



**COURSE TITLE:**

Western Art History and Theory 1  
 COURSE INSTRUCTOR: Priyank Gothwal  
 COURSE CREDITS: 4 Credits  
 COURSE LENGTH: 15 Weeks

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course explores the dynamics of Western art from the Italian Renaissance to Modernism. It foregrounds the historical and social contexts in which artworks were produced and probes the theoretical frameworks that informed artistic practices. Instead of relating the story of Western art as a continuous progression, the course underscores the discrepancies, breaches, and discontinuities between different discursive formations that organise the domain of the arts and the histories that shape them. Adopting a decolonial perspective to study artworks and art theories, the course’s working hypothesis is that the developments of modernity and coloniality are intimately connected. Thus, whereas Western art history is usually narrated in relation to events that took place in Europe, the students will be encouraged to examine the impact of colonialism on creative expression and its theorisation.

The students will be introduced to various artistic styles and art movements that dominated Western art history and learn to recognise their unique features. They will learn to analyse the aesthetics elements of artworks, and to decipher their iconology, and symbolism. Since visual art is not a discrete field, the course will review other forms of creative expression to enrich the understanding of each movement and style. Thus, in addition to the survey of architecture, painting, and sculpture, the students will listen to compositions of Western classical music, read poetry and short stories, and engage with artists’ essays and letters, and philosophical texts.

**SESSIONAL BREAKDOWN:**

	<b>Periods/ Movements</b>	<b>Reading</b>
Class 1	Early Renaissance	Plato, ‘Ion’, Aristotle Poetics (shift to second semester).
		The Black African Presence in Renaissance Europe by Kate Lowe

Class 2	High Renaissance	Giorgio Vasari, 'The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects'
Class 3	Mannerism, Baroque & Rococo	Fredrick Nietzsche: 'on the baroque,' (human, all too human),
Class 4	Neoclassicism,	On the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks (1755) by Johann Winckelmann
Class 5	Romanticism	Isaiah Berlin, 'The Roots of Romanticism'
Class 6	Realism & Impressionism	Why have there been no great women artists? by Linda Nochlin  Vision and Difference: Feminism, femininity and the histories of art by Griselda Pollock
Class 7	Post impressionism: Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh and Georges Seurat.	T.J. Clark. "Olympia's Choice" in The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Follower.  Paul Gauguin, 'Letter to Fontainas' Vincent van Gogh, 'The Letters of Vincent van Gogh'
Class 8	Expressionism	Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, 'Programme of the Brücke'
Class 9	Fauvism, Cubism, futurism	Henri Matisse, 'Notes of a Painter' Georges Braque, 'Thoughts on Painting'
Class 10	Abstract art, Suprematism & Constructivism	Piet Mondrian, 'Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art' Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' Kazimir Malevich, 'From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Realism', 'Suprematism'

Class 11	Futurism, Dada, Surrealism	FilippoTommaso Marinetti, 'The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism' Tristan Tzara, 'Dada Manifesto 1918' André Breton, 'First Surrealist Manifesto'
Class 12	Abstract Expressionism	Clement Greenberg, 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch', 'Modernist Painting'
Class 13	Pop Art & Op Art	Andy Warhol, 'Interview with Gene Swenson' Arthur Danto, 'The Artworld'
		Jean Baudrillard, 'Starting From Andy Warhol' (in The Conspiracy of Art)
Class 14	Conceptual art	Joseph Kosuth, 'Art after Philosophy' Sol LeWitt, 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art'
Class 15	Minimalism	Donald Judd, 'Specific Objects' Robert Morris, 'Notes on Sculpture 1-3'

### **Additional Texts**

Ernst Gombrich, *The Story of Art*

Charles Harrison, Paul J. Wood, *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* Schiller, *Letters Upon The Aesthetic Education of Man*

Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*

- Note: additional references including online sources, secondary reading and films will be given in each class.

### **COURSE ASSESSMENT MODES:**

The students will be assessed according to their theoretical and practical skills.

Class participation	10%
Readings	10%
Research paper	40%
Exam	40%

**LEARNING AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:**

The course has two major objects: 1) To introduce the students to the history of Western art from Renaissance to Modernism. The student should be able to analyse artworks and to recognize to which period or school they belong. 2) The students should be able to understand the philosophical and theoretical concept “behind” the artwork. 3) The students will analyse the visual “language” of the image.

**Field Visits/Visiting Speakers**

The course will include visits to museums, galleries and interaction with artists.

**A Note on Classroom Punctuality/Conduct:**

JSLH conducts all classes on a foundation of professionalism. It is expected that students should be present in class with a pen and notebook, and seated within five minutes of the class start time. Students arriving after a ten-minute window from the designated start time will be refused entry/attendance. Please show courtesy to your instructors and co-learners by observing punctuality. Please also note that the seminar room is a place for free expression and critical thinking and this comes with a responsibility on the part of students to respect opinions expressed and actively participate in the work of the classroom discussion. Laptops may be used in class only after prior permissions. Mobile phones are not to be used under any circumstance.

**A Note on Plagiarism:**

In line with JGU policy, JSLH operates a zero tolerance approach to plagiarism. The unacknowledged use of material by others within your work is a violation of academic integrity and all reported cases will be investigated before potential disciplinary action. Instructors will address methods of citation and presentation within written work.

**Disability Support and Accommodation Requirements:**

JGU endeavors to make all its courses accessible to students. All students with a known disability needing academic accommodations are required to register with the Disability Support Committee [dsc@jgu.edu.in](mailto:dsc@jgu.edu.in). The Committee has so far identified the following conditions that could possibly hinder student's overall well-being. These include: physical and mobility related difficulties; visual impairment; hearing impairment; medical conditions; specific learning difficulties e.g. dyslexia; mental health.

The Disability Support Committee maintains strict confidentiality in its discussions.