

Kansas City Art Institute: ARTH13400-07
Constructivism and The Bauhaus
Monday/Wednesday: 2:30-3:50pm, EB 217

Professor: Dr. Maria Elena Buszek
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Office Hours: M/W, 11:00a.m.-12:30p.m., or by appointment

Helpsite: <http://www.mariabuszek.com/kcai>
(go to "Constructivism and The Bauhaus" to enter our class' primary site)

Course description and objectives: This course will focus on the revolutionary culture, politics, interrelations, and legacy of the Russian Constructivists and the German Bauhaus in the years surrounding the two World Wars. We will discuss the utopian ideals and (perhaps inevitable) demise of these wildly influential groups of artists and intellectuals. Since the course deals as much with history as with art, we will also be exploring the different historical events, artistic media and philosophical theories that inform the work presented in the class. The course readings and lectures will address, and in their papers, tests, and class participation students will be expected to understand the art and culture of each movement. Assessment will be based on the mission and learning outcomes of the School of Liberal Arts, as published in the KCAI Catalog.

Grading: Your grade will be based on two exams, one short paper, and class participation. All these grades hold equal weight in determining your grade, which means your final grade will be based on the average of these four grades. Because the exams will be slide intensive, resulting in the impossibility of giving examinations anywhere outside of our class period/classroom, **there can be no make-ups of either examination.** Because you will have plenty of lead-time to research and compose your paper—the due date of which has been included in the schedule from the beginning of the semester—**late papers will not be accepted under any circumstances.**

Students' grades will be assessed based on the student's average performance at midterm (at which point downgrades will be given for those earning a C- or less) and the end of the term. This course's grading scale is as follows: 100%-93%=A, 92%-90%=A-, 89%-86%=B+, 85%-83%=B, 82%-80%=B-, 79%-76%=C+, 55%-73%=C, 72%-70%=C-, 69%-66%=D+, 65%-63%=D, 62%-60%=D-, 59% and below, F.

Attendance and Absence Policy: Attendance in class is mandatory, because much of the lecture material will not necessarily be directly or extensively addressed in your textbook readings, and students will be graded on their class participation. Moreover, information from both lectures and discussion will be used to make up the exams and assignments, so one's success in the course will be in great part dependent upon one's presence in the classroom.

Each student is allowed THREE unexcused absences from class over the course of the semester. Absences will only be excused when accompanied by official documentation from a physician or counselor explaining one's extended illness or extreme/unusual personal crisis. Such documentation must be presented within a reasonable amount of time (notes explaining one's illness from three months previous, for example, are not acceptable). Students with preexisting health issues that they anticipate may cause them to miss more than three classes are required to provide me with both a written explanation from and a phone number for the student's physician or counselor, so that I may speak directly with the health care provider should the student's absences begin to affect his/her grade. In any case, unless I am presented with the proper and timely documentation for a student's absence/s, **upon the FOURTH unexcused absence the student will automatically receive a failing grade ("F") in the class.** Remember that it is *the student's* responsibility to contact me and deal with absences as soon as possible! Please keep

this attendance policy in mind when mulling over your use of the “free” absences—I can assure you that you will regret those three days you skipped on the day a flat tire/broken alarm clock/change in your work schedule occurs after you’ve used up your freebies.

Cheating and plagiarism: Students are expected to be honest in both their test taking and paper writing assignments. Later in the semester, students will be given a handout (also available on our website) on guidelines for citing sources according to the Chicago Manual of Style, which is our discipline’s standard style and which I will expect all students to learn/follow in their writing assignments. Any dishonest student caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive an automatic “zero” on the exam/project at hand and be penalized to the fullest extent of the Academic Dishonesty policy stated in the KCAI Student Handbook. (This means anything from academic probation, to a failing course grade, to expulsion, depending on the findings of the KCAI Judicial Board.)

Students with disabilities: Please let me know as soon as possible if you have a disability that may hinder your performance or participation in this class, so that accommodations may be made to satisfy course requirements. Trust me: you will find that I am willing to be extremely accommodating when it comes to student success, and would like to assure just about any student with any disability that they can not only take but do well in my classes. In any case, whether you choose to discuss any disabilities with me or not, **all learning- or physically-disabled students are required to disclose as much with our Academic Resource Center in order to qualify for accommodations**—students can get further information through the ARC at (phone) 816/802.3371 or (e-mail) arc@kcai.edu.

