

DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS

COURSE OUTLINE — Winter 2026

AR2205: Art Since 1945 — 3 (3-0-0) 45hrs for 15 weeks

Northwestern Polytechnic acknowledges that our campuses are located on Treaty 8 territory, the ancestral and present-day home to many diverse First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people. We are grateful to work, live and learn on the traditional territory of Duncan's First Nation, Horse Lake First Nation and Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, who are the original caretakers of this land.

We acknowledge the history of this land and we are thankful for the opportunity to walk together in friendship, where we will encourage and promote positive change for present and future generations.

INSTRUCTOR: Kaveh Rafie

PHONE: +1 780-539-2911

OFFICE: online

Email: krafie@nwpolytech.ca

OFFICE HOURS: Wednesdays 2:30 PM – 3:30 PM or by appointment

<https://nwpolytech.zoom.us/j/xxxx>

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION

This course examines post-1945 art movements, focusing on how rebellious and outsider art challenges and is absorbed by institutions. While centered on Western frameworks, it incorporates a global perspective, featuring both national and transnational artists. Students will analyze diverse media—including installation, painting, performance, photography, sculpture, and video—to develop a multifaceted understanding of contemporary art practice and theory.

PREREQUISITE(S)/COREQUISITE(S)

None

REQUIRED MATERIALS

No textbook is required. Readings will be provided on [myClass](#).

Recommended:

- Sylvan Barnet, *A Short Guide to Writing about Art (ASGWA)* (available at the library on reserve)
- Edward Lucie-Smith, *Movements in Art since 1945 (MAS)*

DELIVERY MODE

This course is delivered synchronously online via Zoom: <https://nwpolytech.zoom.us/j/xxxx>

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze key art movements and their socio-political contexts from 1945 to the present.
- Critically evaluate the role of institutions and the market in shaping contemporary art practices.
- Interpret and discuss artworks across various media, including installation, performance, and digital art.
- Understand and articulate the trends and themes in global contemporary art.
- Develop skills and vocabulary for discussing and writing about contemporary art.

TRANSFERABILITY

Please consult the Alberta Transfer Guide for more information. You may check the transferability of this course at the Alberta Transfer Guide main page <http://www.transferalberta.alberta.ca>.

Warning

For courses with alpha (letter) grading, a grade of **D** or **D+** may not be acceptable for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. **Students are cautioned that it is their responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability.**

EVALUATIONS

CLASS PARTICIPATION

20%

WEEKLY DISCUSSION	15%
QUIZZES	5%
FIELD REPORT	10%
PRESENTATION	10%
FINAL PROJECT	40%

Class Participation

This class will be held synchronously online via Zoom. Active participation in Zoom sessions and activities is essential for a successful learning experience. Students are expected to engage with the material and contribute to discussions. Your grade is based on the following components:

Camera Policy

Turning your camera off will result in not receiving participation credit (10%) unless it is during a break or you have communicated with me in advance for accommodations.

Discussion Contribution

Actively contribute to class discussions by asking questions, responding to prompts, and engaging with your peers' ideas.

In-Class Activities

Complete all micro-activities, such as polls and short collaborative tasks, announced during the session.

Note on Recordings

Sessions will be recorded for educational purposes. By participating, you consent to being recorded. If you miss a session, please email me to receive the link to the missed session.

Attendance Policy

Attendance for our live Zoom sessions is MANDATORY. You are allowed no more than TWO unexcused absences. Failure to address chronic absenteeism may result in failing the course.

If social anxiety limits your participation, email krafie@nwpolytech.ca to discuss alternatives.

Weekly Discussion

Ask one question related to the week's lecture or weekly readings on myClass, and respond to at least two of your classmates' questions.

- To receive full credit, your question should be thoughtful and relevant to the week's material.
- Short or superficial replies will not receive credit.

Quizzes

There will be periodic quizzes based on the readings and lectures. These quizzes are designed to assess your understanding of the course material and your active note-taking during lectures.

Field Report

This assignment assesses your ability to critically engage with contemporary art outside the classroom. You will attend a virtual or local art event (e.g., exhibition, artist talk, workshop) and write a 1000-word report analyzing the experience. More details will be provided in myClass.

