

# ARH 311: American Art

Fall 2018 • Tuesdays 4:30-7:10 • Somerset 216

**professor** Charles A. Cramer • **office** 73 Tremont, #1057

**office hours** TTh 3:00-4:00, or by appointment

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**course website** <http://www.charlesacramer.com/arh311/>

## + Course description and goals

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(4 credits, no prerequisites) This course explores the major works, artists, and issues of American art from the Colonial period through the 1930s. By the end of the course you should:

- Have a thorough understanding of around 80 paradigm works of American art, such as Copley's *Paul Revere*, Cole's *Course of Empire*, Bingham's *County Election*, Sargent's *Madame X*, Whistler's *Symphony in White*, Riis's *How the Other Half Lives*, Sullivan's *Wainwright Building*, O'Keeffe's *Calla Lily*, Dove's *Foghorns*, Lawrence's *Migration of the Negro*, Lange's *Migrant Mother*, Benton's *Social History of Missouri*, and Wood's *American Gothic*.
- On the basis of these and other works we study, know the characteristics of some of the major styles and genres of art produced during the period, including Colonial portraiture, the Hudson River School, Genre painting, Folk Art, social-documentary photography, early skyscrapers, the Ashcan School, Modernism, Social Realism, and Regionalism.
- Understand and be able to articulate the close relationship between art and its historical context: for example between Colonial portraiture and Calvinist moral and economic values; between American land policy and representations of Native Americans; between genre painting and American electoral practices; between the Ashcan School and industrial capitalism, and so on.
- Understand and be able to articulate the diverse roles that art has played in society, from state propaganda to social protest; from objective documentation to subjective expression; and from spiritual transcendence to sensual indulgence.
- Have the basic tools of visual literacy, including an ability to analyze, using appropriate vocabulary, how works of art communicate or express their meanings through the artist's careful choices of subject-matter and form.

## + Readings and resources

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The text for this class is Wayne Craven's *American Art: History and Culture*, available at the campus bookstore or at your online retailer of choice. Used copies are fine. Supplementary required readings of primary and scholarly secondary sources will also be available as PDFs on the course webpages (follow the link above). Also available on the course website are the syllabus, course policies, assignments, and complete study-guides for the exams, including a summary of the major points for each week's lecture, discussion questions for the weekly readings, and a set of key works to know for the exams.

## + Select course policies

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A thorough description of university policies can be found at [www.suffolk.edu/syllabus](http://www.suffolk.edu/syllabus), and detailed course policies can be found on the course website -- see the address above. Here are a couple of key points:

- According to Federal guidelines, you should be spending an average of nine hours per week outside of class meeting time on this course, including time spent doing the readings, analyzing the illustrated works, organizing and reviewing your lecture notes, visiting the museum, writing the papers, studying for the exams, and so on.
- Attendance is required, but you get one 'free' absence to cover illness, a family emergency, a missed bus, or whatever. Save it for when you really need it, though: more than one absence will affect your final grade.
- All electronic devices, including laptops, tablets, phones, MP3 players, and any audio or video recording devices must be turned off and put away during both lectures and exams. Exceptions will only be made in cases of need documented by the Office of Student Affairs or the Learning Center—come see me in advance.
- Make-up exams will only be given under extraordinary circumstances and are considerably more time-consuming than the in-class exams. Make-up weekly presentations are usually not possible due to time constraints.
- Your grade will be computed based on the following components (there is no extra credit):

**exam 1** 30%; **exam 2** 30%; **two in-class presentations** 5% each;  
**museum paper 1** 10%; **museum paper 2** 15%; **participation** 5%

## Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

date	topic and readings
Tuesday 4 September	Introduction to the course Lecture: Colonial portraiture
Tuesday 11 September	Discussion of Craven chapters 3, 5 & 7 plus Paul Staiti, "Character and Class" Lecture: Federal Period art and the Grand Manner
Tuesday 18 September	Discussion of Craven chapters 8, 10, 12 & 18 plus Vivien Fryd, "Two Sculptures for the Capitol" Lecture: Landscape painting
Tuesday 25 September	Discussion of Craven ch. 15 plus Angela Miller, "Millennium/Apocalypse" Lecture: Manifest Destiny and the American West
Tuesday 2 October	<b>Museum paper 1 due</b> ; presentations/discussion Lecture: Genre painting and the American people
Tuesday 9 October	Discussion of Craven chapters 16, 19, and pp. 210-13 & 367-70 Lecture: American Realism
Tuesday 16 October	Discussion of Craven chapters 11, 23 (pp. 329-342), & 24 Review for Exam I
Tuesday 23 October	<b>Exam 1</b> Lecture: The Gilded Age and American expatriates
Tuesday 30 October	Discussion of Craven chapters 20, 22, & 23 (342-48), plus Whistler, "Action for Libel" Lecture: How the Other Half Lives
Tuesday 6 November	Discussion of Craven 25 (371-76), 29 (422-438) & 31 (468-76), plus Trachtenberg, "Lewis Hine" Lecture: Modernism in architecture
Tuesday 13 November	Discussion of Craven chapters 21, 24 (349-54), 27 & 33, plus Louis Sullivan, "Tall Office Building" Lecture: Modernism in art
Tuesday 20 November	Discussion of Craven chapter 30, plus "The Armory Show" readings* Lecture: After the Depression: Social Realism and Regionalism
Tuesday 27 November	Discussion of Craven chs. 28, 29 (439-43), 31 (476-80), & 36 (543-550) Catch up
Tuesday 4 December	<b>Museum paper 2 due</b> ; presentations/discussion Review for Exam 2, course evaluations
Tuesday 11 December	<b>Exam 2</b> 5:00-6:30 pm, Somerset 216

