

This is a draft version of the syllabus and is subject to change.

DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS

COURSE OUTLINE — FALL 2026

AR2105: Early Twentieth-Century Art — 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

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OFFICE: online

Email: krafie@nwpolytech.ca

OFFICE HOURS: Wednesdays 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM or by appointment

[Teams Link](#)

DESCRIPTION

The course will cover major developments in art from the turn of the 20th century to the mid-20th century. It will focus on various art forms and movements from both non-Western and Western contexts. These may include painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, museum displays, exhibition practices, and the relationships between art, techniques of expression, politics, culture, revolutions, and everyday life. It will also explore key terminology associated with 20th-century art, such as modernism, modernity, and the avant-garde.

PREREQUISITE(S)/COREQUISITE(S)

None

REQUIRED MATERIALS

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

DELIVERY MODE

This course is delivered synchronously online via Microsoft Teams.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course provides a survey of global modern art from the late 19th century to the end of 1950s. By the end of the term, you will be able to:

- Knowledge & Identification: Recognize a wide range of modern art forms and movements and define critical terms like modernism, modernity, and the avant-garde.
- Formal & Contextual Analysis: Critically analyze artworks by examining their formal qualities and connecting them to their specific historical, political, and cultural circumstances.

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>.

⚠ 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.**

CLASS PARTICIPATION	25%
DISCUSSION BOARD	15%
QUIZZES	10%
PRESENTATION	10%
FINAL PROJECT	40%

Class Participation

This class will be held synchronously online via Microsoft Teams. Active participation in 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.

Engagement with Popup Activities

Participate in all in-class activities, including polls, breakout room discussions, and collaborative tasks.

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 online 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.

Discussion Board

Every two weeks, a new discussion topic will be posted on myClass. Ask one question related to that period's lectures and readings, and respond to at least two of your classmates' questions.

- To receive full credit, your question should be thoughtful and relevant to the 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.

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," 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

Please submit your study guide responses by midnight on the date they are due. Assignments not turned in at that time will receive a score of zero that will stay in place until the assignment is received (myClass will not calculate your grade accurately otherwise). Assignments turned in after the due date will be marked down by 20%.

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
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 (TENTATIVE)

(Schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be communicated in advance via myClass announcements.)

Week 1

Thu, Sep 03: Introduction

Course overview and requirements.

The birth of modernism and the avant-garde. The role of art in society and culture during the late 19th century.

Optional Reading:

- Linda Nochlin, "The Invention of the Avant-Garde"

Week 2

Tue, Sep 08: The Location of Modernity

Industry, urban life, and new subjectivities. Manet, the painter of modern life.

READ

- Clark, T. J.. *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers*. Princeton University Press, 1984. Part I (an excerpt).
- Wood, Paul. "Japonisme." In *Art & Visual Culture 1850–2010: Modernity to Globalisation*. 2012. .

Thu, Sep 10: The Instantaneous Impression of Modernity

Capturing the ephemeral moment: optics, leisure, and the modern city. Monet, Renoir, Degas. The Arts and Crafts movement.

READ

- Clark, T. J.. *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers*. Princeton University Press, 1984. Part II (an excerpt).
- Cumming, Elizabeth, and Kaplan, Wendy. *The Arts and Crafts Movement*. Thames & Hudson, 1991..

Week 3

Mon, Sep 14: Add/Drop Deadline

Last day to add or drop fall courses.

Tue, Sep 15: Photography and Modernity

Photography as the first modern medium: from Daguerre and Talbot to instantaneous photography (Muybridge, Marey), pictorialism, and Stieglitz's Photo-Secession. How the camera changed painting.

READ

- Scharf, Aaron. *Art and Photography*. Penguin, 1968. An excerpt.

Thu, Sep 17: Van Gogh and Cézanne

The Post-Impressionist revolutions of Van Gogh and Cézanne: expressive color and constructive form, and how they set the terms for modern painting.

READ

- Denis, Maurice. "From Gauguin and Van Gogh to Classicism." In *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*. 1982. and Denis, Maurice. "Cézanne." In *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*. 1982. .
- Bell, Clive. "The Aesthetic Hypothesis." In *Art*. 1914. .

