

Class Schedule & Required Reading

This is a tentative schedule that may change. Updates will be announced in class, and modified on Canvas. Reading and assignments are due before, and in preparation for the class under which they are listed.

Legend

Required reading is highlighted in a box. Students are asked to arrive to class ready to discuss required readings and to cite them in Class Discussion posts.

- * Recommended readings are designated with an asterisk. Students should expect to find references to these readings in class presentations and lecture materials. They are also great sources to utilize on assignments!

August 30

Introduction

We will begin our examination by considering the scope of our undertaking, and the conditions under which we engage with this important material.

September 1

White Walling

Jumping into the center of our studies, we will discuss the debate concerning Dana Schutz's use of the well known image of Emmett Till in a painting that was included in the 2017 Whitney Biennial.

Aruna D'Souza. "Open Casket, Whitney Biennial, 2017" in *Whitewalling: Art, Race & Protest in 3 Acts*. New York: Badlands Unlimited, 2020.

Kennedy, Randy. "White Artist's Painting of Emmett Till at Whitney Biennial Draws Protest" *The New York Times*, March 21, 2017.

September 6

Labor Day - No Class

September 8

Pre-Colonial Foundations

We'll begin with an introduction to the artistic traditions of the people of pre-colonial Central and West Africa to provide a foundation for our investigation and unseat western hierarchies.

Wallace, Michelle. "Why Are There No Great Black Artists?: The Problem of Visuality in African American Culture" in *Dark Designs and Visual Culture*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004.

September 10 Last day to add or drop courses

September 13 **How Art Communicates**

Students will be introduced to common art historical methodologies and begin using them to analyze representations of Black subjects made during the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment in order to glean from these examples the contexts under which Black subjects visited, interacted with, and inhabited Europe as capitalism developed and spread.

Farrington, Lisa. "The Art of Perception: How Art Communicates." In *African-American Art: A Visual Culture History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Desmond, Matthew. "In order to understand the brutality of American capitalism, you have to start on the plantation" *The New York Times*, August 14, 2019.



Assignment Proposal and Presentation Topic Due

September 15 **Scalar Workshop**
Students will build their author pages and learn how to insert media and text into their Scalar pages. Please come to class with your biography and a digital photo.



September 20 **The Transatlantic Slave Trade**
Our examination will work to dispel common but faulty assumptions about the African people who were stolen from their homelands and transported across the Atlantic, then look to the ways that they engaged in creative expression despite the treacheries of plantocracies.

Farrington, Lisa. "Art and Design in the Colonial Era" And "Federal Period Architecture & Design."



Writing Art History Activity Due

September 22 The Invention of Race

Many systems were involved in the invention and development of ideas of race. We'll ask what purposes these concepts served and look at how they undergird colonizing enterprises. We will look to an article by Jamelle Bouie from *The New York Times's* "1619" project to consider the racist and sexist ideas embedded in the American constitution.

Bouie, Jamelle. "America holds onto an undemocratic assumption from its founding that some people deserve more power than others," *The New York Times*, August 14, 2019.

September 27 Art As Fugitive Practice

Black people, like all humans, have always engaged in creative expression, even under the most oppressive conditions. Perhaps surprisingly, works by Black people living in the Global North often demonstrate keen knowledge of the Western canon, and a desire to assimilate to Western ideas of beauty and artistry. At the same time, an astute analysis of works by Black artists reveals moments of covert critique. Our discussion will look to the creative production of Phillis Wheatley, an enslaved woman who was originally from West Africa and was taught to read and write, as an incredible example of such resistance. Wheatley is the first African American to publish her poetry, which is still in print today.

Wheatley, Phillis. *To Maecenas*. <https://www.bartleby.com/150/1.html>

Ford III, James Edward. "The Difficult Miracle: Reading Phillis Wheatley Against the Master's Discourse." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 18, no. 3 (2018): 181-124 doi:10.14321/crnewcentrevi.18.3.0181.

* Optional Reading: Atlas, Nava. "10 Poems by Phillis Wheatley from *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773)." *Literary Ladies Guide*, <https://www.literaryladiesguide.com/classic-women-authors-poetry/10-poems-by-phillis-wheatley-from-poems-on-various-subjects-religious-and-moral-1773/>.

September 29 **Controlling Black Reproduction**

We will examine the pseudo-scientific illustrations commissioned by Georges Cuvier of Sara Baartman, the so-called “Hottentot Venus” to interrogate the far-reaching ramifications of language and visual culture that continue to be overtly used to eroticize Black women, their bodies, and their reproductive capabilities.

Collins, Lisa Gail. "Historic Retrievals: Confronting Visual Evidence and the Imaging of Truth." In *Black Venus 2010: They Called Her "Hottentot"*, edited by Willis Deborah, by Williams Carla, 71-86. Temple University Press, 2010. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt14bt8mv.11>.

