



Boston University Study Abroad  
Paris

## CAS AH 356 Modern and Contemporary Art in Paris

**Credits:** 4

**French Language Prerequisite:** LF212 and above (or the equivalent)

**Hub Units:** Aesthetic Exploration (1 unit)  
Historical Consciousness (1 unit)

**Schedule:** FALL & SPRING  
16 two-and-a-half-hour sessions over 7.5 weeks (2 weekly sessions + 2 additional sessions)  
Final exam (last Friday)  
SUMMER  
5 five-hour sessions (first intensive week) + 4 four-hour sessions (following Fridays)

### Course visits examples:

- Musée d'Orsay
- Musée National d'Art Moderne (Centre Pompidou), Modern and Contemporary collections
- Fondation Louis Vuitton
- Contemporary art galleries (details TBD)

### Course material:

- Two reference manuals available at the BU Paris Center (chapters on Blackboard):
  - o DAGEN, Philippe. HAMON, Françoise (dir.). *Histoire de l'art. Epoque Contemporaine (XIXe-XXe siècles)*, Paris, Flammarion, 1995.
  - o LEMOINE, Serge (dir.). *L'Art Moderne et Contemporain*, Paris, Larousse, 2006.
- Course Reader posted on Blackboard and/or to be purchased by students at a partner shop
- Additional documents posted on Blackboard:

### Assessment for the course:

- class attendance, participation and preparedness (10%),
- a quiz combining identifying works and answering definition or factual questions (20%),
- an oral presentation (analytical commentary) about a given work (20%),
- a 5-page essay analyzing a current exhibition (30%),
- a final exam consisting of two essay questions (20%).

**Homework** includes mandatory readings in French (chapters from the two manuals and writings by the artists themselves, by contemporary authors or intellectuals, or by art historians) for each session, preparation for in-class tests (quizzes and exams), as well as extensive research and reflection for the oral presentation and for the essay.

In-class sessions alternate between lectures illustrated with slides and videos, group discussions, students' presentations, and are supplemented by commented group visits to museums and galleries.

This course is accessible to students with no previous experience in art history.

This course, including assignments and additional visits, is conducted entirely in French.

## I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Since 1850, art has evolved in a world that has transformed with each generation even more deeply and rapidly than ever before in human history. The 19th century Industrial Revolution, the two World Wars and the more recent globalization, as well as developments such as photography, cinema, computer science and the internet, are major historical and technological phenomena in which modern and contemporary artists have been both engaged witnesses and active participants.

The emergence of photography has forced painters (such as Impressionists, Cubists, Abstract artists) into redefining the possibilities of the painting medium as a tool for representing the real, psychic or spiritual world. Marxism as well as the democratization of society have led some artists from movements as diverse as Constructivism or Pop Art to reflect upon the social role of art. Others, following Marcel Duchamp's *Readymades* or Conceptual Art, have explored a more philosophical questioning of the very nature of Art. Since the 1960s, in the context of a civilization struggling with multiple uncertainties, artists have created new genres such as installation, performance, video and digital art, which contribute in making Contemporary Art a vibrant laboratory where the new forms of our future are created.

This course focuses on Paris as one of the three global capitals of modern and contemporary art and culture (along with New York and London). Attracting and inspiring not only French but international artists, the city has contributed to the creation of major global art movements over the past two centuries, and has been instrumental in giving contemporary art a major place in world culture through dedicated museums and art centers (such as Centre Pompidou) as well as numerous galleries. The understanding of the principal art movements in Paris from 1850 to today, including painting, sculpture, photography, installations, and urbanism, in relation to the historical, economic, and sociocultural contexts of the time period, will allow us to develop a history of "modernity" (in the art historical sense) as Paris defined it and to examine what influence Parisian modernity has had on Western culture and how it has been interpreted and translated in other parts of the world.

Furthermore, the study of modern and contemporary art raises essential questions which are continuously addressed throughout the course:

- The question of beauty as a criterium of aesthetic value;
- The distinction between "real" and "ideal"
- The questioning of perfection as a goal and the distinction between evolution and transformation;
- The extension of art to non-artistic expressions/objects;
- The renewal of sources of inspiration, shifting from Greek and Roman Antiquity to other cultures;
- The rejection of Western society's artificiality.