Week 4

Tue, Sep 22: Primitivism and Fauvism: From Gauguin to Matisse

Gauguin and Primitivism; Roger Fry and the Bloomsbury Group; Matisse and Fauvism.

READ

- Wood, Paul. "Gauguin and Primitivism." In *Art & Visual Culture 1850–2010: Modernity to Globalisation*. 2012. .
- [Lifestyle and Legacy of the Bloomsbury Group \(Tate\)](#).
- Matisse, Henri. "Notes of a Painter." In *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*. University of California Press, 1968. .

Thu, Sep 24: De-(Re-)Construction of the Reality

On the Cubist revolution: Picasso's **Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)**, Analytic and Synthetic Cubism, and African masks.

READ

- Wood, Paul. "Cubism and Abstract Art (Revisited)." In *Art & Visual Culture 1850–2010: Modernity to Globalisation*. 2012. .
- Berger, John. "The Moment of Cubism." 1967..

Week 5

Tue, Sep 29: Machine, Speed & Steel

Italian Futurism: a bizarre spectacle of speed, technology, and violence.

READ

- Arnason, H. H.. "Futurism." In *History of Modern Art*. 1968. .
- Carrà, Carlo. "From Cézanne to Us, the Futurists." In *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*. University of California Press, 1968. .

Thu, Oct 01: Toward Non-Objective Abstraction

Kandinsky, Malevich, and the total abandonment of the subject; Neo-Plasticism, Mondrian, and De Stijl.

READ

- Arnason, H. H.. *History of Modern Art*. Excerpts on Kandinsky and Malevich.
- Groys, Boris. *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*. Princeton University Press, 1992. An excerpt.
- Foster, Hal, Krauss, Rosalind, Bois, Yve-Alain, and Buchloh, Benjamin H. D.. *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*. Thames & Hudson, 2004. "Neoplasticism" and "De Stijl".

Week 6

Tue, Oct 06: From the Studio to Factory Floors

Russian Constructivism: Tatlin, Rodchenko, Lissitzky, and Varvara Stepanova turned from pure abstraction to applied art, design, and propaganda.

READ

- Lodder, Christina. *Russian Constructivism*. Yale University Press, 1983. An excerpt.

Thu, Oct 08: Modernism at the Margins

The "first wave" of Latin American modernism: Tarsila do Amaral. Mexican Muralism: Rivera, Orozco, Siqueiros.

READ

- Lucie-Smith, Edward. "The First Modern Movements." In *Latin American Art Since 1900*. 1993. .
- Lucie-Smith, Edward. "Mexican Muralism." In *Latin American Art Since 1900*. 1993. .

Week 7

Tue, Oct 13: The Return to Order and the Anti-Art of Dada

An overview of postwar tendencies: Dada from Zurich to New York, and Purism in France (Ozenfant, Le Corbusier).

READ

- Dickerman, Leah. *Dada: Zurich, Berlin, Hannover, Cologne, New York, Paris*. The Museum of Modern Art, 2006. An excerpt.
- Arnason, H. H.. "Postwar Classicism." In *History of Modern Art*. 1968. .

Thu, Oct 15: Berlin Dada & New Objectivity

Dada and Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity) in Germany.

READ

- Arnason, H. H.. "Idealism and New Objectivity." In *History of Modern Art*. 1968. .

Week 8

Tue, Oct 20: Making the Style of New Life

The Bauhaus: art, craft, and technology (Gropius, Moholy-Nagy, Anni Albers).

READ

- Bergdoll, Barry, and Dickerman, Leah. *Bauhaus 1919–1933: Workshops for Modernity*. The Museum of Modern Art, 2009..

Thu, Oct 22: A Review of Modern Architecture and Sculpture

Modernist architecture: Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and the International Style. Modernist sculpture from Rodin to the end of the Second World War.

READ

- Frampton, Kenneth. *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*. Thames & Hudson, 1980..
- Curtis, Penelope. *Sculpture 1900–1945: After Rodin*. Oxford University Press, 1999..

Week 9

Tue, Oct 27: The World Divided

Art and propaganda: Nazi Germany's "Entartete Kunst" exhibition, Socialist Realism (USSR), and The New Deal (American WPA murals).

