent and put away for the duration of lecture and section. Notes can and should be taken with pen/pencil on paper, which has been proven to be a more effective means of learning than taking notes by computer. With documentation from the Dean of Students Office, a waiver will be made to the laptop policy.

#### D. Email Policy

Please check your UF email regularly. Important information about assignments, meeting locations, etc. will be disseminated via section list-serves. You are automatically subscribed to the list-serve with your UFL email. In most cases, I respond to emails within 24-48 hours.

## 2) READING

a. The course textbook is:

Angela L. Miller, Janet C. Berlo, Bryan J. Wolf, and Jennifer L. Roberts, *American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Identity* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2008).

It is required and can be purchased at the UF bookstore or online (be sure to buy the correct edition).

**The textbook provides critical background information for lecture, which will presume familiarity with names and dates mentioned therein. Readings from the textbook should be completed in advance of the dates for which they are assigned.**

b. All other required readings are available in the “Course Reserves” section on Canvas.

**Bring hardcopies of all readings to class.** I strongly encourage you to print the texts prior to reading them so you can underline, highlight, and jot down notes, thoughts, and questions with abandon.

c. **Students are required to respond to non-textbook readings in the “Discussion” section on Canvas.**

Questions will be posted at least one week in advance of the class for which they are assigned. Responses are due by 12 am (midnight) the night before class. Posts will receive a check plus, check, or check minus. Late posts will not be accepted.

3) WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: there are two short writing assignment for this course and a research paper, which is divided into four components.

The first short assignment (1-3 pages) will be a visual analysis of a print by Theodore De Bry in the collection of the Harn Museum of Art, which we will visit as a class on Wednesday, January 13<sup>th</sup>. The work will be studied in person, during class, and the assignment will be due at 5pm on January 15<sup>th</sup>. Detailed instructions will be provided in advance.

The second short assignment (1-3 pages) will be completed in class on Wednesday, February 17<sup>th</sup> during the class trip to Special Collections to see *Harper’s Pictorial History of the Civil War*. Detailed instructions and expectations for the assignment will be provided in advance. The assignment will be uploaded to Canvas at the end of class in preparation for our class discussion on Monday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The research paper (7-10 pages) will focus on a single work of American art produced between the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the present. It can be on a work in any medium (painting, film, sculpture, or photography, etc.). I strongly encourage you to choose a topic that you can analyze and study in person. Among other forums, it can be selected from the collection of the Harn Museum of Art or Special Collections. The research paper is divided into four components. Detailed instructions will be provided for each one:

- \* a paragraph-long proposal of a topic is due on Wednesday, February 10<sup>th</sup>
- \* the research proposal (1-3 pages) is due in class on Wednesday, February 24<sup>th</sup> and will be graded as part of the midterm
- \* a draft (3-5 pages) is due on Wednesday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>
- \* the final revision of the research paper is due on Wednesday, April 20<sup>th</sup>

4) Exams: there is a midterm exam and a final exam for this course. They will consist of a combination of ID's/discussions, comparisons, short answer questions, and essays. The exams draw upon the material covered in course lectures, discussions, and readings. The midterm will be in class on Wednesday, February 24th. A midterm review will take place in class on Monday, February 15th. The final will be on Thursday, April 28th and will be preceded by a final review on optional final review to be held after classes end.

### **Accommodations**

Every effort will be made to accommodate students with disabilities. Students in need of disability accommodations should schedule an appointment with me as soon as possible. All accommodations requests must be accompanied by necessary documentation from the Dean of Students Office.

### **Course Resources**

1) Canvas – slide lists and any other documents distributed in class will be posted on the course page.

2) OFFICE HOURS: I'm happy to meet with you during my office hours Wednesdays, 4pm-6pm in my office, FAC 121, to discuss any questions pertaining to the course content, reading assignments, writing assignments, or exams. Office hours don't require an appointment; feel free to just drop by. If you're unavailable at the designated time, just ask or email me, and we can arrange another time to meet.

3) ACADEMIC SUPPORT

UF Teaching Center  
<https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>

UF Writing Studio  
<http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

University Counseling & Wellness Center  
<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/>

### **Grading**

The final course grade is calculated as follows:

10% Attendance  
15% Participation – includes the two short writing assignments  
5% Paper Topic Proposal  
15% Midterm Exam  
10% Research Proposal  
15% Draft of Paper  
15% Research Paper  
15% Final Exam

To receive full credit, assignments must be turned in on time. Late assignments will only be accepted under special or extreme circumstances with valid documentation and, unless impossible, extensions must be arranged in advance. Without an approved extension, late assignments will be marked down 1/3 of a grade per day. No make-up exams will be given without documentation demonstrating that the scheduled exam date is impossible. In order to pass this course, all assignments must be completed. No exceptions.

All exams and assignments will be assigned letter grades. For letter grade definitions, see:  
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

As a matter of course, students are expected to abide by the University's policies regarding academic honesty, the honor code, and student conduct related to the honor code. Full information regarding these policies is available at the following sites:

Academic Honesty: <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html#honesty>

Honor Code: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Student Conduct: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/conductcode.php>

### **Important Dates at a Glance**

Weds. Feb. 10	Paper topic due
Weds. Feb. 24	Midterm
	Research proposal due
Weds. Mar. 23	Draft of research paper due
Weds. Apr. 20	Research paper due
Thurs. Apr. 28	Final Exam

## Projected Course Schedule

All readings should be completed in advance of the lectures for which they are listed.