October 4 **Still Life and Still Lives**

Centering our discussion on Kerry James Marshall’s *Still Life With Wedding Portrait*, 2015, we’ll consider abolition leaders who worked to free slaves and outlaw slavery such as Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and John Brown.

* Optional viewing: Lemmons, Kasi, dir. *Harriet*. 2019; Great Lakes Center, Illinois: Martin Chase Productions, 2019. Stream on Amazon.

October 6 **From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried**

We will pivot to a discussion of the earliest known photos of enslaved people, which also happen to be the earliest known photographs of Black subjects, daguerreotypes commissioned by Harvard zoologist, Louis Agassiz as part of a project to collect visual evidence of polygenesis. Murray’s text will offer the historical background of these images and trace Harvard University’s legal claim of ownership. Murray will also introduce students to Carrie Mae Weems’s 1995 appropriation of the photos, as well as other photographs of Black subjects, to critique the insidious and ubiquitous nature of racist characterizations of Black people.

Murray, Yxta Maya. “From Here I Saw What Happened and I Cried: Carrie Mae Weems’ Challenge to the Harvard Archive,” 8 *Unbound: Harvard Journal of the Legal Left* 1, (September 11, 2013), 14, SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2324363>.

* Optional Reading: Hartocollis, Anemona. "Who Should Own Photos of Slaves? The Descendants, not Harvard, a Lawsuit Says," *The New York Times*, March 20, 2019.

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Assignment 1 Due



October 11

Black Reconstruction

Against the rupture that the Civil War represents in American history, we will consider the efforts of activists in support of democracy and Black freedom. We will examine the oppositional forces of Reconstruction and Redemption as we consider the rise of Jim Crow suppressions.

Farrington, Lisa. "19th-Century Neoclassicism."

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Quiz 1 Due @ midnight on Canvas



October 13

Posing Modernity

Denise Murrell argues in her catalog essay to the exhibition, *Posing Modernity*, that Manet's 1863 painting, *Olympia* goes well beyond the provocations typically considered by art historians to imagine the Black subject as "active participant in everyday life rather than as exotic 'other'" (book jacket). Through fastidious research, Murrell evidences the important relationships and interactions between 19th century avant-garde artists and free Blacks in Paris. Where art historians typically dismiss the Black woman in Manet's famous painting as merely a servant, Murrell's research reveals the identity of the model "Laure," then traces Manet's influence across the Atlantic to Harlem jazz clubs and the emergence of the "New Negro" style which "defied racial stereotypes," (book jacket) influenced the next generation of Black artists in the U.S. and France, and continues to inform the work of contemporary Black artists. Murrell's examination will offer an incredible example for how art history's Eurocentric white supremacist viewpoint can and should be disrupted.

Farrington, Lisa. "Romanticism to Impressionism in the 19th Century."

Denise Murrell, *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today* (New York: The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, 2018).

* *Optional Reading: Roberta Smith, "A Long Overdue Light on Black Models of Early Modernism," The New York Times, November 1, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/01/arts/design/black-models-olympia-columbia-university.html>.*

October 18

Wayward Lives

Saidiya Hartman's incredible book traces the lives of the countless Black women who undertook the Great Migration at the end of the Civil War and amidst Black Reconstruction. Using photographs found in archives, Hartman applies an impeccable research practice to uncover the voices and stories of Black women in this period. Like the women who are portrayed, the text crosses boundaries, and actively works to make this history queer. It is a poignant and capacious strategy, which we'll also use to understand the art of the Harlem Renaissance.

Hartman, Saidiya. *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2019. (Please read "An Intimate History of Slavery and Freedom")

Farrington, Lisa. "Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance."

October 20

Minstrelsy

Actress Abie Irabor will visit our class to discuss black face minstrelsy and the Black playwrights who worked to disrupt and contend with racist stereotypes during the Harlem Renaissance. Given the difficulty and pain embedded in this history and imagery, we'll also take some time to check-in, regroup, and refresh.

* *Optional Listening: Henry Louis Gates Jr., interview by Terry Gross, "Fresh Air," 89.3 KPCC FM, April 3, 2019. <https://www.npr.org/2019/04/03/709094399/henry-louis-gates-jr-points-to-reconstruction-as-the-genesis-of-white-supremacy>*

October 25

The Racial Mountain

Writing in 1926 W. E. B. Du Bois declares, “We have, to be sure, a few recognized and successful Negro artists; but they are not all those fit to survive or even a good minority. They are but the remnants of that ability and genius among us whom the accidents of education and opportunity have raised on the tidal waves of chance.” However Du Bois asserts “But today there is coming to both the realization that the work of the black man is not always inferior,” arguing in “The Criteria for Negro Art” that art wields the potential for ending race distinctions, as it coaxes both viewer and maker to look up and beyond the veil and raise ‘a mighty cry’ where interracial audiences might find common ground. For Du Bois, art was the key to resolving the problem of the color line. However, this stance was in opposition with Langston Hughes’s position, expressed in “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” that race was a burden upon an artist’s creative identity. We’ll consider artistic production by Black artists under the weight of these two influential ideas.