 READ

- Foster, Hal, Krauss, Rosalind, Bois, Yve-Alain, and Buchloh, Benjamin H. D.. *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*. Thames & Hudson, 2004. Excerpts.

Thu, Oct 29: Modernism in Canada

The Group of Seven in Canada: national identity, landscape, and appropriation. Settler colonialism and painting.

 READ

- Moray, Gerta. "Emily Carr and the Traffic in Native Images."

Week 10

Tue, Nov 03: American Art: From Realism to the Harlem Renaissance

A general view of art in the United States: from American Realism (Eakins, Homer, the Ashcan School) to the Harlem Renaissance and the New Negro movement (Aaron Douglas, Augusta Savage, Palmer Hayden).

 READ

- Locke, Alain. "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts." In *The New Negro*. 1925. .
- Huggins, Nathan Irvin. *Harlem Renaissance*. Oxford University Press, 1971. An excerpt.

Thu, Nov 05: Surrealism in Paris

Surrealism forming in Paris. Breton's manifestos.

 READ

- Hopkins, David. *Dada and Surrealism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2004..

Week 11

Tue, Nov 10 – NO CLASS: Fall Break

Thu, Nov 12 – NO CLASS: Fall Break

Week 12

Tue, Nov 17: Surrealism Beyond Paris

Art et Liberté (Egypt): the surrealist fight against fascism and nationalism. Wifredo Lam in Cuba.

 READ

- Telmisany, Kamal. "Long Live Degenerate Art!." 1938..
- D'Alessandro, Stephanie, and Gale, Matthew. *Surrealism Beyond Borders*. The Museum of Modern Art, 2021. Excerpts.

Tue, Nov 17: Proposal & Annotated Bibliography

Proposal and annotated bibliography for the Final Paper are due (see [myClass](#) for details).

Thu, Nov 19: The Atlantic Bridge

European artists (Mondrian, Léger, Ernst, Duchamp) in NYC during WWII, and their influence.

 READ

- Arnason, H. H., and Mansfield, Elizabeth C.. *History of Modern Art*. pp. 365–382.

Week 13

Tue, Nov 24: Modernism International

Amrita Sher-Gil (India/Hungary), and wartime painting in East Asia.

 READ

- Mitter, Partha. "Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Painting from Britain to India."
- [Amrita Sher-Gil, Self-Portrait as a Tahitian \(Smarthistory\)](#).

Thu, Nov 26: The New York School

Abstract Expressionism in New York.

 READ

- Foster, Hal, Krauss, Rosalind, Bois, Yve-Alain, and Buchloh, Benjamin H. D.. *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*. Thames & Hudson, 2004. Excerpts on Abstract Expressionism.

Week 14

Fri, Nov 27: Withdrawal Deadline

Last day to withdraw from fall courses.

Tue, Dec 01: Recap

Review of the course: modernism, modernity, and the avant-garde from 1900 to 1950.

No reading.

Thu, Dec 03: Presentations (1)

Student presentations. Sign up on the [Presentation Sign-up](#) sheet.

No reading.

Week 15

Tue, Dec 08: Presentations (2)

Student presentations. Sign up on the [Presentation Sign-up](#) sheet.

No reading.

Fri, Dec 11: Final Paper

Final Paper is due (see [myClass](#) for details).

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

Submitting AI-generated content as your own work is plagiarism. This includes work produced entirely or partially by LLMs (Large Language Models) or other AI tools without proper attribution.

You must own your intellectual work. AI may assist with brainstorming, outlining, or refining language—but the ideas, analysis, and argument must be yours.

Permitted Use:

- Brainstorming ideas and exploring topics
- Creating outlines or structure for your writing
- Refining and improving your own writing (grammar, clarity, flow)
- Generating examples to understand concepts (not to submit)

Prohibited Use:

- Copy-pasting AI-generated text into assignments without substantial revision
- Having AI write essays, reports, or responses for you
- Using AI to generate analysis or arguments you claim as your own

Requirements:

- All AI use must be cited (tool name and date)

- You are solely responsible for all submitted content
- AI errors, hallucinations, or misinformation will be treated as academic misconduct
- ⚠️ Copy-pasting AI-generated content may result in academic integrity charges and formal reporting

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