Finally, the course will help students understand and apply art historical methodology through different exercises, such as an analytic commentary of a work ("*Commentaire d'oeuvre*"), a formal review of an exhibition and an analytical essay. It will also insist on the relevance of sources: the value of seeing an artwork on site vs. on line or on paper, as well as the distinction between good and poor reproductions; the differences in meaning between a text written by the artist (statement), a contemporary critique (immediate reaction), and an art historian (perspective); the necessity to use on-line reliable sources (Museums' or universities websites, galleries' on-line catalogues); the need to discriminate between informative and reliable sources and subjective judgments (press articles) serving as illustrations of a given time period mentality.

Each session focuses on a specific art movement, starting from its historical and cultural context, to analyze its main conceptions, the most important artists representing this movement and most notable art works by these artists, and their influence & posterity. The lecture part serves as a familiarization with concepts, ideas, methodology (both pertaining art history and interpretation of sources), terminology; preparation for each session, including mandatory readings of academic chapters from an art history manual (informative) and texts by the artists or contemporary intellectuals (aesthetical statements), reinforces and deepens these competencies. In-class discussions allow students to apply them. Students are provided with and expected to use additional tools such as an art history glossary and methodological hand-outs available on Blackboard.

## II. HUB AREAS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

### Hub area: Aesthetic Exploration (1 unit)

1. Students will demonstrate knowledge and appreciation of notable works in modern and contemporary art, including the cultural contexts in which those works were created, and be able to identify their ongoing significance and relevance. This includes:
  - the ability to trace and explain Modern Art timeline from Realism to contemporary developments;
  - the ability to describe and characterize the major movements of Modern and Contemporary Art, as well as their historical, cultural, technological, ideological context;
  - the ability to define and recognize major artists' contributions and key artworks, including a variety of artistic media, such as painting, sculpture, "readymades", photography, installation, performance, and cinema.
2. Students will demonstrate the reasoning skills and French vocabulary necessary to interpret a work of art following the proper methodology specific to different Art History exercises. This includes:
  - understand and analyze theoretical texts about Modern Art written in English or in French, by identifying their main ideas and implications;
  - understand and apply French vocabulary specific to Art History, including media, techniques, movements, aesthetical analysis;
  - follow precise Art History methods, such as the internal and external analysis of a specific work or the formal review of an exhibition, thoroughly explained and applied through different written and oral exercises.
3. Students will produce evaluative and analytical works that demonstrate an understanding of the characteristics—such as genres, modes, styles, and cultural history—of a diversity of artistic media, such as painting, sculpture, readymades, photography, installation, performance, cinema. This includes:
  - an oral presentation and an exam essay requiring to formally analyze a specific work following the precise art history method of "*commentaire d'oeuvre*",
  - an exam essay requiring to reflect analytically on a transversal aesthetical topic common to different art movements over the whole period covered in the course; based on theoretical ideas illustrated with specific examples (works),
  - a critical review of an exhibition, requiring students to apply the specific method used for an exhibition review, including a reflection on the site where the exhibition is held, a presentation of the artist, an analysis of the works and exhibition, and an enlightened and justified personal opinion.

### Hub area: Historical Consciousness (1 unit)

1. When commenting on an artwork or an exhibition, students will situate the given artwork or exhibition in its historical, cultural, social, technological context, analyze the impact of the historical context (the Industrial Revolution, World-War 1 & World War 2, globalization, technological progress such as photography, cinema, computer science), as well as the reception, influence, posterity of the artwork/artist, based on historical sources, thus creating historical narratives and arguments.
2. Students will evaluate the historical scopes of texts written by the artists themselves (statements), comments from contemporary critiques and authors (immediate reaction), articles written by art historians (perspective);
3. Students will relate Modern Art themes to others issues raised by social sciences (postmodernism, gender studies, globalization, urbanism...); indicate the main ideological movements specific to that period and their impact on artistic conceptions; determine how cultural, social and political paradigms related to art have changed from 1850 to today.

