

## **African-American Art of the 20th Century, ARH 344J/AFR 374F**

**Eddie Chambers**

Spring Semester 2019, DFA 2.204, M-W-F, 12.00 – 1.00

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Office Hours, Wednesday, 1.00 – 3.00 and by appointment

This course carries the Cultural Diversity flag. The Cultural Diversity requirement increases your familiarity with the variety and richness of the American cultural experience. Courses carrying this flag ask you to explore the beliefs, practices, and histories of at least one cultural group that has experienced persistent marginalization. Many of these courses also encourage you to reflect on your own cultural experiences. See <https://www.utexas.edu/ugs/flags/students/about/cultural-diversity>

The class will focus on the fascinating work of African-American artists during a century that in its second decade witnessed the 'Harlem Renaissance' of the 1920s and several decades later gave rise to the 'Black Arts Movement' of the mid – late 1960s to early to mid 1970s. The Harlem Renaissance stands as a towering moment of American creativity and will figure prominently in our class syllabus. Our class, *African-American Artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* will present and discuss work that is as varied as the practitioners responsible for it. Sculpture, printmaking, painting, figurative, non-figurative, trained, untrained; the variations are almost endless. The period of time under discussion witnessed hugely important developments of African American history. The 'Great Migration of people from the south to the northern industrial centers, World War II, the Civil Rights Movement, all these factors and many more have their part to play in the absorbing history of *African American artists of the 20th century*. The work of a number of highly accomplished artists will be considered, from Aaron Douglas and William H. Johnson to Dana Chandler, Elizabeth Catlett, and Faith Ringgold. The class will also seek to put the work of these artists into a variety of the wider political, social and cultural contexts that made the 20th century such an important period for African-American people and also for America itself.

### **Learning Goals**

By the end of this course you will be ready to:

- Pose critical questions of the ways in which African American artists have created stories about the experiences of African Americans, as well as reflecting developments in modern and contemporary art practices throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Develop close reading and visual literacy skills in order to experiment with different methods of investigation and synthesize those findings into coherent verbal and written arguments
- Thoughtfully and respectfully critique the intellectual work of others, and evaluate its usefulness in relationship to your own inquiry and academic interests
- Have a greater understanding of the meaning and manifestations of African American

contributions to wider American culture

- Articulate your own opinions, arguments and understandings of African American art

Wednesday January 23

**An introduction to ARH 344J/AFR 374F African-American Art of the 20th Century**

Text: Elton C. Fax, "The Forerunners", Introductory Chapter of *17 Black Artists*, Dodd, Mead & Company, 1971, pp.1-13 and Richard J. Powell, "Introduction: The Dark Center" and Chapter One: "Art, Culture and 'the Souls of Black Folk'", *Black Art and Culture in the 20th Century*, Thames and Hudson World of Art Series, 1997. (Reissued as *Black Art: A Cultural History*, 2002)

Friday January 25/Monday January 28

**The Harlem Renaissance – an introduction**

Text: Alain Locke, "The Legacy of Ancestral Arts", in *The New Negro*, Atheneum, New York, 1992, pp.254-267 (originally published 1925)

Wednesday January 30/Friday February 1

**Winold Reiss, mentor to Aaron Douglas and illustrator of 'The New Negro'.**

Text: "Folk-Lorist of Brush and Palette", John C. Ewers, in *To Color America*, Smithsonian Institution/National Portrait Gallery, 1989 pp. 41 – 69

Monday February 4/Wednesday February 6

**Aaron Douglas, giant of the Harlem Renaissance.**

Text: "Aaron Douglas", in *A History of African-American Artists From 1792 to the Present*, Romare Bearden & Harry Henderson, Pantheon Books, New York, 1993, pp.127-135

Friday February 8/Monday February 11

**Carl Van Vechten, Negrophile and photographer.**

Text: "Introduction", *Generations in Black and White*, Rudolph P. Byrd, the University of Georgia Press, 1993, pp.xv- xxvii

NO CLASSES WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 13 and FRIDAY FEBRUARY 15

Monday February 18/Wednesday February 20

**The Art of Elizabeth Catlett**

Text: Melanie Anne Herzog, "Introduction in Elizabeth Catlett", *An American Artist in Mexico*, University of Washington Press, 2000, pp.3-11

Friday February 22/Monday February 25

**The Art of Romare Bearden**

Text: Elton C. Fax, "Romare Bearden", Chapter IX of *17 Black Artists*, Dodd, Mead & Company, 1971, pp.128-145

Wednesday February 27/Friday March 1

**The Art of Jacob Lawrence**

Text: Elton C. Fax, "Jacob Lawrence", Chapter X of *17 Black Artists*, Dodd, Mead & Company, 1971, pp.146-166

Monday March 4/Wednesday March 6

**The Art of Charles White**

Text: Andrea Barnwell, "From New York to Los Angeles", Chapter Two of *Charles White*, Pomegranate, 2002, pp.41-60

Friday March 8/Monday March 11

**Art of Archibald Motley**

Text: "Archibald J. Motley, Jr," pp.147-156, *A History of African-American Artists From 1792 to the Present*, Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson, Pantheon Books, New York, 1993.

