

HA/CAAS 214
Twentieth Century African-American Art:
An Introductory Survey
Mondays and Wednesdays
1-2:30 p.m.
Tappan Hall 180

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Office hours:
Wednesdays, 3-4 p.m.;
and by appointment, if necessary.

Course Description

This survey covers key issues regarding the last century's history of African-American painting, sculpture, photography, and mixed media art. Moving through the material chronologically, we will discuss a variety of stylistic strategies, social histories, patronage, and critical reception. This course is an opportunity for students to expand their descriptive and analytical skills through oral participation in class and persuasive writing on exams and in short papers. We will also examine the benefits and problems of studying the production of artists' of color as a separate field, considering alternatives to the broad category of "African-American art" and the outlook for new, critical methodologies.

Required Texts

Sharon F. Patton, *African-American Art* (at Shaman Drum Bookstore, 313 South State Street; Tel. 662-7407).

Mary Acton, *Learning to Look at Paintings* (at Shaman Drum Bookstore).

Course Reader (at AccuCopy, 518 East William St.; tel. 769-8338).

(A copy of the course reader will be available at Shapiro Undergraduate Library Reserves by September 18.)

Class Attendance and Conduct

Regular attendance is required. You are allowed two (2) unexcused absences during the semester; each additional, unexcused absence will be penalized with a third of a letter grade deduction (e.g., from B to B minus).

Habitual lateness (two or more tardy arrivals), sleeping in class, and frequent disruptions (i.e., getting up to go the bathroom, beeper or cell phone rings) will similarly lower your grade.

Six unexcused absences will lead to your expulsion from the course.

Disability Accommodations

Please inform me of your disability privately; we can work with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to enable your full participation in class. SSD is in Haven Hall G625; tel. 763-3000.

Course Requirements

*Regular attendance and seemly behavior in class.

*Preparation for and participation in class discussions. Please read the assigned texts and study the related images **before** each class session.

At the minimum, there will be two unannounced quizzes during the semester. Quizzes are opportunities to familiarize yourself with the exam format and to earn extra credit (1-5 points); earned points will be added to your mid-term or final exam scores, or both.

*Mid-Term and Final Exams:

Mid-Term:	Wednesday, October 25	In class (25% of final grade)
Final:	Thursday, December 21	4-6 p.m. (35% of final grade)

Each exam will have up to four parts:

A. Slide identifications. I will show images previously discussed in class; you supply title, artist, date (decade), medium and a brief discussion of the objects' significance. Two slides might be shown side by side: in this case, you will be asked to succinctly compare or contrast the works.

B. Attributions ("Unknowns"). I will show images that you have *not* seen in class. Based on your analysis of style and subject, you will compose an argument to support your educated guess on each object's maker and date of production.

C. Short definitions of key terms discussed in class and assigned readings.

D. Essays in which you discuss a thematic, stylistic, or historical concern discussed in class and assigned readings.

*Two Papers:

Formal Analysis Paper (2-3 pages)

Discussion of the style of an assigned art object on campus. Guidelines will be discussed in class on Monday, September 18.

Due Monday, September 25 at the start of class. (10% of final grade)

Research Paper (6-8 pages)

Topic: African-American Abstract Painters, 1945-1970.

Guidelines will be discussed in class on Wednesday, October 25.

Paper topics and bibliography due in class Monday, November 6.

Due Wednesday, November 22 at the start of class. (30% of final grade)

Both papers must be typed, double-spaced, and carefully proofread for spelling and typos. Margins: 1 inch, all around. Font size: 12 point only. Decorative fonts and folders, and cover pages are unnecessary. Don't include them.

Prepare for these assignments. If you're having writing difficulties, visit me during office hours or make an appointment to talk with me before the paper's due date. Contact the Sweetland Writing Center (tel. 764-0429) to learn about writing and paper organizing strategies.

Anticipate the logjams at the computing centers from mid-semester onward; find out the hours of at least two computer labs.

No extensions will be granted—except in the case that a serious emergency or grave illness prevents you from completing an assignment (or taking an exam). Illnesses and emergencies must be documented with official notification from the University Health Services or the Dean of Students Office.

Class Schedule and Topics

Wednesday, September 6

1. Introduction.

Monday, September 11

2. Prologue: Artists of Color and Images of Blacks in Western Art in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.
READING: Dyer, 1-4 in Chapter 1.
Patton, Chapters 1-2.

Wednesday, September 13

3. "The New Negro" and Idealized Representation.
READING: Patton, 105-16 in Chapter 3.
Acton, Introduction.

Monday, September 18

4. Popular Illustration of the Harlem Renaissance.
READING: Patton, 116-19.
Acton, 1-20 in Chapter 1; and 160-62 and 174-77 in Chapter 7.

Wednesday, September 20

5. Visit to University Museum (tentative).
READING: Acton, Chapter 6 and Appendix 1.

Monday, September 25

6. Types: Black Portraiture and Genre Figures in the 1920s and 1930s.
READING: Patton, 120-28 and 150-52 in Chapter 3.
Formal Analysis Paper due at the start of class.

Wednesday, September 27

7. Claiming the "Legacy": Sargent Johnson and Richmond Barthé.
READING: Patton, 128-31 in Chapter 3.
Locke, "The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts."
Recommended: Porter, 86-98 in Chapter 6.

Monday, October 2

8. Patronage and Style: The Harmon Foundation and "Racial Art."
READING: Bearden, "The Negro Artist and Modern Art."
Calo, "African American Art and Critical Discourse Between World Wars."

Wednesday, October 4

9. Primitivism and "Primitives": Horace Pippin, William Edmondson, William H. Johnson.
READING: Patton, 132-34 and 153-54 in Chapter 3.
Acton, 51-57, 61-63, 69-70 in Chapter 3; and 120-33 and 142-59 in Chapter 5.
Recommended: Antliff and Leighton, "Primitive."