### III. ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

#### Participation and preparedness: 10%

In order to enrich the course with relevant comments, students are required to prepare each session through mandatory readings. This component of the grade takes into account the quality of a student's presence in class, preparedness (readings), energy, relevance of comments in class, effort and progress in language proficiency, attendance and punctuality.

#### Quiz: 20%

This quizzes focuses on factual knowledge. Students are asked to identify artworks studied in class and provide essential details (artist, movement, time period, etc.) and answer factual questions about art movements and techniques.

#### Oral presentation: 20%

Students will prepare a 10-minute presentation (including a PowerPoint) on a given work of art related to a corresponding session topic, highlighting its principal characteristics and its importance in both the career of the artist and the great movements of art history. The grade will take into account the quality of the presentation and the PowerPoint, the knowledge gained on the artist and the work, the analysis of the work, and the ease and clarity of the oral presentation. It will require students to put into practice techniques and terminology of art criticism in an oral context.

This presentation requires students to apply the method of the "*Commentaire d'oeuvre*" which includes the following aspects:

- *internal analysis*, consisting first of a presentation of the artist and the art movement he/she is related to, then of a detailed study of all aspects of the given work, such as its subject matter, its specific iconography, its composition, the use of colors and light, the techniques used;
- *external analysis*, consisting of determining whether the given work is related to a specific art genre or movement, of identifying its sources in the artist's as well as in the more general artistic and historical evolution, of explaining its influence and deeper meaning;
- *reception of the work* by contemporary public, press, artists, intellectuals and its *posterity*.

Aside from seeing the artwork where it is actually exhibited in Paris, research for this presentation must cover the historical, technological and artistic context, the artist's general career, style, work, influence, and the artwork itself (internal and external analysis), as well as other artworks with which it can be compared. The study of a specific artwork must never be isolated from its context.

#### Essay: Review of an Exhibition: 30%

Students will visit an exhibition chosen by the professor and write a developed, analytical critique of it in a 5-page paper. The essay allows students to develop their written French in an academic context and to put into practice techniques and terminology of art criticism in a formal register.

This essay requires students to apply the specific method used for an exhibition review which includes the following aspects:

- *reflection on the site* where the exhibition is held (museum, art center, gallery), its history, its goals, its audience, its renown and influence;
- *presentation of the artist(s)* – biography, previous exhibitions, presence on the art market, main characteristics of his/her work - *and of the exhibition organizer(s)* – motivations for the choice of the artist(s), goals and meaning of the exhibition, questions and issues raised by the exhibition;
- *internal and external analysis of the works* (see above) *and of the exhibition*, including its size, media, scenography, interaction with space and with the public, reception in the French and international press, financial dimension (prices of the works for a private gallery);
- *enlightened and justified personal opinion*.

#### Final exam: 20%

The two-part final exam covers the entirety of the course and focuses on the ability to articulate global analysis and reflection. Students are required to write two essays:

- the first is an *analytical commentary on a given work of art* (same method as for the oral presentation);
- the second is an *analytical essay consisting of a reflection on a transversal topic* common to different art movements over the whole period covered in the course; based on theoretical ideas illustrated with specific examples (works), this essay requires students to comment on the specificities of each movement, in order to establish distinctions between these art movements, thus stressing the process of transformation characterizing the history of art; this essay must follow a precise outline consisting of an introduction, a 2/3-part argumentative development and a conclusion.

### Grading conversion (out of 100)

FINAL GRADE FOR THE COURSE			GRADES FOR INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS/ASSIGNMENTS							
93-100 :	A	77-79,5 : C+	A+ = 97	B+/A- = 89,5	C+/B- = 79,5	D+/C- = 69,5				
90-92,5 :	A-	73-76,5 : C	A/A+ = 96	B+ = 88	C+ = 78	D+ = 68				
87-89,5 :	B+	70-72,5 : C-	A = 95	B/B+ = 86,5	C/C+ = 76,5	D/D+ = 66,5				
83-86,5 :	B	69-60 : D	A/A- = 92,5	B = 85	C = 75	D = 65				
80-82,5 :	B-	59,5-0 : F	A- = 91	B/B- = 82,5	C/C- = 72,5	D/D- = 62,5				
			A-/B+ = 89,5	B- = 81	C- = 71	D- = 61				
				B-/C+ = 79,5	C-/D+ = 69,5	F = 55				

