

**ART HISTORY 310**

**From Collecting to Curating: Modern American Art from 1900 to 1950**

**Fall 2019**

**Professors:** Robert Knight                      rbknight@hamilton.edu                      203-219-1176  
 Office Hours & Mailbox:                      Tues / Wed / Thur 1:00-2:00, or by appt.                      KTSA 107

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 Office Hours & Mailbox:                      By appt.

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**Class Schedule:** This class meets Tuesday / Thursday from 10:30 AM to 11:45 PM in KTSA133. Class will not be held on October 8 (pre-NYC trip), October 17 (fall break), or November 26 and 28 (Thanksgiving).

**Description & Objectives:** This course will present a history of American art from 1900-1950 examined through three related areas: 1) the development of the modern American art museum; 2) the process of collecting art, with a specific focus on Edward Root and Kevin Kennedy '70 as examples; and 3) the theory and process of curating an exhibition. The course will be co-taught by Associate Professor of Art, Robert Knight, and Director Emeritus of the High Museum of Art (Atlanta), Michael Shapiro '72.

The course will include a significant experiential component, including field trips to Munson Williams Proctor Art Museum in Utica, and to New York City where students will meet and interview relevant subjects, including: Kevin Kennedy; Adam Weinberg, Director, Whitney Museum of American Art; Peter MacGill, Director, Pace-MacGill Gallery; Meredith Ward, Director, Meredith Ward Fine Art; Bridget Moore, Director, D. C. Moore Gallery; Alice Duncan, Director, Gerald Peter's Gallery; Maria Friedrich and Julie Graham, Directors, Graham & Friedrich; Marjorie Shelley, Conservator, Metropolitan Museum of Art, among others.

In addition to learning to conduct interviews, student work in the course will include a traditional term paper, as well as written responses to assigned readings, and catalogue entries regarding individual works of art. In addition, students will work in teams to develop a virtual (and partly real) exhibition of objects curated from the collection of Kevin Kennedy, the Wellin, and the Munson Williams Proctor Art Institute. As part of the exhibition curating process, students will learn SketchUp, a digital CAD platform for architectural rendering, as well as VR software for implementing the virtual exhibition. The exhibition will be on view in the Wellin Museum from April to October 2020.

**Required Texts:** All readings will be distributed as PDFs via Blackboard.

**Assignment Values & Due Dates:**

Assignment	Due Date	Grade
Class Participation	Ongoing	10%
2Q2C Reading Responses	Ongoing	10%
Object Response	9/3	5%
Primary Source Assignment	9/10	5%
Pollock / Rothko Response	9/19	5%
4-5p Essay	9/24	15%
NYC Write Up	10/17	5%
Oral Presentation	10/22-10/24	15%
Final Project (Exhibition Design)	12/12	30%
Total		100%

## COURSE POLICIES

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**Class Participation:** Class participation is essential in developing community and furthering your education. You must come to class prepared to engage with reading assignments, work that is presented during class, and any other assignments or discussions that are presented. Your participation is mandatory and will help you to develop a strong ability to articulate your ideas and interact with your Professors and your peers.

**Technology:** Students are responsible for the frequent and methodical back-up of their class work over the course of the semester. Data loss cannot be used as an excuse for late or missing work. Backing up of your work is highly recommended.

**Grading and Standards:**

A+ = 97 – 100 A = 93 – 96 A- = 90 – 92	EXCELLENT: Comprehensive knowledge and understanding of subject matter; marked perception and/or originality; willingness to push yourself to do the very best work
B+ = 87 – 89 B = 83 – 86 B- = 80 – 82	GOOD: Moderately broad knowledge and understanding of subject matter; noticeable perception and/or originality; good growth and effort
C+ = 77–79 C = 73-76 C- = 70-72	AVERAGE: Reasonable knowledge and understanding of subject matter; some perception and/or originality; meets the minimum course requirements for effort and quality of work
D+ = 67–69 D = 63-66 D- = 60-62	POOR: Minimum of knowledge and understanding of subject matter; limited perception and/or originality; incomplete projects; poor quality, skill, effort and/or participation
F = <60 FF XF	FAILING: Unacceptable level of knowledge and understanding of subject matter; severely limited perception and/or originality; absences in excess of limit; lack of projects; honor code violation

**Late Assignments:** Late assignments will not be accepted. If you need to miss class, you should complete your work in advance and deliver it with a classmate.

**Attendance:** Attendance at each class meeting is expected. If there is work due during that class, you must make sure that it is turned in before the class meeting or it will not be accepted. Missing class is not an excuse for not turning in your work.

