

American Studies 433  
Visual Arts in Contemporary America  
Spring 2008, Dr. Terri L. Snyder

**Instructor Information:**

Office: UH 416  
Office Hours: MW 11:30-12:30, 2:30-3:00 and by appointment  
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**Course Description.** This course analyzes selected examples of the visual arts in the modern United States and their relationship to American culture. It primarily focuses on painting and photography but will make brief forays into other art forms - sculpture, performance art, music, and architecture, for example. The following questions and issues will guide our inquiry. How are images useful as cultural documents? What has been the role of the artist in American society? How has art been defined in America and by whom? What controversies have been aroused by artistic production in the U.S.? Over time, what relationships have existed between artistic production, public responses to artists and intellectuals, and institutional and governmental support of the arts? What do successive schools of artists and their work reflect about American culture? How do the visual arts reflect changes in American intellectual, political and social thought? What are the social, economic and intellectual dimensions of artistic production and consumption? In addition to examining the social and intellectual context of artistic production, we will also focus on the ways in which the arts represent the dimensions of sexuality, race, class, and gender in the United States.

**Course Requirements and Assessment.** Students are expected to read the assigned materials and carefully study the visual art under consideration and come to class prepared to discuss them. They are also expected to complete writing assignments and essay examinations appropriate to an upper-division elective, and which demonstrate their understanding of the relationships, both broadly and specifically, between the arts and American culture. Specific course requirements are as follows.

For all of these requirements, graduate students' work is expected to be more qualitatively and quantitatively developed than that of undergraduates.

- **Examinations** (70%). Both midterm (35%) and final examinations (35%) feature essay and short answer questions.
- **Papers** (20%). Undergraduates and Graduates will write one analytical essay (3-5 pages) on an artist, artwork, art movement, or art controversy from the "Art for the People" section of the syllabus. Graduate students will write a second, more extensive research and analytical essay (7-8 pages) on an art controversy and present their findings to the class; specific topics will be chosen in consultation with me. Details on the papers and due dates are given on a separate handout. Each of the graduate student papers will count 10% of their paper grade.
- **Attendance, Participation, and Discussion** (10%). Students are expected to attend class, be on time, and be prepared to participate actively in the discussion. Absences, early departures and late arrivals will negatively impact your participation grade for the class. Students with two or more unexcused absences will be ineligible for A or B grades and those with four or more unexcused absences will fail the class. For an absence to be excused, written verification of a medical, personal, or employment related emergency or necessity is required. **Plus and Minus Grading.** Plus and minus grading will be used in all grading for this class.
- **Make-Up Papers and Exams.** Make-up examinations and late papers are not allowed without written, verifiable excuses for the reasons outlined above.

**Extra Credit: Art in the Real World.** For extra-credit, students are encouraged to attend one of the following art exhibitions in the area and submit a 2-page paper that provides an overview of the exhibit, highlights the parts of the exhibit that you found most intriguing, and offers a reaction and response to the exhibit. All extra credit work needs to be completed and in my hands by May 5, 2008

*Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of Emory Douglas*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Pacific Design Center, (Ends February 24), <http://www.moca.org/>. This exhibit can be viewed on-line, but it would be better to see it in person if you can.

*A New Cosmopolitanism: The Preeminence of Place in Contemporary Art*, Main Gallery, CSUF (ends March 12), <http://campusapps.fullerton.edu/news/inside/2008/cosmopolitanism.html>.

*SoCal: Southern California Art of the 1960s and 70s*, L.A. County Museum of Art (Ends March 30), <http://www.lacma.org/art/ExhibSoCal.aspx>.

*Disorderly Conduct: Recent Art In Tumultuous Times*, Orange County Museum of Art (Ends May 25), <http://www.ocma.net>.

*Art Since the 1960s: California Experiments*, Orange County Museum of Art (Ends September 14), <http://www.ocma.net>.

**Academic Dishonesty.** Any student engaging in Academic Dishonesty for any purposes in the course will fail the class. According to the CSUF policy, Academic Dishonesty "includes but is not limited to cheating on examinations or assignments, unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, falsification/fabrication of university documents, any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student (such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor), assisting or allowing any of these acts, or the attempt to commit such acts." Any student who engages in Academic Dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Students Office, Judicial Affairs. For further definitions of Academic Dishonesty, see [www.fullerton.edu/senate/PDF/300/UPS300-021.pdf](http://www.fullerton.edu/senate/PDF/300/UPS300-021.pdf).

**Disabled Student Services.** Disabled students needing support services should identify themselves to me during my office hours and/or consult the Office of Disabled Students, University Hall 101.