### BU Paris Attendance Policy

Our program is subject to French student visa laws where an active student status is mandatory. As the sponsor of your visa, Boston University has the legal obligation to ensure that you comply with visa requirements. If you do not attend classes or your internship as required, you will be considered to be in breach of your visa and can be deported. Any student who does not comply with this policy may be sent home from the program at the discretion of the program director, and may, as a result, forfeit credit and program costs for part or all of the semester.

<b>1 absence</b> (courses* or internship**)	= -1 point on your final grade
<b>More than 3 unexcused absences</b>	= F for the course
<b>Unsubmitted written work</b> <b>Absence for a presentation or exam</b> <b>Plagiarism</b>	= F (0 points) for the assignment in question

\***Courses:** class sessions, exposé preparation, in-class presentation

\*\* **Internship:** EUSA meetings, BU Paris workshops, work placement schedule

**EXCUSED ABSENCES** = - Absence for illness excused by the *certificate of a French doctor*

- Internship interview
- OFII medical visit (must have *convocation*)
- Professional imperative that conflicts with academic workshop

**Documentation to be submitted to buparis@bu.edu the day following the absence**

### TARDINESS

The professor reserves the right to *not admit* a tardy student to class or to count a tardy arrival as either a *half or whole unexcused absence*. **Late arrivals** to class will impact the class *participation grade*. **Leaving class** before it ends is considered as tardiness. **Late submission** of written work will entail a penalty on the assignment grade. Written work submitted **more than a week late** will not receive credit (grade =F).

Students who do not complete a course on time will be given an F.

There are **no withdrawals** from classes, the internship, nor the internship course.

### PLAGIARISM

Simply stated, plagiarism is taking another's work and presenting it as your own. It is, in fact, intellectual theft. It is one of the most serious forms of academic misconduct. Plagiarism committed by a student will certainly result in course failure and may result in suspension or dismissal. It can take many forms, including reproduction of published material without acknowledgement, or representing work done by others as your own. This includes the increasing common practice of purchasing and downloading work from the Internet "paper mills". Plagiarism applies to all media – printed matter of all kinds, video, audio, and oral presentation. Even unacknowledged paraphrasing or use of another's methodology, structure or management of material is plagiarism. You must use quotation when quoting even if you do the translating yourself.

All students are responsible for having read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that the penalty against students on a Boston University program for cheating on the examinations or for plagiarism may be 'expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the dean'. Read the full Academic Conduct Code online at:

<http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/> as well as the [Policy on Religious Observance](#).

### Accommodations for Students with Documented Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at (617) 353-3658 or [access@bu.edu](mailto:access@bu.edu) to coordinate any reasonable accommodation requests. ODS is located at 19 Buick Street.

#### IV. INDICATIVE CALENDAR (FALL & SPRING)

Readings will be specified in the updated syllabus students will receive once in Paris.

