T.C. Cannon (1946-1978), *Osage with Van Gogh (Collector #5)*, 1975. Woodcut, 64 x 51 cm.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines the production and reception of American visual culture from 1913 to the present, paying particular attention to painting and photography. Students will study theory and criticism in addition to the formal qualities of American visual art to examine how artists engaged and interpreted the world around them in material form, as well as how American visual culture helped shape and promulgate certain attitudes toward nationhood, race, class, gender, and sexual orientation in the 20th century.

The course format consists of lectures by the instructor accompanied by PowerPoint presentations. You are expected to be able to identify the most important of these images in your midterm and final exam. Many of the images can be found in your text. This course encourages students to engage art objects through careful observation and thoughtful visual analysis. Writing and critical reading are crucial components of this class.
COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Become familiar with a range of American artists working in the twentieth century.
- Refine skills in visual analysis in relation to the arts of the United States.
- Demonstrate the dependence of meaning upon cultural, social, and political contexts when analyzing American art.
- Communicate effectively through written and oral communication.

These goals highlight the method we will employ in this class, since we will examine both the formal construction of works of art and the social contexts in which they were produced and received. Such an approach enables us to investigate the active role visual culture played in shaping American ideas, values, and social practices, and provides a more multifaceted understanding of art’s social power and America’s national and cultural formation.

OFFICE HOURS & LOCATION
My office hours are on Wednesdays from 3:00 – 5:00 pm and by appointment. My office is located in 41 Wyllys, Room 304.

MOODLE
All course information including syllabus, lecture images, paper guidelines, select readings, and research tips can be found on Moodle, which can be found at moodle2.wesleyan.edu. I will post announcements to Moodle; be sure to check the course site once a week.

REQUIRED BOOKS
There are two required books and one optional textbook for this course, available for purchase at Broad Street Books:


RESERVE READING
Additional readings for ARHA 271 are on physical reserve at Olin Library, posted to the web as electronic reserves, or can be accessed via Moodle or one of the online library databases (e.g. JStor). Reserve readings are indicated by the letters RSRV, eRes or PDF in parenthesis in the course outline section of this syllabus. To access the readings marked eRes on the syllabus, go to the library homepage at www.wesleyan.edu/libr. Click on the ITEMS ONLINE – ERES link under RESERVES in the FIND bucket. **Password: arha271.** You can also access these readings from off campus by using your Wesleyan username and password.

Readings may be added or deleted during the semester.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS
In addition to providing a broad survey of the approaches and issues that shape the study of American art and culture in the twentieth century, this class endeavors to develop your skills of critical reading, writing, and looking. The assignments are designed to enhance your abilities in these areas.

A. READINGS
All readings for the course are to be done weekly. You are expected to read all of the material for this course.

B. THOUGHT PAPERS AND CLASS PARTICIPATION (20%)
Attendance and active participation in class sessions are essential. This involves assuming the responsibility to speak thoughtfully and listen attentively. Class participation also includes group discussions and in-class writing assignments. Such participation is, of course, only possible when you have done the week's reading and are present in class.

In addition, you will be asked to write five (5) one- to two-page thought papers intended to encourage you to think about a particular issue and to generate class discussion. The assignment will be distributed the class period before it is due; for example, if it is due on Tuesday it will be assigned the preceding Thursday. If for some reason you are unable to attend class or you misplace the assignment, it will be posted on Moodle.

Thought papers should be typed and handed in at the end of class. They will not be graded numerically, but will be read and given a “check,” “check -,” or a “check +.” If you know you will be gone and send me an email ahead of time alerting me of your absence, you will be able to hand in the assignment the following class period. If you don’t complete a thought paper and want to make it up, you can write a two-page critical analysis of the readings assigned for the week.

In the syllabus, the days in which these papers are due are marked with a “*.” You will notice that the writing assignments are often due on days in which reading assignments are short (~20-30 pages).

C. TERM PAPERS (35%)
You are required to prepare two term papers. The first paper (4-5 pages) is worth 15%, and the second (8-10 pages) is worth 20%, for a total of 35%.