\* Readings outside of the textbook are available through the course website. Each day I will pass out a set questions concerning the following week's readings. These questions will guide you to concentrate on the most important issues as you read the assignment: everyone should think about them and come prepared to discuss them. Some of you will be given the assignment of writing and presenting a 1-page response to one of these questions. These presentations will serve to start a general discussion on the issues and relevant works, and should be turned in at the end of the class period.

## Policies

In addition to those described here and on the course webpages, this course adheres to policies and procedures that apply to all Suffolk courses with regard to disability accommodation, academic misconduct, academic grievance, attendance, and credit hour compliance. A description of these policies can be found at the link <http://www.suffolk.edu/academics/72770.php>.

### This course follows the Federal Government's Credit Hour definition

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education set the definition of a 'credit hour' as entailing three hours of student engagement per week. This means that a 4-credit course should entail a minimum 180 hours of work over the 15 weeks of the semester, as follows:

Assignment/Activity	Engagement Estimate	Hours
Weekly readings	520 pages x 8 minutes per page	70 hours
Preview course webpages	½ hour per topic x 12 topics	6 hours
Review and annotate notes	1 hour per topic x 12 topics	12 hours
Weekly assignments	2 x 3 hours	6 hours
Museum visits	2 x 4 hours	8 hours
Write museum papers	6 hours + 8 hours	14 hours
Study for exams	2 x 10 hours	20 hours
Class attendance	3 hours x 15 weeks	45 hours
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>181 hours</b>

### Class Cancellation Plan

In the event that any class meetings are cancelled for either expected or unexpected reasons such as conference travel, inclement weather, illness, etc., I will contact you by email with a plan to make up the missed work.

### Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you determine that you need formal, disability-related accommodations, it is very important that you register with the Office of Disability Services ([www.suffolk.edu/disability](http://www.suffolk.edu/disability); located at 73 Tremont Street, 7th floor, 617.994.6820, [disabilityservices@suffolk.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@suffolk.edu)) and notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. We can then plan how best to implement your accommodations.

### Academic Honesty

Suffolk University expects all students to be responsible individuals with high standards of conduct. Students are expected to practice ethical behavior in all learning environments and scenarios, including classrooms and laboratories, internships and practica, and study groups and academic teams. Cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, use of unauthorized electronic devices, self-plagiarism, fabrication or falsification of data, and other types of academic misconduct are treated as serious offenses that initiate a formal process of inquiry, one that may lead to disciplinary sanctions. Please review the Academic Misconduct Policy at <http://www.suffolk.edu/studenthandbook/19863.php>

### Academic Resources and Student Support Services

A range of student services are available at <http://www.suffolk.edu/syllabus>

### Content Advisory

This course deals with some controversial or difficult subjects, such as religion, sexuality, race, and social class, including representations of the nude body and discussion of sexual, political, socio-economic, and religious ideas and practices that some students may disagree with or be uncomfortable with. As we examine these topics, we should all remember to be respectful of each others' beliefs and backgrounds, and should keep the discussion anchored in an attempt to understand the contextual meanings and purposes of the works of art that we are covering.

Select assignments in this course may be used for institutional and program assessment purposes and will be handled confidentially.

This course fulfills the **VPATH (Visual and Performing Arts: Theory and History)** requirement, the goals and objectives of which are:

Goals	Objectives	Assessment
1. Students will understand the important roles that the visual arts have played in society.	Students will be aware that the visual arts have served multiple purposes in different cultures and at different times.	exams, presentations
2. Students will know appropriate (discipline-specific) methods for analyzing works of visual art.	a. Students will be able to perceive significant formal features in works of visual art.	exams, museum papers, presentations
	b. Students will be able to describe those formal features using appropriate, discipline-specific language.	exams, museum papers, presentations
	c. Students will be able to relate the formal features used in the works to their expressive content and social purpose.	exams, museum papers, presentations
	d. Students will recognize the genre or tradition to which works of visual art belong.	exams, museum papers, presentations
	e. Students will be able to relate the subjects/ genres of such works to their expressive content and social purpose.	exams, museum papers, presentations
	f. (optional) Students will be able to compare different subjects, genres, and/or formal choices in relation to different expressive content and social purposes.	exams (comparison questions), second museum paper
3. Students will understand how the visual arts are related to their contexts.	a. Students will be able to discuss how works of visual art emerged from the ideas and practices of their original context (social, political, religious, cultural, etc.)	exams, museum papers, presentations
	b. (optional) students will be able to discuss how works of visual art attempt to affect or influence the ideas and practices of their original context.	exams, museum papers, presentations
4. Students will understand how learning and experiences inside and outside the classroom are connected and interdependent.	Students will apply course-acquired knowledge and skills to analyze works of art seen in person at local museums and galleries.	museum papers

(For students who enrolled before 2015-16, this course fulfills the Humanities / History core requirement.)