### Introduction

W Jan. 6      Introduction  
  
Reading:  
None

### Transatlantic Encounters

M Jan. 11      European Perspectives

Reading:

W Jan. 13      Painting History  
\* Class meets at the Harn Museum of Art \*

Reading (for class):

Writing (due on Canvas Friday, January 15<sup>th</sup> at 5pm)

Visual analysis of a select work by De Bry based on first-hand study in class on 1/13

### Transatlantic Encounters II / Fashioning Identity

M Jan. 18      History Painting

Reading:

W Jan. 20      Colonial Portraiture

Reading:

### Fashioning Identity II / Natural Specimens

M Jan. 25      Runaway Slave Advertisements

Reading:

W Jan. 27      Bartram's *Travels through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East & West Florida*  
\* Class meets at Special Collections \*

Reading:

Jan. 28/29      Optional tour of the popular culture collection in Special Collections

## **Natural Specimens / Natural Landscapes**

M Feb. 1      The Family Peale

Reading:

W Feb. 3      Hudson River School I

Reading:

## **Natural Landscapes II**

M Feb. 8      Hudson River School II

Reading:

W Feb. 10     Catch Up / Paper How-To

Reading:

Writing

\* Paper Topics due on Canvas by 5pm \*

## **Shaping Memory**

M Feb 15.     Midterm Review

Reading:

None

W Feb. 17     The American Civil War in Retrospect  
\* Visit Special Collections (Library East) \*

Reading:

## **Shaping Memory**

M Feb. 22     *Harper's Discussion* and Winslow Homer

Reading:

W Feb. 24     Midterm

Writing:

\* Paper proposal due in class \*

Bring a hardcopy. No electronic copies received after class has begun will be accepted.

**SPRING BREAK no class!**

**Domestic Politics**

M Mar 7 Genre painting

Reading:

W Mar. 9 Monuments and the American Civil War

Reading:

**New Horizons / Defining the Self**

M Mar. 14 The Western Landscape

Reading:

W Mar. 16 Gilded Age portraiture I

Reading:

**Defining the Self II**

M Mar. 21 Gilded Age "portraiture" II

Reading:

W Mar. 23 Library Session

Reading:

None

Writing

\* Paper draft due on Canvas by 5pm \*

**New Perspectives**

M Mar. 28 Visionary Landscapes

Reading:

W Mar. 30 The Ashcan School

Reading:

**New York I**



M Apr. 4 Dada in New York

Reading:

W Apr. 6 The Stieglitz Circle

Reading:

### **New York II**

M Apr. 11 The Harlem Renaissance

Reading:

W Apr. 13 Art & Industry

Reading:

### **Collective Concerns**

M Apr. 18 Social Realism

Reading:

W Apr. 20 Abstract Expressionism

Reading:

Writing:

\* Final paper due on Canvas by 5pm \*

### **Final Exam**

TBD Optional Final Exam Review

Thurs., Apr. 28<sup>th</sup> (12:30-2:30) Final Exam

## Appendix A

### Note-Taking

In listening to lectures, keep track of two things:

1. the trajectory or arc of American art from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-twentieth century

The course traces a narrative about the development of American art over the course of this time period as artists respond to the world around them and to one another. At the start of every lecture, I will outline the key themes and contributions of the artist, movement, or time period under discussion as well as how they fit into the trajectory of American art.

2. the meaning of individual works of art

Lectures will offer historically-situated interpretations of individual works of art. That is to say, they will explain what a given work of art says about its subject and why. Things to listen for include:

- \* the subject of a work of art
  - \* reasons why an artist took up a given subject
- \* how the artist depicted that subject
  - \* what decisions did she or he make?
- \* the pictorial or cultural circumstances that informed those decisions
- \* finally, what those decisions mean for the work of art: what the work says about its subject and why

The discussion and interpretation of individual works of art in class can thus serve as a model for the research paper. You will also be asked to address these topics (often referred to in class as the “what,” “how,” and “why”) on the midterm and final exam.

## Appendix B

### Potential Paper Topics

In addition to writing on a work by an artist covered in class, you might explore the following artists and subjects in search of a topic:

Washington Allston  
John Vanderlyn  
George Catlin  
Architecture  
Regionalism  
early 20<sup>th</sup>-century design  
Native American crafts  
Representations of slavery  
Representations of politicians  
Comics/cartoons  
Second generation Abstract Expressionism  
Edward Curtis  
Reginald Marsh  
Isabel Bishop  
Charles Darwin  
John James Audubon  
Monuments  
John Trumbull's paintings for the Capitol Rotunda  
Colonial prints

This list consists of subjects that fell somewhat outside the scope of the lectures. As such, it is by no means a comprehensive list of possible topics, but, rather, a place to begin thinking about one. You might also skim the textbook or consult the websites of the following museums: the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago. As noted above, you are also encouraged to visit the Harn Museum of Art or Special Collections on the UF campus and select a work from among their collections.