**Readings.** The texts can be purchased at Little Professor Bookstore. Other required course readings are available on line held on through electronic reserve Pollack Library, designated on the syllabus by the web address or (ER), respectively. Students will also need to access ARTSTOR, the online database of visual images available through CSUF. Please complete the assigned reading by the date indicated on the syllabus and come to class prepared to discuss it. Please bring the assigned reading to class with you.

**Texts to Purchase:**

Erica Doss. *Twentieth-Century American Art*. New York, 2002. # ISBN-10: 0192842390; ISBN-13: 978-0192842398

Richard J. Powell. *Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance*. Los Angeles, 1997. ISBN-10 0520212681; ISBN-13: 978-0520212688

Patricia Hills. *Modern Art in the USA: Issues and Controversies*. Upper Saddle River, 2001. ISBN 0-13-036138-0.

#### **Web-Based Materials:**

Jacob Riis. *How the Other Half Lives*. New York, 1890; reprint, 1997; Hypertext edition.  
<http://www.cis.yale.edu/amstud/inforev/riis/contents.html>

Lewis W. Hine. *Immigrants to America*, New York Public Library,  
[http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/dgkeysearchresult.cfm?parent\\_id=131034&word=](http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/dgkeysearchresult.cfm?parent_id=131034&word=)

*Art For the People*, Hull House and Its Neighborhoods, (Chicago, 1889)  
[http://tigger.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/urbanexp/main.cgi?file=img/gallery\\_list.ptt](http://tigger.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/urbanexp/main.cgi?file=img/gallery_list.ptt)

*American Voices* Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, 1990 [http://www.whitney.org/www/collection/american\\_voices.jsp](http://www.whitney.org/www/collection/american_voices.jsp). You can also browse past and present and online exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art at <http://www.whitney.org>

*Edward Curtis: Selling the North American Indian; The Armory Show of 1913 and Going Back to Iowa: The World of Grant Wood*, at The Museum for American Studies, Crossroads Project, American Studies, University of Virginia,  
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MUSEUM/front.html>

#### **Reserve Room Materials (ER):**

1. Novak, Barbara. *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825-1875*. Revised Edition, New York, 1995.
2. Shi, David E. *Facing Facts: Realism in American Thought and Culture, 1850-1920*. New York, 1995.
3. Doss, Erica, "The Art of Cultural Politics: From Realism to Abstract Expressionism," in Lary May, ed., *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of Cold War*. Chicago, 1989.
4. Guimond, James. *American Photography and the American Dream*. Chapel Hill, 1991.
5. Sandeen, Eric J. *Picturing an Exhibition: The Family of Man and 1950s America*. New Mexico, 1995.



Hills, 11-21 (Overview, Documents 5, 7, 9); 32-42 (Documents 17, 19, 21)  
*The Armory Show of 1913* (web address above),

Tour Show

3/10 **Midterm Examination**

### **Modernism and Art For the Peoples**

3/17 The Harlem Renaissance  
Reading: Powell, 16-34; 160-167; study images, pp. 43-80, 111-153

Hills, 72-81, (Overview, Document 35, 36, 43)

3/24 Radicalism, Regionalism and Cultural Identity  
Reading: Doss, 75-117  
Hills, 88-139 (Read all Overviews and Documents 44-45, 50-51, 56, 57-60)  
*Going Back to Iowa: The World of Grant Wood*  
(web address above)

3/31-4/6 Spring Break

### **The Ascendancy of American Art**

4/7 Abstract Expressionism and Cultural Politics  
Reading: Doss, 119-159  
Hills, 140-176 (Overview, Documents 64, 69);  
May 195-220 (ER)  
Film: *Pollock*

4/14 American Art Goes Global: The Family of Man, Abstract Expressionism, and the USIA; Photography and American Dream in the Post-War Era

Reading: Sandeen, 1-10; 39-61 (ER)  
Hills, 187-197 (Overview, Documents 79-81)  
Guimond, 245-290

### **The Postmodern Turn and Contemporary Culture Wars in the Arts**

4/21 Pop Art  
Reading: Doss, 139-159  
Hills, 218-236 (Overview and Documents 87, 89-90)  
Film: *Andy Warhol*

- 4/28                    Art, Identity, and the Culture Wars  
Reading: Doss, 181-248  
             Hills, 305-16 (Overview and Documents 115-6);  
             316-34 (Overview and Documents 119, 123); 366-  
             80 (Overview and Documents 134-135,)
- 5/5                    Art Controversies and the Culture Wars  
Reading: Doss, 203-        225  
             Hills, 380-398 (Documents 137-140); 408-423  
             (Overview and Documents 146, 148)
- 5/12                    **FINAL EXAMINATION, 5:00-6:50**