

Primitivism, Ethnography, & (Anti-)Colonialism in the Avant-Garde



Images: Paul Colin, *Le Tumulte Noir/Dancer in Pink on Piano (Josephine Baker)*, 1927 / Norman Lewis, *Carved Bobbin (Guru)*, 1935 / Hannah Höch, *Monument 1 (From an Ethnographic Museum)*, 1924–28

ARH 4931 Art History Seminar / ARH 6496 Modern Art Seminar
School of Art + Art History, College of the Arts, University of Florida
Fall 2022 Credits: 3

Tuesdays Periods 8–10 | 3:00–6:00pm FAC 116A

INSTRUCTOR	Email & Office Phone	Office	Office Hours
Professor Rachel Silveri	rsilveri@arts.ufl.edu 352-273-3053	FAC 119B	TBD

Course Description and Objectives

This course attempts to hold in tension a dual reality: that the European avant-gardes of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries at once valued and valorized African, Oceanic, and Indigenous cultures while nonetheless perpetuating forms of colonial violence. Rereading canonic as well as new texts on European primitivism, the class will be an opportunity to rethink ethnographic Surrealism, retheorize the dialogues that modern artists had across cultures, and reassess the many types of anti-colonial declarations made by members of the avant-garde. Students will also have the occasion to consider how the reception of primitivism affected the work and livelihood of Black and Indigenous artists, as well as the legacies of contemporary neo- and techno-primitivisms within our own contemporary moment.

While this course is primarily designed for art history graduate students, advanced art history undergraduates and graduates from any arts and humanities discipline are welcome to enroll.

Course Requirements and Grading

Active Seminar Participation	10%
Weekly Presentations	10%
Response Papers	20%
Final Project Abstract & Bibliography	10%
Final Project Presentation	10%
Final Project	40%

Completion of all presentations and assignments is necessary to pass the course.

For more information on UF's grading policies and assigning grade points, see:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Letter Grade	% Equivalency	GPA Equivalency
A	94 and above	4.00
A-	90 to 93	3.67
B+	87 to 89	3.33
B	83 to 86	3.00
B-	80 to 82	2.67
C+	77 to 79	2.33
C	73 to 76	2.00
C-	70 to 72	1.67
D+	67 to 69	1.33
D	63 to 66	1.00
D-	60 to 62	0.67
E, I, NG, WF	59 and below	0.00

Assignments

Weekly Presentations

To facilitate discussion, many of the assigned readings will be presented in-class by seminar participants. The goal of such presentations is to unpack the main arguments and critical stakes of the readings; relate them to other texts, issues, or works already discussed; and raise questions about them for discussion. Other presentations might focus on artworks related to the readings. Presentations should be 5–10 minutes in length. Students should expect to make two or three of these presentations throughout the semester.

Response Papers

Throughout the semester, students will be responsible for short, weekly response papers. For every class with assigned readings, students will be expected to turn in a 1-page response (total) summarizing the text(s). (The page count is per class, not per text, i.e., if there are three readings

assigned, you should summarize them all together in a 1-page response). Your response should briefly state the main argument of each reading, its methodology (*how* the argument is made, *how* the author arrives at their claims), and the materials (texts, artworks, theories) that it examines.

Final Project Abstract & Bibliography

In advance of their final projects, students will prepare an abstract of 500 words outlining the scope of their topic and the issues/materials to be examined. They will also include a preliminary bibliography of at least ten scholarly texts.

Final Project Presentation

Students will present a polished, conference-style presentation of their final project to the class, complete with a PowerPoint of related images. Presentations should be 15–20 minutes in length.

Final Project

The final research paper should be at least 15 pages in length and demonstrate significant research, original argumentation, clearly defined critical stakes, and mastery of the related secondary literature. It should also incorporate feedback and suggestions from the final project presentation. Plagiarism, in part or in full, will be grounds for failing the course.

In lieu of a final research paper, MFA students are welcome to produce a new, original studio work that is both substantial and directly related to the themes of the class. (Studio works previously created or done on assignment for another course will not count). An artist statement should accompany the work.

Students should discuss their final projects with the instructor in advance.

All assignments must be in Times New Roman 12-point font, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins. Please number the pages. Any citations must be done in Chicago-style.

Chicago Manual of Style Guide: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Readings

All assigned readings will be available either on reserve at the Architecture & Fine Arts Library or made available online through the Canvas e-Learning Course Website. All readings must be completed before each class. Please bring hard copies of the readings to class with you.