Monday, October 9

10. Masculinities.
READING: McBreen, "Biblical Gender Bending in Harlem: The Queer Performance of Nugent's 'Salome.'"
Langa, "Two Antilynching Exhibitions: Politicized Viewpoints, Racial Perspectives, Gendered Constraints."

Wednesday, October 11

11. History, Legend, and "the Usable Past": Narrative Series and Murals.
 READING: Patton, 139-45 and 154-56 in Chapter 3.
 Acton, 41-43 and 45-47 in Chapter 2.

Monday, October 16

12. Graphic Art and Leftist Politics: The WPA and The Harlem Artists' Guild.
 READING: Patton, 145-50 in Chapter 3.
 Acton, 87-91 in Chapter 4; and 201-05 in Chapter 8.

Wednesday, October 18

13. Black Artists' Circles, 1933-1945: The Harlem Art Workshop; The "306" Group; and The Atlanta and Hampton University Art Programs.
 READING: "Black Beaux Arts."
 Ritter, "The Birth of the Hampton Institute Art Department: The Lowenfeld Years, 1939-1946."

Monday, October 23

14. Review for Mid-Term Exam.

Wednesday, October 25 **Mid-Term Exam (in class)**Monday, October 30

15. In Search of A Universal Language: Romare Bearden in the 40s and 50s.
 READING: Patton, 156-60 and 165-69 in Chapter 3.
 Witkovsky, "Experience vs. Theory: Romare Bearden and Abstract Expressionism."

Wednesday, November 1

16. Norman Lewis, Hale Woodruff, and The New York School.
 READING: Patton, 170-75 in Chapter 3.
 Acton, Conclusion.
 Gibson, "Recasting the Canon: Norman Lewis and Jackson Pollock."

Monday, November 6

17. Sam Gilliam, Alma Thomas and the Washington Color School.
 READING: Patton, 220-23 in Chapter 4.
 Gibson, "Putting Alma Thomas in Place: Modernist Painting, Color Theory, and the Civil Rights Movement."
Research Paper Topic and Bibliography due at the start of class.

Wednesday, November 8

18. "Turbulent Decade": Pop and the Art of Confrontation, 1960-1970.
 READING: Patton, 183-87, 190-99, and 204-05 in Chapter 4.
 Kramer, "Trying to Define 'Black Art': Must We Go Back to Social Realism?"
 Gaither, "A New Criticism Is Needed."

Monday, November 13

19. Artist-Exiles, Artist Travelers: Lois Mailou Jones, Beauford Delaney, Elizabeth Catlett, and Eldzier Cortor.
 READING: Patton, 161-64 and 176-81 in Chapter 3.
 Mercer, "Explorations in the City of Light."

Wednesday, November 15

20. Black Nationalism and "Black Art": Afri-COBRA, The Wall of Respect, and Mel Edwards's "Lynch Fragments."
 READING: Patton, 210-20 in Chapter 4.
 Fine, "Mainstream, Blackstream and the Black Art Movement."
 Bowling, "The Rupture: Ancestor Worship, Revival, Confusion, or Disguise."

Monday, November 20

21. Bob Thompson: Black Bohemian Claims the Italian Renaissance.
 READING: Patton, 226-27 in Chapter 4.
 Golden, Introduction.

Wednesday, November 22

22. Betye Saar's Boxes.
 READING: Patton, 200-03 in Chapter 4.
Research Paper due at the start of class.

Monday, November 27

23. Romare Bearden's Collage Practices.
 READING: Patton, 187-90 in Chapter 4.
 Glaser, "Signifying Identity: Art and Race in Romare Bearden's Projections."

Wednesday, November 29

24. Faith Ringgold's and the Modernist Canon.
 READING: Patton, 242-44 in Chapter 4.
 Gibson, "Faith Ringgold's *Picasso's Studio*."

Monday, December 4

25. Photo I.D.: Dawoud Bey's Portraits and Carrie Mae Weems's Text and Image Narratives.
 READING: Patton, 263-67 in Chapter 4.
 Reynolds, "An Interview with Dawoud Bey."
 Kirsh, "Carrie Mae Weems."

Wednesday, December 6

26. Artists of Color in the Postmodern Era, 1980-1990.
 READING: Patton, 232-42, 247-54, 256-63, 267-73 in Chapter 4.
Recommended: Hall, "Minimal Selves."

Monday, December 11

27. Avant-[Color]-Garde: Jean-Michel Basquiat and Kara Walker.
 READING: Szabo, "Kara Walker's Shock Art."
 Marshall, "Repelling Ghosts."

Wednesday, December 13

28. Review for Final Exam.

Thursday, December 21

Final Exam, 4-6 p.m. (Tappan Hall 180).

Bibliography

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- "Black Beaux-Arts." *Time* 40 (21 September 1942): 74.
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- Calo, Mary Ann. "African American Art and Critical Discourse Between World Wars." *American Quarterly* 51 (September 1999): 580-621.
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- "Putting Alma Thomas in Place: Modernist Painting, Color Theory, and the Civil Rights Movement. Fort Wayne Museum of Art, *Alma W. Thomas: A Retrospective of the Paintings*. Fort Wayne, Indiana: Fort Wayne Museum, 1998. 38-53.
- "Recasting the Canon: Norman Lewis and Jackson Pollock." *Artforum* 30 (March 1992): 66-73.
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- McBreen, Ellen. "Biblical Gender Bending in Harlem: The Queer Performance of Nugent's 'Salome.'" *Art Journal* 57 (Fall 1998): 22-28.
- Marshall, Richard. "Repelling Ghosts." *Jean-Michel Basquiat*. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1992. 15-27.
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