You will be asked to select a single object for investigation from the permanent collection of the Davison Art Center. It will be the focus of two paper assignments. In the first paper, you will do a close analysis of your object, taking its form, content, and historical context into account. In the second paper, you will examine a single issue of a periodical published in the year your object was made. After considering the contents of the periodical, you will investigate how your object both engages and departs from the events, ideas, and interpretations presented in the periodical. I will distribute more detailed assignment instructions during the semester.
D. PAPER WORKSHOP

Peer review is an essential part of the publishing process in the field of art history. As a nod to this professional standard, students will divided into small groups that will read and provide constructive feedback to their classmates on how to improve their term papers. Peer response papers should include, at minimum, three paragraphs: the first outlines the strengths of the essay, the second paragraph discusses the essay’s problems, and the third paragraph is a description of what you would focus on in revision, if it were your essay.

The success of the paper workshop relies on the seriousness and preparedness of each student. Paper drafts and written peer critiques will receive a grade of “check,” “check -,” and “check +” and will count toward the class participation total.

E. EXAMS (45%)

There are two exams in this course. The midterm counts for 20% of your term grade, and the final exam is worth 25% of your term grade, for a total of 45%.

The midterm will cover the material from the first part of the course and will endeavor to test your mastery of key historical and visual concepts. It is worth 100 points and will be composed of four to five essay questions. For each essay question, you will be shown two images. You will be asked to identify each image by artist, title, and year and then to compare the images in the light of the question posed. You should also incorporate the relevant readings from the course into your answers. The midterm will be on October 17.

The final exam, scheduled for Thursday, December 12, from 2:00 to 5:00, will be cumulative. It will consist of three primary parts, which will total 100 points. In Section One, students will be expected to identify a number of major paintings and other works of art by artist, title, and year, as well as to provide a brief description that explains why it is identified as such and accounts for its significance. Section Two will be comprised of short answer questions based on slide comparisons or contrasts. These will be directed, focused questions that require you to explain how the physical characteristics of the objects relate to their cultural contexts. In Section Three, students will be asked to analyze and illuminate fundamental cultural meanings via a longer, thematic essay question spanning the twentieth century.

COURSE GRADING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REQUIREMENTS</th>
<th>WEIGHT</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal Analysis Paper</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>October 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>October 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>November 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>December 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought Papers &amp; Participation in class discussion based on readings, images, and lectures</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Determined at end of semester</td>
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</table>
COURSE POLICY
Please notify me in advance if you must be absent from class. Students may be excused from class if they present documentation (from the deans' office or health services) for personal emergencies or illness within a week of the missed class. More than two (2) unexcused absences (i.e. over a week of class) will result in the lowering of your class attendance and participation grade by one full letter.

As a courtesy to your classmates, please turn off all cell phones before coming to lecture. Taking notes on a laptop computer is also discouraged. This is an image-intensive course and it is very easy to miss an important point if your eyes (and brain!) are trying to process the information on two (or more) screens.

Extensions & Make-Up Exams:
Late work is not accepted and there will be no make-ups or extensions, except in the case of a medical or personal emergency supported by a letter from your class dean. Be advised that only one make-up exam will be scheduled within a week of the missed exam. **If papers are turned in after the due date, your grade will be reduced by 1/2 letter grade for each day or fraction of a day that the paper is late.**

Extra Credit Opportunity:
You will notice various art exhibitions and events indicated in the attached course calendar. Students wishing to receive 5% extra credit on their semester grade should plan to attend three (3) events throughout the semester and write a brief (1-page max) critical review for each.

UNIVERSITY POLICY
A. HONOR CODE AND PLAGIARISM
The university has a recognized Honor Code, administered by the Honor Board. This code sets standards for academic integrity for all undergraduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. In particular, pay special attention to the section on plagiarism, which describes the acceptable ways of quoting, paraphrasing, and citing the works of others, and acknowledging the ideas of others. Any suspected violations of the honor code will be reported to the Honor Board. For additional information on the Honor Code visit the Student Handbook web site: [http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/standardsregulations/studentconduct.html](http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/standardsregulations/studentconduct.html).

