

Kansas City Art Institute: ARTH13400-07
CONSTRUCTIVISM AND THE BAUHAUS
Tuesday/Thursday: 4:00-5:20pm, EB 217

Professor: Dr. Maria Elena Buszek

Office: 304 Baty House (ext 3378), e-mail: mbuszek@kcai.edu

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 research 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, and cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated. The KCAI Student Handbook clearly defines academic dishonesty as follows:

- A) The copying of another student's work or the use of unauthorized notes and materials during examinations,
- B) Plagiarism, or the presentation of either the written or visual work of others (including that of other students), as one's own
- C) Plagiarism is a serious offense in the academy, as well as illegal in the context of our nation's copyright law. As such, it is important to know what plagiarism is in both one's studio- and liberal arts work. According to the Modern Language Association, plagiarism is "the wrongful act of taking the product of another person's mind, and presenting it as one's own." In other words, plagiarism is the use of not just words but ideas borrowed from someone else without crediting the source. *Students are required to learn the arts-standard, Chicago Manual of Style guidelines for citing sources referenced in their own work, and must follow them carefully in their research and writing projects.*

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 KCAI's Academic Dishonesty policy:

All academic dishonesty is taken as an offense against the Institute and may result in penalties assessed by the faculty member teaching the course in which the offense has occurred and the Judicial Board, up to and including expulsion.

When a faculty member has reason to believe that an act of academic dishonesty has occurred, s/he will inform the student/s involved, the head of the department (or director/dean, if applicable) in which the course is offered, and the head of the department (or director/dean, if applicable) in which the student is majoring. The faculty member will forward a report in writing to the Dean of Student Life for presentation before the KCAI Judicial Board. The Judicial Board will interview and/or receive written statements from the student accused of academic dishonesty prior to making any determination.

Once a determination has been made that an offense did occur, faculty members maintain the right to assign a failing grade to the student. [...] Additional penalties, up to and including expulsion, will be determined by the Judicial Board working in tandem with the faculty member who reported the offense.

Students with disabilities: KCAI will provide services and accommodations as mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Students requesting accommodations based on disability status should provide KCAI appropriate documentation. The documentation must be in written form from a licensed health care professional or educational professional who is qualified to diagnose the disability and recommend specific accommodations. Documentation must be within 3 years of being current. KCAI has the right to require a student to supplement the documentation if it is determined that the information in the initial documentation is incomplete, inadequate, or the qualifications of the health care provider or professional are in question. The documentation should state the specific disability and include recommended accommodations with a rationale if needed. **All documentation will be kept confidential.** Students with documented disabilities are encouraged to provide documentation whether or not they opt to have accommodations in place so that if a specific need arises, an accommodation can be put in place in a timely manner. **Accommodations are not made on a Post Facto basis. Accommodations are not put in place unless requested by the student. All requests are confidential,** and should be directed toward: Kathy Keller, Disabilities Coordinator [kkeller@kcai.edu] Phone: 816-802-3485.

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 weekly "reserve" readings linked to our website. I expect students to read ahead for each day's lecture, as our readings will be directly addressed in that day's class discussion, and students' participation grade will largely be based on their ability to address/ask questions about that day's readings. (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.

COURSE SCHEDULE

AUGUST

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

SEPTEMBER

- 1-3: **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")
- 8-10: **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")
- 15-17: **The People's 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")
- 22-24: **Creating Revolutionary art/Creating Revolutionary artists**
(Website: UNOVIS "Program," Kandinsky, "Inkhuk Program," Lyubov Popova, "Statement," and Nikolai Punin, "The Monument to the Third International")
- 29: **Fusing the Formal and the Utilitarian: Constructivism**
(Gray, Ch. 8; Website: Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova, "Program of the First Working Group of Constructivists")

OCTOBER

- 1-6: **Fusing the Formal and the Utilitarian: Constructivism (cont'd)**
(Website: Alexei Gan, "From *Constructivism*," and Osip Brik, "From Pictures to Calico Print")
- 8: **Problems on the "Lef"**
(Website: LEF group, "Whom is LEF alerting?" Leon Trotsky, excerpt from *Literature and Revolution*)
- 13-15: **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")
Research paper assignment due Thursday, October 15th
- 20-22: **Socialist Realism: The end of the avant-garde**
(Website: AKhRR, "Declaration" and Paul Wood, "Realism and the Avant-Garde")
- 27: **Midterm Exam: Constructivism**
- 29: **Germany: Art and Industry**
(Droste, Ch. 1; Website: Walter Gropius, "Reply to Workers' Council for Art questionnaire")

NOVEMBER

- 3-5: **Weimar Bauhaus—Expressionist Bauhaus**
(Droste, Ch. 2; Website: Gropius, "Bauhaus Manifesto," and Johannes Itten, "Analyses of Old Masters")
- 10-12: **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")

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17: The Bauhaus Exhibition of 1923

(Droste, pp. 104-114)

19-24: Dessau Bauhaus: Institute of Design

(Droste, Ch. 4-5; Website: Gropius, "Bauhaus Dessau—Principles of Bauhaus Production" and Lazlo Moholy-Nagy, "'Isms' or Art?")

26: Thanksgiving Break: NO CLASS!

DECEMBER

1-3: The death and (partial) rebirth of the Bauhaus

(Droste, Ch. 6)

8: Catch-up day

10: Final Exam: The Bauhaus