	<b>Indicative Topics / Visits</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
Session 1	- Introduction - Methodology: work commentary - Methodology: research - how to find reliable sources	
Session 2	- What is modern art? - Baudelaire and the painter of modern life - Current situation of art and of artistic institutions - Methodology: analyzing a text	Preparatory readings
Session 3	- Realism - The Impressionist revolution - Methodology: the essay	Preparatory readings
Session 4	- Neo-Impressionism – a scientific conception of nature - Post-Impressionism - Methodology: review of an exhibition	Preparatory readings
Session 5	<b>VISIT: Musée d'Orsay</b>	
Session 6	- Gauguin and the Nabis - Symbolism - Sculpture between tradition and modernity	Preparatory readings <b>Oral Presentation 1</b>
Session 7	- Decorative arts: <i>L'Art Nouveau</i> - Paris architecture at the beginning of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century - Matisse and fauvism	Preparatory readings <b>Oral Presentation 2</b>
Session 8	- Cubism - Primitivism and other influences - The 1937 <i>Exposition Internationale</i> - Artists after World War 2	Preparatory readings <b>QUIZ</b>
Session 9	<b>VISIT: Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, Modern Collections</b>	
Session 10	- Marcel Duchamp and readymades - Dada - Surrealism in painting, sculpture, photography and cinema	Preparatory readings <b>Oral Presentation 3</b>
Session 11	- Abstraction in Paris: the Delaunays, Kandinsky, Mondrian - Other solutions in Europe and in the United States - Abstraction: 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> generations between the 1950's and the 1970's	Preparatory readings <b>Oral Presentation 4</b>
Session 12	<b>VISIT: Fondation Louis Vuitton</b>	
Session 13	- Politics and art in the 20 <sup>th</sup> century - Conceptual art and staging - Yves Klein and New Realism	Preparatory readings
Session 14	<b>VISIT: Contemporary art gallery or exhibition (TBD)</b>	
Session 15	- Art at the turn of the millennium - Photography: the 20 <sup>th</sup> and 21 <sup>st</sup> centuries	Preparatory readings <b>Essay due</b>
Session 16	Conclusion / Synthesis and review for Final Exam	<b>Last Friday : FINAL EXAM</b>

#### IV. INDICATIVE CALENDAR (SUMMER)

Readings will be specified in the syllabus handed out to students at the beginning of the semester.

		<i>Indicative Topics and Visits</i>	<i>Assignments and Activities</i>
<b>INTENSIVE WEEK</b>			
Session 1 Monday	Morning	- Introduction - Methodology: work commentary - Methodology: research - how to find reliable sources	
	Afternoon	VISIT (to be determined) - Photography: invention and development during the 19 <sup>th</sup> century	
Session 2 Tuesday	Morning	- What is modern art? - Baudelaire and the painter of modern life - Current situation of art and of artistic institutions - Methodology: analyzing a text	Readings
	Afternoon	VISIT (to be determined)	
Session 3 Wednesday	Morning	- Realism - The Impressionist revolution - Methodology: the essay	Readings
	Afternoon	VISIT (to be determined)	
Session 4 Thursday	Morning	- Neo-Impressionism – a scientific conception of nature - Post-Impressionism - Methodology: review of an exhibition	Readings
	Afternoon	VISIT (to be determined) - Sculpture between tradition and modernity	
Session 5 Friday	Morning	- Gauguin and the Nabis - Symbolism - Matisse and fauvism	Readings
	Afternoon	VISIT (to be determined) - Decorative arts: <i>L'Art Nouveau</i> - Paris architecture at the beginning of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century	

<b>FRIDAY WEEKLY SESSIONS</b>			
Session 6 Friday	Morning	- Cubism - Primitivism and other influences - The 1937 <i>Exposition Internationale</i> - Artists after World War 2	Mid-Term Test Oral Presentation
	Afternoon	VISIT (to be determined)	
Session 7 Friday	Morning	- Marcel Duchamp and readymades - Dada - Surrealism in painting, sculpture, photography and cinema	Essay due Oral Presentation
	Afternoon	VISIT (to be determined)	
Session 8 Friday	Morning	- Politics and art in the 20 <sup>th</sup> century - Conceptual art and staging - Yves Klein and New Realism	Oral Presentation
	Afternoon	VISIT (to be determined) - Art at the turn of the millennium	Oral Presentation
Session 9 Friday		Conclusion / Synthesis and review for Final Exam	Final exam