B. DISABILITY RESOURCES
Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible.

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, Room 021, or call 860-685-2332 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.
# COURSE SCHEDULE

## WEEK 1

**Sept. 3**  
**Introduction**  
- Doss, “The Gilded Age,” 19-34.

**Sept. 5**  
**The Art of Modern American Life**  
- Web Resource: Interactive Map of John Sloan’s urban neighborhoods, which inspired many of his paintings, drawings, and etchings: [http://www.johnsloansnewyork.org/new_york/map.html](http://www.johnsloansnewyork.org/new_york/map.html)

## WEEK 2

**Sept. 10**  
**Introducing Modern Art to American Audiences: The Armory Show**  
- Web Assignment: Take a tour of the Armory Show via the online exhibitions “The Armory Show,” organized by the Art Institute of Chicago: [http://extras.artic.edu/armoryshow](http://extras.artic.edu/armoryshow), and “The Armory Show at 100,” organized by the New York Historical Society: [http://armory.nyhistory.org/about/](http://armory.nyhistory.org/about/)
  
**Optional:** Come celebrate the 40th anniversary of Wesleyan’s Center for the Arts. The opening reception for The Alumni Show II at the Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery will be 5-7 pm, followed by a performance art piece by Wes alum Aki Sasamoto (’04) at 7:30 pm at CFA Art Studio North (free event).

**Sept. 12**  
**Alfred Stieglitz and the Institutionalization of Modern Criticism**  
**First Paper Assigned**  

## WEEK 3

**Sept. 17**  
**Representing the Modern Self**  
- William Carlos Williams, “The Great Figure” in Hills, 51-52.

**Sept. 19**  
**The Skyscraper as American Icon**  
- Doss, “Modernism and the Interwar Years,” 75-85.  
**WEEK 4**

**Sept. 24**  
Race Politics in the New Negro Movement  
- Alain Locke, “Enter the New Negro,” *Survey Graphic*, March 1925, digitized by the National Humanities Center (PDF)  
- Langston Hughes in *Hills*, 73-76.

**Sept. 26**  
Visit to Davison Art Center for First Paper  
We will visit the DAC Print Room in small groups during our scheduled class time. Each group will have 30 minutes to view and take notes on a pre-selected work of art. Be sure to bring a PENCIL or your laptop to make notes—pens aren’t allowed in the Print Room.

**WEEK 5**

**Oct. 1**  
Cultural Primitivism and the American Southwest  

**Oct. 3**  
Painting the American Scene  
**First Paper Due**  
- Diana Linden, “Ben Shahn’s New Deal Murals: Jewish Identity in the American Scene,” in *The Social and the Real: Political Art of the 1930s in the Western Hemisphere*, 241-260. (eRes)  
- Thomas Hart Benton and Diego Rivera in *Hills*, 57-58; 112-115.

**WEEK 6**

**Oct. 8**  
Picturing the Great Depression  
- Roy Stryker in *Hills*, 125-128.  
- Web Resource: Over 160,000 photographs from the Farm Security Administration-Office of War Information Collection, located at the Library of Congress, can be accessed through the LOC American Memory Website: [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/fsahtml/fahome.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/fsahtml/fahome.html). In addition, all 50 of Walker Evans’ photographs that opened *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* are located at the website: [http://xroads.virginia.edu/~UG97/fsa/gallery.html](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~UG97/fsa/gallery.html)

**Oct. 10**  
The Fight for Democracy: Art and Propaganda during World War II  
WEEK 7

Oct. 15  The New York School & Modernist Criticism  
• Clement Greenberg, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” Partisan Review 6 (Fall 1939): 34-49. (eRes)  
• Harold Rosenberg and Jackson Pollock in Hills, 150-153; 170-171.

Oct. 17  Midterm Exam  
Optional: Experience art film as it was intended! Watch three films by Wes alum Liz Magic Laser (’03) at the Powell Family Cinema, Center for Film Studies, starting at 7:00 pm (free event)

WEEK 8

Oct. 22  No Class – Fall Break

Oct. 24  McCarthyism and Encoded Meaning in American Art  
Second Paper Assigned  
• Robert Rauschenberg in Hills, 220-221.

WEEK 9

Oct. 29  The Art of Consumption  
• Doss, “Neo Dada and Pop,” 138-159.  

