

Kansas City Art Institute: ARTH1241
Constructivism and The Bauhaus
Tuesday/Thursday 2:30-3:50pm, EB 217

Professor: Maria Elena Buszek

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Office Hours: T/Th, 11:00a.m.-12:30p.m., or by appointment

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(go to "Constructivism and The Bauhaus" to enter our class' primary site)

Course Description: This course will deal with the utopian experiments in art and theory to emerge from the Russian Constructivist movement and the German Bauhaus academy in the years between the two World Wars. In both Constructivism and The Bauhaus, one finds some of the most influential ideas on the integration of art and everyday life in history—affecting our world to this very day—which we will study through the objects and writings created by the artists associated with each. 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 artworks presented in the class.

Grading: Your grade will be based on two exams and one short paper. 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.**

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. Information from lectures 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, with 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.

(over)

Class Participation: Active participation on the part of each student is essential to the success and effectiveness of this course. Indeed, dialogue will be a crucial part of the way this class addresses the information at hand. Contrary to popular belief, some teachers do *not* necessarily enjoy talking to themselves, and *really* want to hear your thoughts and insights into the material being discussed. (By the way...I am one of those teachers!) **Don't be afraid to speak up!**

Cheating and plagiarism: At KCAI, students are expected to be honest in both their test taking and paper writing assignments. Any dishonest student caught cheating or plagiarizing will be reported to the Academic Resource Center, receive an automatic "zero" on the exam/project at hand, be brought before the KCAI Judicial Committee, and penalized to the fullest extent of the Art Institute's guidelines. (Depending on the student's record, this means anything from academic probation to a failing course grade, or even expulsion.) Along with this syllabus, you will find a copy of a "Chicago Style Cribsheet," which outlines what constitutes plagiarism, and demonstrates how to use the Chicago Style of citation to be sure that each student is properly crediting and organizing sources in their writing. Please note that—as with all terms of this syllabus—if you stay in this class, it is assumed that you understand and agree to these terms on academic honesty. (This means the "I didn't know it was plagiarizing" excuse—in this and all subsequent courses—will be deemed unacceptable to both the professor and KCAI.)

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

November 1st: Midterm exam: Constructivism

November 24th: THANKSGIVING BREAK: NO CLASS

December 13th: Final exam: The Bauhaus

COURSE SCHEDULE

AUGUST

30: Introductions, syllabus, questions

SEPTEMBER

1: Origins of Constructivism: Heroism, symbolism, idealism
(Gray, Chs. 1-3)

6-8: Kandinsky, Malevich, and Russian abstraction
(Gray, Chs. 4-5; Website: Wassily Kandinsky, "Concerning the Spiritual in Art" and Kazimir Malevich, "From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Realism in Painting")

13-15: Malevich v. Tatlin: Romanticism v. Realism
(Gray, Ch. 6)

20-22: The October Revolution: From the studio to the street
(Gray, Ch. 7; Website: KOMFUT "Programme Declaration," Vladimir Tatlin, "The Initiative Individual in the Creativity of the Collective," and Malevich, "The Question of Imitative Art")

27-29: 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

4-6: Fusing the Formal and the Utilitarian: Constructivism
(Gray, Ch. 8; Website: Alexander Rodchenko, "Slogans/Organizational Program for Vkhutemas," Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova, "Program of the First Working Group of Constructivists," and Alexei Gan, "From *Constructivism*")

11-13: Problems on the "Lef"
(Website: LEF, "Whom is *LEF* alerting?" Leon Trotsky, "From *Literature and Revolution*")

18-20: 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 Tuesday, October 18th

25-27: Socialist Realism: The end of the avant-garde
(Website: AKhRR, "Declaration," and Paul Wood, "Realism and the Avant-Garde")

NOVEMBER

1 Midterm Exam: Constructivism

3: Germany: Art and Industry
(Droste, Ch. 1; Website: Walter Gropius, "Reply to Workers' Council for Art questionnaire")

8-10: Weimar Bauhaus—Expressionist Bauhaus
(Droste, Ch. 2; Website: Gropius, "Bauhaus Manifesto," and Johannes Itten, "Analyses of Old Masters")

15-17: 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")

22: The Bauhaus Exhibition of 1923
(Droste, pp. 104-114)

24: Thanksgiving Break: NO CLASS!

29: Dessau Bauhaus: Institute of Design
(Droste, Ch. 4; Website: Gropius, "Bauhaus Dessau—Principles of Bauhaus Production")

DECEMBER

1: Dessau Bauhaus, cont'd
(Droste, Ch. 5; Website: Lazlo Moholy-Nagy, "'Isms' or Art?")

6-8: The death and (partial) rebirth of the Bauhaus
(Droste, Ch. 6)

13: Final Exam: The Bauhaus