## V. REFERENCES

### Reliable on-line sources

*Avoid: Wikipedia, anonymous or tourists' blogs and websites.*

- Recommended Museums websites  
New York MoMA. The Art Institute of Chicago. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.  
The National Gallery (Londres). National Gallery of Art (D. C.). Boston Museum of Fine Arts.  
Musée du Louvre, Musée d'Orsay, Musée Picasso, Musée Rodin, Centre Pompidou.
- University resources: [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org).
- Glossaries and general information: [www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie](http://www.larousse.fr/encyclopedie)  
[www.moma.org/explore/collection/](http://www.moma.org/explore/collection/) ("Index of art terms")  
[www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/glossary/](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/glossary/)  
[www.metmuseum.org/toah/](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/) (« Timeline of Art History »)  
[http://arthistory.about.com/od/glossary/Art\\_History\\_Glossary.htm](http://arthistory.about.com/od/glossary/Art_History_Glossary.htm)
- Texts and pictures: [www.artchive.com/](http://www.artchive.com/) (including the link "Theory & Criticism")  
[www.googleartproject.com/fr/](http://www.googleartproject.com/fr/)  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/>
- Dictionaries : <http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/>  
[www.wordreference.com/](http://www.wordreference.com/)

### Additional bibliography

#### General art history

- BOIS, Yve-Alain. BUCHLOCH, Benjamin. FOSTER, Hal. KRAUSS, Rosalind. *Art Since 1900. Modernism. Antimodernism. Postmodernism*, Londres, Thames & Hudson, 2004.
- BLISTÈNE, Bernard. *Une histoire de l'art au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Beaux-Arts magazine, 2002.
- FER, Briony. BATCHELOR, David. WOOD, Paul. *Realism, Rationalism. Surrealism. Art between the Wars*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 1993.
- HARRISON, Charles. WOOD, Paul (dir.). *Art en théorie 1900-1990. Une anthologie*, Paris, Hazan, 1997 (éd. anglaise, 1992, augmentée en 2010).
- HARRISON, Charles. FRASCINA, Francis. PERRY, Gill. *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction. The Early Twentieth Century*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 1993.

#### Specific artists and movements

- BAUDELAIRE, Charles. *Écrits sur l'art*, Le Livre de Poche Classique, 1992.
- FRIZOT, Michel (dir.). *Nouvelle Histoire de la Photographie*, Paris, Bordas, Adam Biro, 1994.
- *Catalogue Impressionnisme. Les origines, 1859-1869*, Paris, Grand Palais, 1994.
- *Catalogue Cézanne*, Paris, Grand Palais, 1996.
- *Catalogue Le Fauvisme ou l'épreuve du feu. L'éruption de la modernité en Europe*, Paris, Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, 2000.
- WHITFIELD, Sarah. *Le Fauvisme*, Paris, Thames & Hudson, 1997.
- CABANNE, Pierre. *Le Cubisme*, Paris, Saint-André-des-Arts, 2002.
- DAIX, Pierre, *Dictionnaire Picasso*, Robert Laffont, Bouquins, 1995.
- DUCHAMP, Marcel. *Duchamp du signe. Écrits*, réunis et présentés par Michel Sanouillet, Paris, Flammarion, 1975 (édition revue et corrigée, 2008).
- *Catalogue Marcel Duchamp*, Venise, Palazzo Grassi, 1993.
- DACHY, Marc. *Dada & les dadaïsmes : Rapport sur l'anéantissement de l'ancienne beauté*, Paris, Gallimard, Folio, 2011 (édition revue et augmentée).
- *Catalogue Dada*, Paris, Centre Pompidou, 2005.
- *Catalogue La Révolution surréaliste*, Paris, Centre Pompidou, 2002.
- BRETON, André. *Le surréalisme et la peinture*, Paris, Gallimard, Folio essais, 1965.
- BRETON, André. *Manifestes du surréalisme*, Paris, Gallimard, Folio, 1973.
- *Catalogue Aux Origines de l'Abstraction. 1800-1914* (Serge Lemoine, Pascal Rousseau dir.), Paris, Musée d'Orsay, 2003.
- *Catalogue Face à l'Histoire (1933-1996). L'Artiste moderne face à l'événement historique : engagement, témoignage, vision*, Paris, Centre Pompidou, 1997.
- SCHIPP, Herschel B. *Guernica. Histoire. Élaboration. Signification*, Paris, Cercle d'Art, 1992.
- *Catalogue Le Nouveau Réalisme*, Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, 2007.
- *Catalogue Yves Klein*, Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, 2006.
- BUREN, Daniel, *Mot à mot*, (catalogue), Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, 2002.