

HA 203

History of American Art

General Description

Nature and Purpose of the Course

HA 203 is an introductory survey of the arts of America. The primary focus of the course is on developments in painting and architecture between approximately 1660 and 1970, supplemented by a section on post-1945 sculpture. HA 203 is designed for those persons without a broad formal background in art history, although some familiarity with general European art movements is useful. For the most part, the terms used in the course are defined in the textbook or this course manual.

The purpose of HA 203 is to convey an understanding of the evolution of formal and thematic concerns in American art. You will find that certain general themes and concerns will recur throughout the course, such as the relationship between American artists and European art; realism vs. abstractionism in American art; the role of portraiture, history painting, landscape painting, and so on. Keep notes on these and other general themes as you encounter them since your exam essay questions will be concerned with them. In order to see and understand the characteristics and concepts discussed in your reading, immediately look up the reproductions in the text (referred to by figure numbers).

Course Materials

The required text for the course is Wayne Craven's *American Art: History and Culture*, revised 1st edition, McGraw-Hill, 2002. It can be purchased from the Higher Grounds bookstore at the Friday Center using the book order form in this manual. In order to cover the three-century span of American art, the reading assignments will focus on the main schools of architecture, painting, and

post-1945 sculpture. You may wish to read the additional sections not specifically assigned to gain a full picture of the range of artistic expression in America.

Craven includes a wealth of material. The central purpose of the notes that accompany each lesson is to focus attention on those artists or architectural styles that your instructor considers to be particularly important. Some buildings and paintings have been singled out for special study as representative of a style or period.

Suggestions for Study

You may consult any secondary sources you wish in order to complete the written assignments at the end of each lesson (for examples, see the bibliography beginning on page 646 of Craven). Be sure to acknowledge any material you consulted beyond the required readings. You should always answer the questions in your own words; your answer must reflect a synthesis of the material you have studied and your own ideas. Do not merely transcribe information from the text. Work at a steady pace, trying to complete one lesson a week. Allow yourself time to digest the material and become familiar with the works.

For the final exam you will be expected to **know the works of art and buildings that are included in the notes in this course manual**. It would be helpful to keep a list of these as you go through the lessons and to quiz yourself on them from time to time. You should learn the artist, title, and date within ten years on either side of the date cited in the text. For example, if 1775 is the given date, any answer from 1765–1785 is acceptable. Always refer to specific works when completing your written assignments, and refer back to earlier assignments to point out new developments.

To actually learn the works, first learn the general characteristics of each movement and the overall dates for the movement. After you can correctly identify these general points in the images, go back and begin isolating those unique characteristics that will help you distinguish one particular work from another. Learning to distinguish broad stylistic traits common to groups of artists or architects in different periods is more valuable than

memorizing isolated works. On the final exam, you will be shown reproductions of three pairs of paintings or buildings that have been discussed in the notes. You will be asked to identify these works and to briefly compare and contrast them in terms of style and content. The final exam will also include a short list of terms to define and a choice of essay questions. *You must pass the final exam in order to pass the course.*

Additional Suggestions

Your assignments may be either typed or neatly written in pen. In either case, skip lines and leave margins so that there is room for your instructor to write notes.

Try to go to museums and galleries to see actual works of art. Also, be aware of the different periods of architecture present where you live.

Your grades on the written assignments as well as the final exam will be determined by your organization of the material and the thoroughness and originality of your answers. Support your conclusions by referring to specific works of art and architecture and explain the reasons behind your choice of examples. Do not hesitate to voice your own opinions.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask for assistance at any time.