A note on class readings: Your textbooks for this class are: **Camilla Gray, *The Russian Experiment in Art: 1863-1922*** and **Magdalena Droste, *Bauhaus: 1919-1933***. You will also be assigned “reserve” readings linked to our website. I expect students to read ahead for each day’s lecture; the required readings are listed in our course schedule with specific chapters/pages/authors following each day’s lecture theme, and we will often consult these readings in the course of in-class discussions. (So please be prepared with either copies of or notes from these readings.)

Questions? Problems? Frustrations? These, my friends, are what your professors are here to help you deal with! I place a priority upon making myself accessible to students, and do my best to be extremely flexible when it comes to meeting and talking with students who would like help. My crucial numbers (phone, e-mail, office) are located above, and I am always willing to answer questions, discuss problems, and ease anxiety.

Dates to remember!

October 18th: First paper assignment due: Constructivist film

October 29th: Midterm exam: Constructivism

November 21st: THANKSGIVING BREAK: NO CLASS

December 12th: Final exam: The Bauhaus

COURSE SCHEDULE

AUGUST

- 27: **Introductions, syllabus, questions**
29: **Origins of Constructivism: Heroism, symbolism, idealism**
(Gray, Chs. 1-3)

SEPTEMBER

- 3-5: **Russian Futurism and abstraction**
(Gray, Chs. 4-5; Website: F.T. Marinetti, "Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste," and Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov, "Rayonists and Futurists")
10-12: **Kandinsky-Malevich-Tatlin: Romanticism v. Realism**
(Gray, Ch. 6; Website: : Wassily Kandinsky, "Concerning the Spiritual in Art" and Kazimir Malevich, "From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Realism in Painting")
17-19: **The October Revolution: From the studio to the street**
(Gray, Ch. 7; Website; KOMFUT "Programme Declaration" and Vladimir Tatlin, "The Initiative Individual in the Creativity of the Collective")
24-26: **Creating Revolutionary art/Creating Revolutionary artists**
(Website: UNOVIS "Program," Kandinsky, "Inkhuk Program," Lyubov Popova, "Statement," and Nikolai Punin, "The Monument to the Third International")

OCTOBER

- 1-3: **Fusing the Formal and the Utilitarian: Constructivism**
(Gray, Ch. 8; Website: Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova, "Program of the First Working Group of Constructivists," Alexei Gan, "From *Constructivism*," and Osip Brik, "From Pictures to Calico Print")
8-10: **Problems on the "Lef"**
(Website: LEF group, "Whom is *LEF* alerting?" Leon Trotsky, excerpt from *Literature and Revolution*)
15-17: **Finding balance: New solutions through new media?**
(Website: Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Gustav Klucis, "Photomontage as a New Problem in Agit Art," and October, "Declaration")
First paper assignment due Monday, October 15th
22-24: **Socialist Realism: The end of the avant-garde**
(Website: AKhRR, "Declaration" and Paul Wood, "Realism and the Avant-Garde")
29: **Midterm Exam: Constructivism**
31: **Germany: Art and Industry**
(Droste, Ch. 1; Website: Walter Gropius, "Reply to Workers' Council for Art questionnaire")

NOVEMBER

- 5-7: **Weimar Bauhaus—Expressionist Bauhaus**
(Droste, Ch. 2; Website: Gropius, "Bauhaus Manifesto," and Johannes Itten, "Analyses of Old Masters")
12-14: **Art and Technology—A New Unity**
(Droste, pp. 54-104; Website: Paul Klee, "The Play of Forces in the Bauhaus," and Gropius, "The Theory and Organization of the Bauhaus")
19: **The Bauhaus Exhibition of 1923**
(Droste, pp. 104-114)
21: **Thanksgiving Break: NO CLASS!**
26-28: **Dessau Bauhaus: Institute of Design**
(Droste, Ch. 4-5; Website: Gropius, "Bauhaus Dessau—Principles of Bauhaus Production" and Lazlo Moholy-Nagy, "'Isms' or Art?")

DECEMBER

- 3-5: **The death and (partial) rebirth of the Bauhaus**
(Droste, Ch. 6)
10: **Catch-up day**
12: **Final Exam: The Bauhaus**