Wednesday March 13/Friday March 15

**Palmer C. Hayden**

Text: "Hayden: The Persona", pp.11-15 of *Echoes of Our Past: The Narrative Artistry of Palmer C. Hayden*, Allan M. Gordon, The Museum of African American Art, Los Angeles, California, April 15 – July 31, 1988.

SPRING BREAK MARCH 18 - 22

Monday March 25/Wednesday March 27

**Palmer C. Hayden and the Story of John Henry**

Text: "John Henry" by Guy B. Johnson, *Negro Anthology*, Nancy Cunard, London, 1934, pp. 363 – 365 and "On the Trail of John Henry", Guy B. Johnson, from *John Henry: Tracking Down a Negro Legend*, University of North Carolina, 1929, pp. 8 – 26

Friday March 29/Monday April 1

**James Van Der Zee**

Text: "James Van Der Zee: Artist and Photographer", pp.146-192, *James Van DerZee, The Picture Takin' Man*, Jim Haskins, Africa World Press, Inc.1991

Wednesday April 3/Friday April 5

**Problems and Progress: African-American Artists in mid 20th Century America**

Text: "The Continuity of Negro Art", Cedric Dover *American Negro Art*, New York Graphic Society, 1970, pp. 44 – 56

Monday April 8/Wednesday April 10

**William H Johnson: Triumph and Tragedy**

Text: Entry on the artist in *The St. James Guide to Black Artists* plus one other text tbc

Friday April 12/Monday April 15

**'Black Folk Art' in 20th Century America**

Text: Jane Livingston, "What it is", in *Black Folk Art in America 1930-1980*, Corcoran

Gallery of Art/University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 1982, pp.11-23

Wednesday April 17/Friday April 19

**The Art of Horace Pippin**

Text: Selden Rodman, *Horace Pippin: A Negro Painter in America*, The Quadrangle Press 1947 pp.3 – 28

Monday April 22/Wednesday April 24

**Black Art/Black Strength: The Black Arts Movement of the 1960s/70s**

Text: Ron Karenga “Black Cultural Nationalism”, in, *The Black Aesthetic*, Doubleday & Company, Inc, New York, 1971, pp.32-38

Friday April 26/Monday April 29

**Black Art/Black Strength: The Black Arts Movement of the 1960s/70s**

Text: tbc

Wednesday May 1/Friday May 3

**Faith Ringgold**

Text: “The 1960s: Is There a Black Art?” from *We Flew Over the Bridge: The Memoirs of Faith Ringgold*, Bulfinch Press, Little, Brown and Company, 1995

Monday May 6/Wednesday May 8

**African American art practice towards the end of the 20th Century.**

Text: chapter (tbc) from *Black Art and Culture in the 20th Century*, Richard J. Powell, Thames and Hudson World of Art Series, 1997. (Reissued as *Black Art: A Cultural History*, 2002)

Friday May 10 - last day of class – test

Monday May 13, 10.00am

3500 word paper due

**Particulars**

Students are required to produce response papers, relating to the previous week’s class. The first response paper is due Wednesday August 31 2016. The reaction papers should be a word length of about 500 words. Similarly, students are required to produce a précis, (a summary) of one of the previous week’s assigned readings. Précis and Response papers will comprise 30% of the final grade. A 3500-word research paper, relating to some aspect of the class, must be submitted no later than 10.00am on Monday May 13 2019.

**Required textbook:**

Richard J. Powell, *Black Art and Culture in the 20th Century*, Thames and Hudson World of Art Series, 1997. (Reissued as *Black Art: A Cultural History*, 2002)

Accommodation.

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-2557, <http://diversity.utexas.edu/> For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students, <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/>

#### Academic Integrity

University Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty: “Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. Please see UT Honor Code (or statement of ethics) and an explanation or example of what constitutes plagiarism (Link to University Honor Code: [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/spot\\_honorcode.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/spot_honorcode.php)). For further information please visit the Student Judicial Services Web site:

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>

#### Class Attendance

Students are required to attend all classes. Please inform instructor ahead of time if you will miss any class. Full attendance is 20 points. For every unexcused absence from class, a student will drop 5 points. University policy on holy days states, “A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence.” Unless absences have been notified in advance, students failing to sign the class attendance sheet will be considered absent. Class attendance and participation will count towards final grade.

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

#### Assignments and Grading

Attendance 20 points

Class participation 10 points

Response papers 30 points

Research Paper 30 points

Test 10 points

Total.....100 points

A.....90-100 points

B.....80-89 points.

C.....70-79 points.

- D.....60-69 points.  
E.....50-59 points.  
F..... Below 50 points.

There are no exams relating to this class, there is a mandatory test on the last day of class.

Any student not present will forfeit the 10 point allocated for the test

Class readings will be made available on Canvas. Likewise, class announcements will be posted on Canvas - <http://canvas.utexas.edu/>

**No** laptop use in class

**No** cell phone use/texting in class

**No** note-taking on cell phones