Hint: For how-to-write an exhibition see Sylvan Barnet, "Writing a Review of an Exhibition" *ASGWA*, 1–34

Presentation

Students will deliver a 6-8 minute presentation on a selected contemporary artist or art movement. You can choose to present solo or partner up with a classmate. I always encourage collaboration so working in pairs is highly recommended and will be rewarded with extra marks (5%). The presentation should include visual aids (e.g., images of the works under discussion) and a brief Q&A session. A rubric will be provided in myClass.

Final Project

The Final Project is a research project on the topics covered in this course; you are encouraged to focus on a specific artist, art movement, or theme in contemporary art related to your own interests and practice. You are expected to develop your project in two stages:

Hint: For developing your topic see Sylvan Barnet, "Getting Ideas for Essays" in *ASGWA*, 75–130

Project Proposal (10%)

An approximately 250-word proposal outlining your research topic and objectives, along with a preliminary annotated bibliography. This proposal should demonstrate a clear working thesis and a plan for your research.

Final Essay Submission (30%)

A comprehensive research paper of approximately 1000–1250 words (or approximately 4 pages double-spaced). The essay should present a well-structured argument, supported by scholarly sources and critical analysis of relevant artworks. Proper citation and adherence to academic standards are required. Images of the artworks discussed should be included, along with proper captions.

Info

The writing assignments in the course require proper citation of sources. Please use Chicago style consistently throughout your work. Consult the [Chicago Manual of Style](#) or the [Purdue OWL](#) for guidance.

Late Assignments and Missed Exams

Assignments must be submitted by midnight on the due date. Late submissions receive a zero until accepted (at my discretion; I may not accept them). Submissions after the due date may be marked down by 20%, depending on circumstances. For emergencies or extenuating circumstances, contact me before the due date.

Warning

Please note that most universities will not accept your course for transfer credit **IF** your grade is **less than C-**.

GRADING CHART FOR COURSES WITH ALPHA GRADING

Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guideline	Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guideline
A+	4.0	95–100	C+	2.3	67–69
A	4.0	85–94	C	2.0	63–66

Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guideline	Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guideline
A-	3.7	80-84	C-	1.7	60-62
B+	3.3	77-79	D+	1.3	55-59
B	3.0	73-76	D	1.0	50-54
B-	2.7	70-72	F	0.0	0-49

● Grades for this course will be assigned as a percentage.

COURSE SCHEDULE (WORKING)*

Week 1

Fri, Jan 09: Course Introduction and Overview

Introduction to the course and expectations. A walkthrough of the syllabus and assessment methods. A short introduction to writing about art.

Read:

- Sylvan Barnet, *ASGWA*, 1–34

Week 2

Mon, Jan 12: The First Half of 20th Century Art

A short survey of modernist movements of the early 20th century until the end of World War II.

Read:

- T.J. Clark, "Introduction," in *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism*

Fri, Jan 16: When New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art

Read:

- David Joselit, from *American Art Since 1945*

Week 3

Mon, Jan 19: What Comes After Abstract Expressionism?

A review of the characteristics and significance of Post-Painterly Abstraction in the evolution of abstract art.

Read:

- "Post-Painterly Abstraction" in *MAS*
- Sylvan Barnet, *ASGWA*, 42–48

Fri, Jan 23: European Post-War Art

Examination of key European art movements and figures in the post-war period.

Read:

- "The European Scene" in *MAS*
- Sylvan Barnet, *ASGWA*, 48–67*

Week 4

Mon, Jan 26: Post-War Art in Africa

Examination of post-war art movements in Africa and their contributions to global art narratives.

Read:

- [Chika Okeke, "Africa: Modern African Art"](#)
- Sylvan Barnet, *ASGWA*, 69–74

Fri, Jan 30: Pop Art and Consumer Culture

Exploring art of consumer culture on steroids in the second half of the 20th century.

Read:

- Blake Stimson, from *Citizen Warhol*
- "1960" in *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism (ART1900)*

Week 5

Mon, Feb 02: Thing instead of Art Object

Exploration of Minimalism as a reaction against Abstract Expressionism and its emphasis on simplicity and objecthood.

Read:

- James Meyer, from *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties*

Fri, Feb 06: Fluxus and the Neo-Avant-Garde

Examination of the Fluxus movement and its impact on avant-garde art practices.

Read:

- Hannah Higgins, "Fluxus Experience"

Week 6

Mon, Feb 09: Earthwork and Installation

Examination of installation art as a medium for creating immersive and interactive experiences.

