

ART H 400/525 A

American Stories: Narrative and American Art

Spring 2018
Thursdays 2:30–5:20 PM
312 Art Building

Professor Lacey Baradel
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Office: 365 Art Building
Office hours: Thursdays 10:30–11:30 AM, or by appointment

Course Description

This seminar examines the role of narrative in the development of 19th- and 20th-century American art, focusing in particular—but not exclusively—on the traditions of history and genre painting. Searching for national symbols in the first decades of the new republic, American artists adopted and adapted conventions from European art, especially 17th-century genre scenes and 18th-century Grand Manner history painting, to portray significant moments in American political and social life. In this course, we will explore not only the historical transformations in the production and reception of history and genre scenes in the American context, but also the various ways that scholars have studied and written about such works over the past three decades. Through a series of case studies, we will examine questions such as: Why did the Grand Manner tradition of history painting struggle to take root in the United States when it was so popular in Europe? Why did interest in Grand Manner history scenes climax, and then quickly decline, in the mid-19th century? How did artists mobilize narrative as a tool to make their works more accessible and acceptable to American audiences? To what extent did genre scenes fill the gap left by the decline of history painting in the second half of the 19th century? In what ways have late 20th-century and contemporary artists returned to these earlier traditions to critique American history and society?

Readings

All readings are available on the course Canvas site.

Canvas: Additional readings, course material, assignments, and announcements will be posted to the ART H 400 A Canvas site. Please check Canvas regularly for important course information.

Course Requirements

All scheduled readings are subject to change. You are responsible for any changes, which will be communicated in class and by email.

You must complete all required course assignments (papers, presentations, and attendance) to receive a passing grade in this course.

Grades are based on 1) your participation and engagement in discussions and other classroom activities, 2) meeting deadlines for all assignments, and 3) the quality of the work you submit.

Class participation: Informed and consistent participation in class is expected. This requires completing assigned readings in advance of class and being prepared to discuss them in class (please bring the readings with you, either electronically or as printouts); active participation in in-class discussions; regular, punctual attendance; and helping to foster a respectful classroom environment. Electronic devices such as laptops should be used for classroom activities only. Please silence all phones and put them away during class. **30% of final grade**

Reading presentation: Each student will sign up for one of the assigned readings and will serve as the discussion leader for that reading in-class on the day the reading is due. You should organize a presentation that facilitates discussion and close examination of the selected reading, including bringing in images when appropriate. You will select readings in class on March 29th. **20% of final grade**

Research paper: Each student will write a final research paper about any topic relating to the themes of this course. The research paper assignment comprises the following three parts:

1. Proposal: 2-pages, submitted via Canvas, due April 23rd. Your proposal should outline the topic and major research questions you will examine in your final paper and review the most important research resources (i.e., at least four scholarly sources such as peer-reviewed books and journal articles as well as any relevant primary documents you have identified) that you will use to support your argument. You should have begun the research process in order to write this proposal. Your argument in your final paper may change a bit from what you present in the proposal, and that is to be expected. As you continue your research, you will certainly uncover new evidence that changes your analysis. You are highly encouraged to make an appointment with me during office hours to discuss your chosen paper topic before you submit your proposal.
2. Oral presentation: Each student will give a 10–15-minute oral presentation to the class. There will be time at the end of each presentation for Q&A. Presentations will be May 24th & May 31st (order of presentations will be determined on April 26th).
3. Final research paper: 9–12 pages (undergraduate) or 12–15 pages (graduate), submitted via Canvas, due June 4th. A successful final paper must be organized around a thesis, which you will defend by visually analyzing the works of art you discuss as well as drawing on evidence presented in relevant primary and scholarly secondary sources (you will likely have identified additional sources beyond those listed in your proposal). Be sure to cite your sources in footnotes or endnotes using either Chicago or MLA citation style. The page count does not include illustrations, which must appear at the end with figure numbers and identifying captions. Your paper will be evaluated not only for content but also form and style, so please edit and proofread carefully! **50% of final grade**

Key dates:

4/23: Research paper proposal due (on Canvas, 5pm)

4/26: Michael Lobel as guest; Kollar American Art Lecture at Henry Art Gallery (6pm)

5/9: Catharina Manchanda lecture (4pm)

5/10: Meet at Seattle Art Museum to tour *Figuring History*

5/24: Student presentations – group 1

5/31: Student presentations – group 2

6/4: Final research paper due (on Canvas, 5pm)

Course Policies

Submitting Assignments

All written assignments should be typed, double spaced in 12-pt Times New Roman font (or similar style), with 1-inch margins. You should cite sources using a standard citation style; the [Chicago Notes & Bibliography style](#) is preferred, but [MLA](#) is also acceptable.