Accordingly, the absence policy follows:  
2 Absences: No Grade Penalty  
3-4 Absences: 1 Letter Grade Reduction (ie, A- to B-)  
5-6 Absences: Failure

**Lateness:** Arriving late or leaving early from class is extremely disruptive and will result in your missing essential course material. It will affect your ability to succeed in the course and will negatively affect your grade.

**Academic Progress:** We will regularly post your grades on Blackboard throughout the semester. We will speak with you individually if your overall grade falls below a C+.

**Academic Integrity:** It is the responsibility of all Hamilton students to know and adhere to the College's Honor Code and its policy on Academic Dishonesty. If you have any question concerning Hamilton's Academic Dishonesty policy and how it relates to work you produce in this course, please speak to me.

**Disabilities:** If you believe you have a disability that may warrant accommodations in this class, please make an appointment to meet with me during the first 2 weeks of the semester. All discussions will be kept confidential. You should also contact Allen Harrison in the Dean of Students Office (Elihu Root House; ext. 4021), who coordinates services and verifies eligibility for students with disabilities.

**Mental Health:** As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. Hamilton College services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn

more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus at <https://www.hamilton.edu/offices/counselingcenter>

**Library Support:**

Start with the Art and Art History Research Guide  
<http://libguides.hamilton.edu/ArtArtHistory>

Contact Lynn Mayo [[lmayo@hamilton.edu](mailto:lmayo@hamilton.edu)] for personalized assistance.

Consult with experts from the Research & Design Studio for guidance with academic research and digital media technologies.

[Research & Design Studio](#), 1st Floor Burke Library, [askus@hamilton.edu](mailto:askus@hamilton.edu) or call 315-859-4735.  
<https://my.hamilton.edu/offices/lits/research-design-studio>

## COURSE SCHEDULE

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### **THEME I – History of Museums and American Art 1900-1950**

#### **Week 1 – Aug 29**

Introduction to the course. Review syllabus.

Introduction to looking at, handling, and writing about works of art (Solander box and photos). Discuss Barnett.

#### Due:

Barnet, Writing About Art, Ch. 2 (p. 15-28 and 43-50) (PDF)

#### **Week 2 – Sep 3**

American Pre-Modernism and the Rise of an American Avant Garde

From the exhibition of The Eight (Henri, Shinn, Sloan, Davies, Lawson, Prendergast, Luks, and Glackens), to The 1913 Armory Show and the Dawn of American Modernism (MS)

#### Due:

Introduction and biographical entries in Painters of a New Century: The Eight & American Art by Elizabeth Milroy (PDF)

The Armory Show 50th Anniversary Show Exhibition, catalog Joseph Trovato (PDF)

Meecham, "Realism and Modernism," Varieties of Modernism (PDF)

2Q/2C on Trovato/Milroy/Meecham

Short paragraph on a work from Aug 29 class

#### **Sep 5**

Technology, the Industrial Revolution and the Invention of Photography

Pictorialism: Alfred Stieglitz, *Camera Work* and the Photo-Secession Movement

Photography and American Modernism (RK)

#### Due:

"291" in Alfred Stieglitz: A Biography by Richard Whelan

"Pictorial Photography" by Alfred Stieglitz in Classic Essays on Photography, ed. By Alan Trachtenberg

[XX]

2Q/2C on "291", "Pictorial Photography" and [XX]

#### **Week 3 – Sep 10**

WordPress Tech (with Doug Higgins / ITS) **Meet in KTSA 144**

#### Due:

Primary Source Assignment for WordPress Site

Review:

1913 Armory Show: The Story in Primary Sources [Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution]

<https://www.aaa.si.edu/collection-features/1913-armory-show>

Wellin Museum Collection of American Art

<http://wellin-emuseum.hamilton.edu/collections/1315/american-art/objects>

Munson-Williams-Proctor Art Institute Collection

<http://collections.mwpai.org/collections>

#### **Sep 12**

Collecting (Private and Institutional) – Edward Root (MS)

#### Due:

Aline Saarinen, "Patron: John Quinn" in The Proud Possessors (PDF)

Aline Saarinen, "The Quiet World – Edward Wales Root" in The Proud Possessors (PDF)

Mary E. Murray, "Edward Wales Root and American Modernism" in Auspicious Visions (PDF)

2Q/2C on Saarinen / Murray

**Week 4 – Sep 17**

MWPAL Field Trip (Galleries) **Meet at KJ Circle at 10:20**

Pollock vs Hopper vs Rothko

Watch:

Pollock 51 (10' film)

[http://www.openculture.com/2011/08/jackson\\_pollock\\_lights\\_camera\\_paint.html](http://www.openculture.com/2011/08/jackson_pollock_lights_camera_paint.html)

Due:

Barnet, Writing About Art, Ch. 2 (p. 37-43) (previously PDF)

Mary E. Murray, Look For Beauty: Philip Johnson and Art Museum Design [PDF from MS book]

[Rand Carter essay in same book?]