Farrington, Lisa. “Social Realism.”

Du Bois, W. E. B. “Criteria of Negro Art.” 1926. Writings, Library of America, 1986.

Hughes, Langston. “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain.” *The Nation*, 1926.

* Optional Reading: “Ralph Ellison: An American Journey.” *American Masters*. PBS. <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/ralph-ellison-an-american-journey/587/>

October 27

13th

The extraordinary documentary *13th* will provide important context to the tyranny enacted against Black people after Reconstruction. We will consider DuVernay’s argument that slavery was reimaged in America via the 13th amendment.

◆ Screening: Duvernay, Ava, dir. *13th*. 2016; Los Angeles, CA: Forward Movement. Netflix.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. “The Case for Reparations,” in *The Atlantic*, June 2014.

November 1 **Transitions**

We'll look at works by Black artists in conversation with elitist viewpoints to ask what happens to the sanctified story of modern art when Black artists are included in the storyline? What is at stake, and what do we gain through this wider view?

Farrington, Lisa. "Mid-20th-Century Transitions and Surrealism." and "Abstract Expressionism."



Assignment 2 Due

November 3 **Collective Acts**

The 1960s and 70s saw a fecund explosion of Black creative action and expression through activism through the Civil Rights Movement, the emergence of academic fields such as cultural and ethnic studies, and the leadership of Black collectives and political organizations such as the Black Panther Party and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. We'll consider the intersecting trajectories of activist work as reflected in powerful works by Black artists.

Farrington, Lisa. "Pop and Agitprop: The Black Arts Movement."
 Hannah-Jones, Nikole. "Our democracy's founding ideals were false when they were written. Black Americans have fought to make them true," *The New York Times*, August 14, 2019.

November 5 Last day to withdraw

November 8 **Elements**

It is too often taken for granted that Pop Art is solely the story of white males. We'll ask how Black artists worked to counter this narrative, while also crafting their own paths through a critique of commercialism and popular culture.

Farrington, Lisa. "Black Feminist Art: A Crisis of Race and Sex."



Quiz 2 Due @ midnight on Canvas

November 10 **The Master's Tools**

In 1987, artist Howardena Pindell surveyed New York city galleries and major museums. Using Pindell's analysis, and referencing Nochlin's 1971 essay, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" Michelle Wallace's "Why Are There No Great Black Artists?" (read during our first week) will re-situate our investigation as we enter into the contemporary period. Beginning by ruminating on the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings in which Anita Hill was subpoenaed to testify before Congress on accusations that Thomas had sexually harassed her at work, Wallace argues that, "vision, viscosity, and visibility are part of a problematic in African American discourse, and that problematic has much to do with related issues of gender, sexuality, postmodernism, and popular culture." Further, Wallace asserts that "the problem takes many forms" including "the problem of a white-dominated art world that does not usually conceptualize blacks as visual producers."

Pindell, Howardena. "Gallery Statistics." We wanted a Revolution Black Radical Women, 1965-85: A Sourcebook, edited by Catherine Morris, Brooklyn Museum, 2017, 273-290.

Lorde, Audre. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." 1984. Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches. Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press. 110- 114. 2007.

November 15 **Higher Goals**

Postcolonial theory will be introduced through Fred Wilson's landmark artistic "intervention," *Mining the Museum* "which reconfigured an already-existing museum space at the Maryland Historical Society" in order to "[critique] how the history of American slavery and Native-American genocide was presented or, more fittingly, not presented to museum-goers." We will read the artist's and curator's essays from the exhibition catalog, as well as a critical posthumous review of the intervention's influence and importance.

Farrington, Lisa. "Postmodernism."

* *Optional Reading: Wilson, Fred and Howard Halle. Mining the Museum, Grand Street, No. 44 (1993). 151-172, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25007622>.*

- * Optional Reading: Houston, Kerr. "How Mining the Museum Changed the Art World." Bmore Art, May 3, 2017, <http://www.bmoreart.com/2017/05/how-mining-the-museum-changed-the-art-world.html>

November 17

White Cube Black Male

We will consider debates surrounding the *Black Male* exhibition curated by the Whitney Museum's first Black curator, Thelma Golden, then move to a reconsideration of the uproar. Golden conceived the exhibition as "a catalyst for further introspection into the ways in which black masculinity is addressed in contemporary art, and how this work is informed by stereotypes and falsities of black masculinity that have saturated popular culture for centuries" (<https://hammer.ucla.edu/blog/2017/08/where-are-we-now-revisiting-black-male>).