You should submit your research proposal and final paper as Microsoft Word or PDF documents via Canvas by 5pm on the day they are due. Due dates are firm so that all students have the same amount of time to complete assignments. For each day (including weekends) that an assignment is late, the assignment grade will be marked down 5% of the maximum possible points, except in cases of documented emergency or illness or if you have arranged in advance for an extension. Extensions will be granted sparingly—such as in cases when you have multiple major assignments due the same day—and must be requested at least 72 hours in advance of the deadline to be considered for approval.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is using the creations, ideas, words, inventions, or images of someone else in your own work without formally acknowledging them. All plagiarized assignments or tests will receive a grade of 0. Please see the UW [Statement on Academic Responsibility](#) for further guidance and/or consult with me if you have any questions.

Attendance

You are expected to attend class regularly in order to contribute to in-class conversations. Participation is a central component of this course. Frequent absences will prevent your participation in class and may, therefore, negatively impact grades.

Equal Opportunity

The School of Art reaffirms its policy of equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, or status as a disabled veteran or Vietnam-era veteran in accordance with UW policy and applicable federal and state statutes and regulations.

Accommodations

If you would like to request academic accommodations due to a disability and/or health condition, contact the [Disability Services Office](#). During the first week of class, please provide me with a copy of your letter from Disability Services indicating you have a disability that requires assistance.

Communication

I will occasionally notify you of information related to the course (changes, relevant lectures and events, etc.) by email and through the conversations feature in Canvas. You can expect that I will be checking and responding to messages between the hours of 9am and 5pm, Monday–Friday. Please be professional in your electronic communications. For questions that require more than a brief “yes” or “no” answer or to discuss any assignments, issues, or concerns, please make an appointment for office hours.

Reading Schedule, Special Events & Assignment Deadlines

All readings and assignments are due on the dates listed

MARCH 29 INTRODUCTION – SPACE, TIME & VISUAL NARRATIVE

Readings:

- Cooke and Lübbren, “Introduction: Narrativity and (French) Painting”

APRIL 5 EARLY AMERICAN HISTORY PAINTING (WEST & TRUMBULL)

Readings:

- Phillips, “‘A Topic That History Will Proudly Record’; or, What is the ‘History’ in History Painting?”
- Palumbo, “Averting ‘Present Commotions’: History as Politics in *Penn’s Treaty*”
- Burnham, “John Trumbull, Historian: The Case of the Battle at Bunker’s Hill”
- Reborá, “History Painting and the American Academy of Fine Arts”

APRIL 12 ANTEBELLUM GENRE PAINTING (MOUNT & BINGHAM)

Readings:

- Johns, Introduction, Ch. 1 & 2 of *American Genre Painting*
- Miller, “The Mechanisms of the Market and the Invention of Western Regionalism: The Example of George Caleb Bingham”
- Wolf, “History as Ideology; or, ‘What You Don’t See Can’t Hurt You, Mr. Bingham’”

APRIL 19 HISTORY & GENRE AT MID-CENTURY (LEUTZE, SPENCER & JOHNSON)

Readings:

- Wierich, Introduction, Ch. 1, 4 & 5 of *Grand Themes*
- Steven Conn, “Narrative Trauma and Civil War History Painting; or, Why are these Pictures so Terrible?”

APRIL 23 **Research paper proposal due** (Canvas, 5pm)

APRIL 26 DISCUSSION WITH PROF. MICHAEL LOBEL

Readings:

- Lobel, “John Sloan: Figuring the Painter in the Crowd”
- Lobel, “The Image between Media” (required for grads; optional for undergrads)

Special event:

- Kollar American Art Lecture, 6pm, Henry Art Gallery Auditorium - Michael Lobel, Professor of Art History at Hunter College, will present a lecture entitled “Iconic Encounter: Gordon Parks and Ella Watson in 1942” (note: register in advance online to ensure a seat)

MAY 3 20TH-C. REALISM & REGIONALISM (REMINGTON, BELLOWS, & BENTON)

Readings:

- Nemerov, “Within and Without the Past”
- Fagg, Ch. 2 of *On the Cusp*

- Doss, “Action, Agency, Affect: Thomas Hart Benton’s Hoosier History”

MAY 9 Catharina Manchanda (curator of *Figuring History*) lecture at UW

Special event:

- Art History Colloquium, 4–5:30pm, Art 312

MAY 10 *FIGURING HISTORY* – **Meet at the Seattle Art Museum**

Readings:

- Catharina Manchanda, “Knowledge of the Past is the Key to the Future: An Introduction”
- Lowery Stokes Sims, “Figuring it Out: History, Art, and Many Other Things in the Art of Robert Colescott, Kerry James Marshall, and Mickalene Thomas”

MAY 17 POSTMODERN NARRATIVES

Readings:

- Thistlethwaite, “Revival, Reflect, and Parody: History Painting in the Postmodern Era”
- Peabody, Introduction and Ch. 1 of *Consuming Stories*
- Corrin, “Installing History”

MAY 24 **Research presentations** – Group 1

MAY 31 **Research presentations** – Group 2

JUNE 4 **Research paper due** (Canvas, 5pm)