[New Johnson biography chapter or other TBD]

2Q/2C on Murray / Carter / TBD / Pollock film

**Sep 19**

MWPAL Field Trip (Storage, Anna D'Ambrosio / Mary Murray)

Due:

[Overview of American art 1925-1950]

Essay on Pollock / Rothko (PDF TBD)

Rick Powell, "Re/Birth of a Nation" in Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance (PDF)

2 page response on Pollock/Rothko

**THEME II – The Art of Collecting**

**Week 5 – Sep 24**

Galleries / Dealers / Museums

Select objects for Object Presentation Assignment (due 10/22, 10/24)

Due:

Lindsay Pollock, "The Girl with the Gallery" in The Girl with the Gallery: Edith Gregor Halpert and the Making of the Modern Art Market (PDF)

S.N. Behrman, "The Days of Duveen," *The New Yorker*, September 22, 1951 (PDF)

2Q/2C on Pollock / Behrman

4-5 page essay [TOPICS TBD]

**Sep 26**

Hamilton & The Wellin: Building a Collection (in Conversation with Tracy Adler)

**MEET AT WELLIN MUSEUM**

Due:

Michael Shapiro, Intro and a chapter (student choice) from Eleven Museums / Eleven Directors: Conversations on Art & Leadership (PDF)

2Q/2C on Shapiro

**Week 6 – Oct 1**

Conducting an Interview (NYC Trip Preparation) with Oral Communications Center

Due:

Nicholas Serota, Experience or Interpretation: The Dilemma of Modern Art Museums, p. 6-55.  
Brian O'Doherty, "Notes on the Gallery Space", in Inside the White Cube, ch. 1.  
2Q/2C on Serota / O'Doherty

**Oct 3**

Conducting an Interview (NYC Trip Preparation) with Tracy Adler (ITS)

Due:

Questions for interview

**Week 7 – Oct 8**

NO CLASS

**Oct 10**

NYC Trip (in NYC 10/10-10/12)

**Meet at KJ Circle at 7:00am, return 10/12 at 9pm**

**Week 8 – Oct 15**

NYC Trip Debrief

Due:

NYC Trip Write Up: Focused 1-2 page response based on a work or a person interviewed.

**Oct 17**

NO CLASS (Fall Break)

**THEME III – Curating: History to Practice**

**Week 9 – Oct 22 / Oct 24**

Presentations

Due:

Powerpoint Presentation on an object (8-10 minute oral presentation, location TBD)

**Week 10 – Oct 29**

Curatorial Practice: Technology – Sketchup Models (with Bret Olsen / ITS) (MS in Chicago)

**Oct 31**

Curatorial Practice: What is a Curator? Catalogues & the Catalogue Entry

Due:

David Levi Strauss, "Bias of the World: Curating After Szeemann & Hopps", in *Cautionary Tales: Critical Curating*, p. 15-25. (PDF)

Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Walter Hopps" and "Anne d'Harnoncourt", in *A Brief History of Curating*, ch. 1 and 10. (PDF)

2Q/2C on Strauss / Obrist

**Week 11 – Nov 5**

Curatorial Practice: Layout, Wall Text & Labels

Due:

Robert Storr, "Show and Tell", in Marincola, P. ed. *What Makes a Great Exhibition?* London: Reaktion Books Ltd., pp.14-31 (PDF)

Ingrid Schaffer, "Wall Text", in Marincola, P. ed. *What Makes a Great Exhibition?* London: Reaktion Books Ltd.

<https://ingridschaffner.com/2013/06/wall-text-what-makes-a-great-exhibition/>

2Q/2C on Storr / Schaffer

**Nov 7**

Film TBD [RK in NYC]

Due:

Draft Catalogue Selections

**Week 12 – Nov 12**

Professions: artists, art dealers, art critics, art historians, collectors, curators, foundations (Liz Glassman, etc.)

Due:

Draft SketchUp Exhibition Layout

**Nov 14**

Professions: art historians, collectors, curators

**Week 13 – Nov 19**

Follow up Skype Interviews

Due:

Draft Wall Text

**Nov 21**

Follow up Skype Interviews

Nov 22 – Dec 2

Thanksgiving Recess

**Week 14 – Dec 3**

Student Presentations: Revised Layouts & Wall Text (Group I)

**Dec 5**

Student Presentations: Revised Layouts & Wall Text (Group II)

**Week 15 – Dec 10**

In class work session (ITS)

**Dec 13**

In class work session (ITS)

**Dec 19**

Final Exam Period – Presentations

THURSDAY 7-10pm