

## Cedar Crest College

### Art 215/History 215 Selected Movements in Art and Architecture 1750-1900 Spring 2010 (An E-Companion Course)

Professor James J. Ward  
Hartzell Hall 226  
Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday/Friday 10-11:45, Other Times by Appointment  
Campus Extension: 3402  
E-Mail: [jjward@cedarcrest.edu](mailto:jjward@cedarcrest.edu)



The most revolutionary painting of the late 18th century? Jacques-Louis David's "Death of Marat," painted shortly after the event itself in July 1793, during the Reign of Terror. Why revolutionary, other than that the painting eulogizes a leader of the revolutionary movement, the self-proclaimed "ami du peuple" and one of David's closest political associates? For one thing, the painting departs from the imagery of heroism and sacrifice that had become standard in the 17th and 18th centuries. Instead of a glorious setting, Marat is shown in his bathtub, where he frequently sat to compose his radical tracts, using medicinal salts to treat a severe skin condition. He looks vulnerable, even pitiable, in this intimate space, a far cry from the circumstances to which heroes were accustomed

in battlefield scenes or in grand altarpieces. At the moment of death, Marat is alone. The usual company of grieving companions is absent (think of Benjamin West's "Death of General Wolfe," painted in 1770, or of David's own "Death of Socrates," painted only a few years before the "Marat"). David turns Marat, who was hated and feared by many of his contemporaries, into a martyr. All the familiar imagery of martyrdom is there—the naked body, the shroud-like sheet, the wound with the dripping blood, the head thrown back, the serene expression. This iconography would have been recognized by anyone at the time: the murdered revolutionary has been transfused with the dead Christ. Disenfranchising the Catholic Church, persecuting the French clergy, "de-Christianizing" churches and monasteries across the country—all the actions of the revolutionary government shrink by comparison with David's startling appropriation of traditional religious imagery for ideological purposes. The sacredotal character of the painting is reinforced by the script we see on Marat's wooden writing block: "To Marat...David." The painting is an act of homage, even of worship (Marat's comrades in the Jacobin Society assigned David the responsibility to arrange his funeral, held appropriately enough in a de-Christianized church).

Not only does David isolate Marat in his bathtub, he places him against an indeterminate, olive-green background. The formless, indefinable space that Marat inhabits is possibly the first example we have of "abstraction" in art. It could be "real," simply the gloom and shadows that surround Marat's work space, or a premonition of the cloths David would employ when he draped Marat's funeral so that the citizens of Paris could pay their respects to the fallen tribune. This strange, almost eerie background also evokes a sense of the void, of the empty space that death may seem to represent, at least for the non-religious. Most strikingly, it anticipates what we still think of as "modern art," i.e., the movement away from the illusion of reality toward abstraction, particularly as the latter was to climax in the years after 1945. While it is impossible to document a direct influence, we cannot help but recall the background to David's "Marat" when, for example, we look at Caspar David Friedrich's "Monk by the Sea" (1809-10) or at the paintings with which Francisco Goya decorated the walls of his Quinta del Sordo (House of the Deaf Man) in the 1820s. In this way, the "Death of Marat" may be the first "modern" painting, even if "modernism" did not become a term in general use for another half-century.

The preceding is an example of what you can expect to learn in this course. You should acquire both the knowledge and the skills to "read" a painting, or for that matter a work of sculpture or a piece of architecture, in art historical terms, looking both backward and forward (as well as all around). There is more to this course than simply memorizing slides and being able to reproduce titles and dates, along with artists' names, on a test. This is not a survey course in 18th and 19th century art, hence the emphasis on the word "selected" in the title. Rather, we will look in some depth at the work of particular artists (and architects), several "schools" or "movements" that are still encumbered by the labels critics and art historians have attached to them (how do we define "romantic" or, for that matter, "modern"?), and unusual clusters of creativity, in chronological and geographical terms, e.g., Paris in the 1860s and 1870s or Vienna at the turn of the century. The result, assuming everything goes as planned, will be that you'll be able to walk through a museum, visit a gallery, or just wander through a city street with a sharper eye and an intellectual inventory that makes the experience considerably more worthwhile.

## **Books**

The textbook for this course is Petra ten-Doeschate Chu, Nineteenth Century European Art, second edition (2006), Pearson/Prentice Hall paperback, ISBN 0131886436.

If you buy this book elsewhere than the College Bookstore, be sure you are getting the second edition. This edition contains several changes from the first edition (2003) and reflects recent art historical contributions by other scholars. All the assignments below are to the second edition.

## **Requirements and Grades**

1. Attendance, participation in discussion, and other evidence of interest in the subject matter—25 percent;
2. Mid-Term Exam, for the first half of the semester, which will include identifications, comparisons, and a critical essay—25 percent;

3. Final Exam, for the second half of the semester, with the same content—25 percent;
4. Museum Paper or Architecture Paper—25 percent.