Attendance, Participation, Due Dates

Attendance in seminar is mandatory. Any absences that are incurred as a consequence of illness, religious observance, or family emergency will be excused; please simply inform the instructor and, in the case of illness, provide a doctor's note.

Students are expected to arrive to class on time and to actively participate throughout our seminar discussions. Active participation means continually engaging and contributing to seminar conversations throughout the semester, coming to class having completed all the readings and being ready to discuss them (consulting images, identifying puzzling aspects of the texts, highlighting

passages for analysis, raising questions for discussion), and being respectful of your instructor and peers.

All assignments must be turned in on time. Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for every twenty-four hours past their due date (i.e., from an A to an A-). Any extensions on assignments and the acceptance of late submissions are solely at the instructor's discretion.

Requirements for class attendance, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

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

Course Policies & Additional Information

Land Acknowledgement

The University of Florida rests on the traditional lands of the Potano, Timucua, and Seminole peoples, territories which later had long ties with the Miccosukee and Mascogo peoples as well. As one of the 52 land-grab universities in the United States, the University of Florida has benefited from the forced cession and sale of 90,226 acres of Indigenous lands from 121 Tribal Nations under the Morrill Act of 1862.

Please learn more at the Land-Grab Universities Project and Native Land Digital:

<https://www.landgrabu.org/universities/university-of-florida>

<https://native-land.ca/>

As faculty, I recognize and respect these Indigenous communities past, present, and future, and honor the ongoing important work of dismantling settler colonialism.

Email

Announcements about the class will be sent out over email. Please check your UF email regularly. If you send the professor or teaching assistants any emails, please do so from your official UF account and practice email etiquette and courtesy when messaging (write a clear subject line, include a salutation and closing, address your instructor as "Professor" or "Dr.," etc.). For more information on email etiquette, see the guide from *Inside Higher Education*:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2015/04/16/advice-students-so-they-dont-sound-silly-emails-essay>

Disability Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting

<https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

College of the Arts Mission

The University of Florida College of the Arts intends to be a transformative community, responding to and generating paradigmatic shifts in the arts and beyond. We do so by:

- Embracing the complexity of our evolving human experience and seeking to empower our students, faculty, and staff to shape that experience fearlessly through critical study, creative practice, and provocation
- Collaborating effectively with the forces of change
- Preparing students to access and unsettle centers of power in a radically changing world
- Facilitating an arts education that will position emerging artists and researchers as catalysts for equity on local and global levels

School of Art + Art History Mission and Values

Mission Statement:

The School of Art + Art History nurtures a culture of critical inquiry in our scholarly and creative work. Our educational mission is to empower each student with knowledge, skills, and insight to engage thoughtfully with our changing world.

Values Statement:

We believe in community and transformation. We aspire to be courageous, generous, and engaged.

- **Community:** We foster a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community through mutual respect and acceptance.
- **Transformation:** We pursue positive transformation and impact through education, research, and creative works.
- **Courage:** We ask challenging questions, take risks, and strive for excellence.
- **Generosity:** We assume the best in others and enable a culture where everyone can flourish.
- **Engagement:** We believe the diverse contributions of art, design, and scholarship are critical to our community and beyond.

Diversity

We will explore the content of this course in a way that is respectful of diversity—including gender identity, sexuality, race, ethnicity, age, ability, socioeconomic class, nationality, religion, and culture. Throughout, this course explores diverse points of view, which might be challenging. Maintaining a respectful environment will be the responsibility of both the students and the instructor. This course is intended to serve students from all backgrounds and perspectives and is based upon the premise that the diversity which students bring to the classroom is a resource, strength, and benefit. Throughout the semester, your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated.

Content Warning

In this course, we will cover content and materials that some may find difficult. It is important that in an art history course we do not shy away from engaging with materials that may be controversial or challenging. I will do my best to give you advance notice when specific materials or content covered may contain images, language, or perspectives that some may find difficult, and I encourage you to reach out to me if you are struggling with the course materials. In class, if you need to step away for a period of time as we are covering particular content, you may do so without penalty, but I ask that you remember that you are responsible for any information covered in your absence.

Critical Thinking, Honest Questions, & Open Debate

Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint, or belief.