Optional: Visit current exhibition Media Rewind 1963 at the Wadsworth Atheneum (600 Main Street, Hartford) to view Pop Art and other artworks inspired by the people and events of 1963! The show runs through December, and student admission is $5.00.

The Yale University Art Gallery (1111 Chapel Street, New Haven) offers an alternative perspective on the people and events of this era through photojournalism and art photography. The exhibition A Great Crowd Had Gathered: JFK in the 1960s opens on November 1 and runs through the semester (free event).

*Oct. 31  Out of the Gallery, Into the World: Happenings & Earthworks  
• Allan Kaprow and Robert Smithson in Hills, 208-211; 261-264.  
• Web Assignment: Land Artist Christo’s proposed project "Over the River" has stirred local objections to its construction:  
  1. Huffington Post article about the project's postponement:  
     http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/22/christos-over-the-riverf_n_1293230.html  
  2. "Over the River" Project Site:  
  3. Opposition, "Rags Over the Arkansas River": http://www.roarcolorado.org/

Optional: Browse and listen to a collection of over 750 first-pressings of The Beatles’ The White Album at Wes alum Rutherford Chang’s art performance We Buy White Albums at the Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery on Sat., November 2, from 2:00-6:00 pm (free event)
### Week 10

**Nov. 5**  
*Art as Presence: Minimalism and Conceptual Art*  
- Michael Fried in Hills, 245-259.

*Optional: Explore formal concerns of line, color, and space at Yale University Art Gallery’s current exhibition Many Things Placed Here and There: The Dorothy and Herbert Vogel Collection at the Yale University Art Gallery, which runs through January 2014 (free event).*

**Nov. 7**  
*Sexual Politics*  
- Lucy Lippard in Hills, 319-322.

### Week 11

**Nov. 12**  
*Breaking Stereotypes: Black Arts Movement, AIM, and Chicano Arts Movement*  
- Patrick Hill, “The Castration of Memphis Cooly: Race, Gender, and Nationalist Iconography in the Flag Art of Faith Ringgold,” in *Dancing at the Louvre: Faith Ringgold’s French Collection and Other Story Quilts*, 26-38. (eRes)  
- Larry Neal and Marcos Sánchez-Tranquilino in Hills, 308-311; 445-449.

**Nov. 14**  
*Mediated Images: Video Art*  
*Laboratory Session – Meet at Olin Library Special Collections & Archives*  

*Optional: Consider artistic originality and the relationship of art and technology by attending the exhibition Still Life: 1970s Photorealism at the Yale University Art Gallery. The show runs all semester, but the museum is closed on Mondays (free event).*

*For a contemporary take on these issues, visit the New Britain Museum of American Art (56 Lexington Street, New Britain) to view New Media: Jason Huff, an exhibition of Brooklyn-based artist Jason Huff’s multi-media installations which examine the effect of the internet on literature and art. Admission for students is $8.*

**Nov. 15**  
*Paper Workshop – Paper #2 Draft Due Today*

### Week 12

**Nov. 19**  
*The Culture Wars of the 1980s*  
*Paper Workshop – Peer Critiques Due Today*  

**Nov. 21**  
*No Class – Use this time to work on your paper revisions!*
WEEK 13

Nov. 26  Postmodern Subjectivities

Second Paper Due Today


Optional: See how contemporary American artist Red Grooms honors earlier artistic giants, such as Jackson Pollock, in his witty, oversized paintings at Yale University Art Gallery’s exhibition Red Grooms: Larger than Life, which runs all semester (free event)

Nov. 28  No Class – Thanksgiving Break

WEEK 14

Dec. 3  Roman Catholicism and the Body

- Web Assignment: Listen to NPR’s coverage of the recent controversy surrounding the National Portrait Gallery’s exhibition “Hide/Seek”: [http://www.npr.org/2010/12/01/131730255/sm](http://www.npr.org/2010/12/01/131730255/sm)"

*Dec 5  Diasporic Identities


READING PERIOD

Dec 7 – Dec 9

FINAL EXAM

**Thursday, December 12  2:00 PM-5:00 PM**