Thelma Golden, "My Brother" in *Black Male*. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1994, 19-43.

Cooks, Bridget R. "New York to L.A., Black Male: Representations of Black Masculinity in Contemporary American Art, 1994-1995" in *Exhibiting Blackness: African Americans and the American Art Museum*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2011, 110-134.

November 22

Thanksgiving Recess

November 24

November 29

Black Necropolitics

We'll consider the historical debates in favor and against Black activism, as well as the potency of politically engaging works by Black artists.

- * Optional Reading: Streeter, Kurt. "Is Slavery's Legacy in the Power Dynamics of Sports?" *The New York Times*, August 16, 2019.

December 1

A Subtlety

Gwendolyn Dubois Shaw's and Siddhartha Mitter's essays will investigate Kara Walker's infamous cut out figures depicting often figures engaged in provocative, violent, and horrifying acts that rely on the viewer's complicity, experience, and knowledge of racist stereotypes and theories to pack a destabilizing punch. Our conversation will focus on the sensational 2014 *A Subtlety*, and a more recent work for the Tate that takes Britain to task for its role in and benefit from the transatlantic slave trade.

Shaw, Gwendolyn Dubois. "Final Cut," in *Seeing the Unspeakable: The Art of Kara Walker*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004, 126-151.

- * Optional Reading: Muhammad, Khalil Gibran. "The sugar that saturates the American diet has a barbaric history as the 'white gold' that fueled slavery," *The New York Times*, August 14, 2019.
- * Optional Reading: Mitter, Siddhartha. "Kara Walker Takes a Monumental Jab at Britannia" in *The New York Times*, September 30, 2019.

December 6

Mastry

Farrington's chapter on contemporary art and Kennedy's essay will critically evaluate the triumphant emergence of Black artists in the contemporary era. We'll examine the work of Kerry James Marshall, who employs radical tactics to engage with matters of race, racism, and the idea of a "post-racial" imaginary.

Farrington, Lisa. "Neo-Expressionism, The New Abstraction," and Architecture."

Kennedy, Randy. "Black Artists and the March into the Museum," *The New York Times*, November 28, 2015.

Marshall, Kerry J, Helen A. Molesworth, Ian Alteveer, Dieter Roelstraete, and Lanka Tattersall. *Kerry James Marshall: Mastry*. Skira Rizzoli Publications, Inc., 2016.

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Assignment 3 Due

December 8 **The New Millennium**

We will tie up loose ends by considering future possibilities in Farrington’s final chapter, and swing back to ideas and arguments introduced in earlier articles from *The New York Times’* 1619 project with a final text by Hanne-Jones and Streeter. In this consideration, we’ll look to works by Kehinde Wiley, Mikalene Thomas, Nick Cave, Mark Bradford as bench marks for new paths and ulterior dynamics that might engage Black artists in the future.

Farrington, Lisa. “Post-Black Art and the New Millennium.”



All late, re-submits, posts, and extra credit coursework due



December 13 **Grand Finale 1:30 to 4 PM & Quiz 3 Due @ midnight on Canvas**



Kerry James Marshall, *Untitled* 2008.

While Canvas offers a page where students can keep track of their grades, it does *NOT* keep an accurate tally of the total points possible and should therefore *NOT* be relied on for a current grade assessment. In addition to opening the grading rubrics on Canvas (which cannot be accessed on a phone) to view instructor feedback on your assignments, please also use this page to keep a running tally of the points you have earned. Dividing your total by 500 points will offer the grade you would receive in the class if you submitted no other work, while dividing your total by the points possible at any given time during the semester (refer to due dates on the schedule to compute this) will offer you your current grade.

Assignment	Points Earned	Points Possible	
Class Participation	Midterm	out of 12 points	20%
	Conclusion	out of 13 points	
	Class Discussion Board	out of 25 points	
	Presentation	out of 50 points	
Assignments	Assignment Proposal	out of 25 points	55%
	Writing Art History Activity	out of 25 points	
	Assignment 1	out of 50 points	
	Assignment 2	out of 50 points	
	Assignment 3	out of 50 points	
	Scalar Pages	out of 75 points	
Quizzes	Quiz 1	out of 30 points	25%
	Quiz 2	out of 30 points	
	Quiz 3	out of 30 points	
	Grand Finale	out of 35 points	
Sub-Total			
Extra Credit		Maximum 25 points	
Total		out of 500 points	