Read:

- Claire Bishop, "Installation Art: A Critical History,"

Fri, Feb 13: From Neo-concretism to Tropicalia

Exploration of Latin American contributions to modern and contemporary art movements.

Read:

Week 7

Mon, Feb 16 – NO CLASS: Family Day

Fri, Feb 20 – NO CLASS: Winter Break

Week 8

Mon, Feb 23: Calligraphic Abstraction

Examination of calligraphic abstraction as a movement in majority Muslim nations.

Read:

- Iftikhar Dadi, "Rethinking Calligraphic Abstraction," in *Discrepant Abstraction*

Fri, Feb 27: Conceptual Art and Institutional Critique

Week 9

Mon, Mar 02: Feminist Art Movements

Exploration of the history of feminist art movements in the second half of the 20th century.

Read:

- ["Feminist art movement". The Art Story Foundation.](#)

Fri, Mar 06: Culture Wars and Art in the Late 20th Century

Discussion on the intersection of art, politics, and society during the culture wars of the late 20th century. Act up and the AIDS crisis.

Read:

- Jonathan D. Katz, "'The Senators Were Revolted': Homophobia and the Culture Wars" in *A Companion to Contemporary Art Since 1945*

Week 10

Mon, Mar 09: What is Contemporary Art?

Read:

- [Andrea Fraser, "The Field of Contemporary Art," in e-flux journal, Oct 2024.](#)

Fri, Mar 13: Site-Specific Art and Public Art

Exploration of art created for specific locations and its interaction with the environment.

Read:

- Miwon Kwon, "One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity," in *Art of the Twentieth Century (ATC)*

Week 11

Mon, Mar 16: Video Art and Photography in Contemporary Art

Exploration of the use of video and photography as mediums in contemporary art practices.

Read:

- TBD

Fri, Mar 20: When Curators Took Over the Art World

Analysis of the increasing influence of curators in shaping art exhibitions and trends.

Read:

- David Blazer, from *Curationism: How Curating Took Over the Art World and Everything Else*

Week 12

Mon, Mar 23: Guest Lecture

Fri, Mar 27: Art and Community Engagement

Discussion on the role of art in community development and social change.

Read:

- Grant Kester, "Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art"

Week 13

Mon, Mar 30: Biennials as New Spectacles

Analysis of the role of cities and biennials in shaping contemporary art practices and discourses.

Read:

- Charles Green and Anthony Gardner, "Introduction" in *Biennials, Triennials, and Documenta*

Fri, Apr 03 – NO CLASS: Good Friday

Week 14

Mon, Apr 06: From digital to AI

Examination of the evolution of digital art practices leading to the emergence of AI in art creation.

Read:

- Annie Armstrong, “Forget Blue-Chip Art. It’s a ‘Red-Chip’ Art World Now” also listen to her interview on Art Edge
- Michael Wagner, “AI Slop Is the New Kitsch”

Listen:

- [“The Rise of the Red-Chip Art World.” *The Art Angle*](#)

Fri, Apr 10: Student Presentations

Student presentations on selected contemporary artists or art movements. See [myClass](#) for schedule.

Week 15

Mon, Apr 13: Student Presentations

Student presentations on selected contemporary artists or art movements. See [myClass](#) for schedule.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Online Communication & Professionalism: Students are expected to maintain a high-level of professionalism across all course-related communications. Please conduct your communications as you would any other professional experience. Treat your colleagues with respect! • Join the lecture on time and remain for the duration of class and related activities. • Students can expect to put in a minimum of 4 hours per week on out-of- class work. Assignments will be expected on the date required.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Academic Misconduct will not be tolerated. For a more precise definition of academic misconduct and its consequences, refer to the Student Rights and Responsibilities policy available at <https://www.nwpolytech.ca/about/polytechnic-leadership/policies-directory>.

**Note: all Academic and Administrative policies are available on the same page.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Plagiarism and the Use of LLMs or AI Tools

Plagiarism is the presentation of the work, ideas, or data of another person as one's own. This includes work obtained through the use of LLMs (Large Language Models) or other AI tools. Students must properly cite any sources used in their assignments, including any content generated by AI tools. Failure to do so may result in academic penalties as outlined in the institution's academic integrity policies.