For the paper, you must visit a museum, select a work by one of the artists we are studying, look at the work at length and in detail, do the research needed to set it in the context of the artist's career and the genre or style to which it belongs, and write a critical report of 6-8 pages. The paper is due by April 16, 4 PM. A significant part of the paper should consist of your observation of the painting you've chosen—i.e., what you saw as you looked at it and how this work has helped you understand more about both the artist and the style or movement with which it is identified. You might visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, or the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, all of which have extensive holdings in the periods we are studying; the Baltimore Museum of Art or the Walters Gallery (also in Baltimore); a regional museum like the Princeton University Art Museum; or a specialized collection like the Center for British Art at Yale University. If the Art Department schedules a field trip to the Metropolitan this spring, you might avail yourself of that opportunity.

As an alternative, you may choose to visit, study, and write on a piece of architecture in our region, with the qualification that it must represent one of the architectural styles or movements we are studying in this course (i.e., Neoclassicism, Second Empire, Beaux-Arts, Historicism). Again, you should do research appropriate to the building, and the architect if known, and you must include your own observations and reactions. I recommend staying away from obvious choices like the Metropolitan Museum or the Philadelphia Museum and to find equally interesting, but less “showpiece,” specimens of the architectural styles we've studied. If you choose this option, research the building, photograph some of its aspects, and write the paper. If you are unsure that “your” building qualifies, speak with me.

### **The E-Companion Site**

Most, if not all, of the material presented in class will be posted on the E-Companion site for this course, usually within a day or two. You can use the site as back-up for our class meetings and as a resource when it comes to preparing for the Mid-Term and the Final. Other material may be posted (e.g., references to articles and essays, notices and reviews of exhibitions) as it becomes available, mostly for informational purposes.

I have also introduced a new component to the course, which (tongue-in-cheek) I'm calling “Selected Moments in Art and Architecture.” You'll see five of these listed with the schedule for our class meetings. My purpose is to take advantage of some unusual exhibitions that didn't always get major attention or coverage in the media and of some interesting developments in new or recent art historical scholarship. I trust students will find these a kind of bonus rather than yet another burden. In any case, they will allow us to stray briefly outside the mainstream of 18th and 19th century art history. These presentations will also find their way to the E-Companion site.

### **Schedule of Class Sessions**

Week I            Course Organization  
20.0-22.01

Week II           The 18th Century Art Regime  
25.01-29.01  
Reading: Text, chap. 1

Week III          The Revival of Antiquity: Classicism and Neoclassicism in Art and Architecture  
01.02-05.02  
Reading: Text, chap. 2

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Weeks IV-V<br>08.02-19.02   | The Creation of Heroes: French Painting in the Age of the Revolution and Napoleon<br><br>Reading: Text, chaps. 4-5<br><br>Video: “The Passing Show—J. L. David” (65 mins.)<br><br>Selected Moment I: The Creation of the Museum—The Louvre, 1793 to 1815 |
| Weeks VI-VII<br>22.02-03.03 | Romantic Painting in France: Mixed Traditions and Blurred Boundaries<br><br>Reading: Text, chaps. 9-10<br><br>Video: “Théodore Géricault—Men and Horses” (65 mins.)<br><br>Selected Moment II: Géricault’s “Heroic” Landscapes                           |
| <b>05.03</b>                | <b>Mid-Term Exam</b>   |
| <b>Week VIII</b>            | <b>Spring Break</b>  |
| Week IX<br>15.03-19.03      | Transformations in Landscape Painting in England and Germany<br><br>Reading: Text, chaps. 3, 7, 8<br><br>Selected Moment III: The Lure of Rome for American Painters   |
| Week X<br>22.03-26.03       | Naturalism and Realism in France<br><br>Reading: Text, chaps. 10-11  |
| Week XI<br>29.03-31.03      | Manet: “The Painting of Modern Life” (Note: No class on Friday, 02 April)<br><br>Reading: Text, chap. 12<br><br>Selected Moment IV: Art and the Paris Commune, 1870-1871   |
| Week XII<br>06.04-09.04     | Academic Painting and History Painting (Note: No class on Monday, 05 April)<br><br>Reading: Text, chaps. 13, 14, 16  |
| Week XIII<br>12.04-16.04    | Second Empire and Beaux-Arts Style: The Transfer of an Architectural Language  |
| <b>16.04</b>                | <b>Papers Due (4 PM)</b>   |

Week XIV            Symbolism, Decadence, and the Vienna Sezession, 1880s-1890s  
19.04-23.04  
Reading: Text, chaps. 19-20  
  
Selected Moment V: Varieties of Religious Painting at the End of the 19th Century

Week XV            Off the Beaten Track: Art Nouveau and Art Moderne in Central Europe  
26.04-30.04

Last Class            Wrap Up and Plans for the Final (Note: No Class on Wednesday, 05 May)  
03.05

### **Final Exam**

### **College Policies**

Students are expected to adhere to the Honor Philosophy both in regard to taking tests and exams and in regard to the use of source material, proper citation of all sources, and the submission of original work. Any instance of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course.

Detailed information on the Honor Philosophy and the College's Policy on Plagiarism is found in the Student's Guide for 2009-10. If you have any questions, ask me for clarification.

A student with a Documented Learning Disability should discuss any accommodations she may need with me within the first two weeks of class. The Academic Advising Center is available to assist students in meeting their particular needs, and I will be happy to cooperate in ensuring suitable arrangements

Electronic devices, including cell phones, tape recorders, laptops, and anything else you can think of, may not be used while class is in session. Please respect this admonition so that I don't have to put anyone on the spot.