

ART & THE COLD WAR

VAH 3393F Special Topics – fall 2016



Ray and Charles Eames, *Glimpses of the USA* (1959)

Western University, Department of Visual Arts

Class time: Thursdays 9:30-11:30 am (this is a blended course with online content in addition to weekly class meetings)

Location: VAC 247

Professor Sarah Bassnett

Email – sarah.bassnett@uwo.ca

Office hours – Thursdays 11:30 am – 12:30 pm and by appointment in VAC 220

Teaching assistant –

TA office hours – in VAC 240

COURSE DESCRIPTION

By the time the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as superpowers after the Second World War, the utopian dreams of pre-war modernism had shattered. Artists, intellectuals, and other cultural practitioners, struggling to come to terms with the horrors of the war and the threat of nuclear annihilation, explored alternate visions. Taking a thematic approach, this course examines the art of the Cold War (1947-1991) in Europe and North America in relation to the social and political context of the period. We consider major trends in art, alongside the issues that influenced them: abstract expressionism and individualism versus collectivism; international exhibitions and cultural diplomacy; pop art and the rise of mass consumerism; conceptual art, performance, and political radicalism; appropriation and the growth of corporate culture, and more. This is a blended course with online content in addition to weekly class meetings.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- explain the relation between key artistic movements of the period 1947-91 and the social and political context of the Cold War
- describe and analyze the formal properties of a range of art works using appropriate terminology
- read, comprehend, and summarize the main points of art historical texts and explain their own point of view on the texts in writing
- conduct research using library resources, including books and databases, and use the sources effectively in an academic essay
- articulate an argument in writing, support the argument using appropriate evidence, and address counter-arguments
- participate constructively in discussions and by listening respectfully to the views of others, both online and in class

PREREQUISITE / ANTI-REQUISITE

The prerequisite is two of VAH 1041A/B, 1042A/B, 1043A/B, 1044A/B, 1045A/B, or VAH 1040E. You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that you have not taken an anti-requisite course. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as the basis for an appeal. If you are not eligible for a course, you may be removed from it without an adjustment to your fees. These decisions cannot be appealed.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required text for this course:

***After Modern Art, 1945-2000*, David Hopkins** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

The book is available at the University Bookstore and is also available online through Weldon Library. **Additional required readings are posted as PDFs on OWL Sakai.**

Class preparation: This is a blended course, which means it is essential that you read the assigned texts, watch the assigned videos, and participate in assigned activities before each class. The equivalent of 1 hour of weekly class time is directed to online activities such as watching videos and answering questions posted to OWL. In order to read or watch actively and to create a record of your thoughts on the texts, I highly recommend taking notes, which you can then review for tests and exams. Completing the assigned readings, watching the videos, etc. will take a total of approximately 2-3 hours a week.

You are responsible for material covered in the lectures and for the readings. You are expected to have done the readings in preparation for the day they are listed. Attendance and participation in all classes is mandatory. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed from a classmate.

EXPLICIT CONTENT WARNING

Artists are known for breaking rules and challenging social norms. In this course, we will look at and discuss a broad range of artwork, including some that addresses controversial subject matter and some that depicts explicit scenes of a sexual or violent nature. If you do not want to engage with artwork of this kind, this course may not be a good fit for you.

ASSIGNMENTS

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION 10% (weekly)

READING RESPONSES – 10% (weekly)

RESEARCH PROJECT – proposal 10%, presentation 10%, and final essay 30%

FINAL TEST 30% (November 10)

GRADING

Attendance & participation	10%	Weekly
Reading responses	10%	Weekly
Proposal	10%	October 6
Final test	30%	November 10
Didactic & presentation	10%	Draft due Nov. 17. Presentations Nov. 24 or Dec. 1
Research essay	30%	December 1