People learn best when they are encouraged to ask questions and express their diverse opinions on course content which may include images, texts, data, or theories from many fields. This is especially true in courses that deal with provocative or contemporary issues. UF offers many such courses, in which students encounter concepts of race, color, sex, and/or national origin. We teach these important issues because understanding them is essential for anyone who seeks to make economic, cultural, and societal contributions to today's complex world. With this in mind, we do not limit access to, or classroom discussion of, ideas and opinions—including those that some may find uncomfortable, unwelcome, disagreeable, or even offensive. In response to challenging material, students and instructors are encouraged to ask honest questions and thoughtfully engage one another's ideas. But hostility, disruptive and disrespectful behavior, and provocation for provocation's sake have no place in a classroom; reasonable people disagree reasonably. These guidelines can help instructors and students as they work together to fulfill the mission of the University of Florida, which includes the exploration of intellectual boundaries, the creation of new knowledge, and the pursuit of new ideas.

Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

University of Florida Student Honor Code

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states: “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: *‘On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.’*”

In addition to The Honor Pledge, students are responsible for knowing and abiding by the Student Honor and Conduct Codes, both of which are available in full here:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

UF's policies regarding academic honesty, the Honor Code, and the Conduct Code will be strictly enforced. Plagiarism, in part or in full, will be grounds for failing the course.

Campus Resources: Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you are in distress or have a friend who is, please contact “U Matter, We Care” so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Email: umatter@ufl.edu

Phone: 352-392-1575

Website: <http://www.umatter.ufl.edu/>

Counseling and Wellness Center:

Address: 3190 Radio Road, Gainesville, FL 32611

Phone: 352-392-1575

Website: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), at the Student Health Care Center:

Phone: 352-392-1161

Website: http://www.umatter.ufl.edu/sexual_violence

Campus Resources: Academic

The Writing Studio, 2215 Turlington Hall, offers help with brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers, as well as online tutoring.

Phone: 352-846-1138

Website: <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

Academic Resources, 1317 Turlington Hall, for tutoring and strengthening study skills.

Email: teaching-center@ufl.edu

Phone: 352-392-6420

Website: <https://academicresources.clas.ufl.edu/>

Harn Museum of Art, 3259 Hull Road, excellent collection on campus with more than 10,000 works of art; offers free student memberships that include admission to 75+ museums nationwide, invitations to museum events, and more.

Phone: 352-392-9826

Website: <http://harn.ufl.edu/>

Resources for Art Historical Research:

UF Libraries Catalogue: <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/>

UF Libraries Inter-Library Loan Service: <https://uflib.illiad.oclc.org/illiad/FUG/logon.html>

Journals:

Recommended art history journals include *The Art Bulletin*, *Art Journal*, *Art History*, *October*, *Grey Room*, *Oxford Art Journal*, *History of Photography*, *Dada/Surrealism*, *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, *Modernism/modernity*, *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, *African Arts*, *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, *Third Text*, *Representations*, *Critical Inquiry*, *Word & Image*, *American Art Journal*, *ARTMargins* + lots more – access through UF Libraries Catalogue.

Databases:

WorldCat, JSTOR, Artstor, Oxford Art Online – access through UF Libraries Catalogue.

Chicago Manual of Style Quick Guide for Citations:

https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Important Dates to Remember

Friday, October 21

Final Project Abstract & Bibliography Due

Tuesday, November 29

Final Presentations (Day 1/2)

Tuesday, December 6

Final Presentations (Day 2/2)

Tuesday, December 13 Final Projects Due

Schedule

The schedule may change slightly during the semester in response to the needs of the class.

Week 1
Tuesday, August 30 **Overview & Introductions**
Black Skin, White Masks: Theorizing Colonialism & Its Effects

Week 2
Tuesday, September 6 **From Primitivism to Negrophilia: Definitions & Histories**

Week 3
Tuesday, September 13 **Paul Gauguin**

Week 4
Tuesday, September 20 **Primitivism at MoMA**

Week 5
Tuesday, September 27 **Henri Matisse and Fauvism**

Week6
Tuesday, October 4 **Pablo Picasso**

Week 7
Tuesday, October 11 **Dada's Africa**

Week 8
Tuesday, October 18 **Josephine Baker**

☞ Friday, October 21 **Final Project Abstract & Bibliography Due**

Week 9
Tuesday, October 25 **DOCUMENTS**

Week 10 Tuesday, November 1	Négritude, Surrealism, & Primitivisms in the Caribbean
Week 11 Tuesday, November 8	Phantom Africa
Week 12 Tuesday, November 15	Nancy Cunard's <i>Negro: An Anthology</i>
Week 13 Tuesday, November 22	The Harlem Renaissance & Counter-Primitivisms
Week 14 Tuesday, November 29	Final Presentations (Day 1/2)
Week 15 Tuesday, December 6	Final Presentations (Day 2/2)
📅 Tuesday, December 13	Final Projects Due