

ART_HISTORY 255-0: INTRODUCTION TO MODERNISM



PROFESSOR
HUEY COPELAND

T/TH 9:30-10:50 AM

FISK HALL, RM. 217

THIS COURSE INTRODUCES ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AND CONTESTED TERMS OF ART-HISTORICAL INQUIRY TODAY: MODERNISM. FOR SOME, THE WORD SIMPLY DEFINES WESTERN ART OF THE LAST 200 YEARS. FOR OTHERS, MODERNISM REFERS PRIMARILY TO “ADVANCED” VISUAL ART, WHETHER THE CUBIST DISTORTIONS OF PABLO PICASSO OR THE ALL-OVER ABSTRACTIONS OF JACKSON POLLOCK. FOR STILL OTHERS, THE TERM SINGLES OUT MODES OF ARTISTIC OPPOSITION TO THE RAVAGES OF CAPITALISM, INDUSTRIALIZATION, IMPERIALISM, AND WAR, WHICH CONTINUE TO DEFINE OUR WORLD. OVER THE COURSE OF THE QUARTER, WE WILL AIM TO KEEP THESE COMPETING DEFINITIONS IN PLAY AS WE EXAMINE SIGNAL EPISODES OF EUROPEAN AND U.S. MODERNISM FROM THE LATE-19TH THROUGH MID-20TH CENTURIES AS WELL AS THEIR COUNTERPARTS IN LOCATIONS AROUND THE GLOBE, INCLUDING JAPAN, NIGERIA, AND MEXICO. IN EVERY INSTANCE, WE WILL ENGAGE WORKS OF ART THAT HAVE CONFRONTED OUR CULTURE’S VISUAL MEANS—OF LIFE, DEATH, CONSUMPTION, AND DISPLAY—AND ATTEMPTED TO WORK THEM OVER INTO CRITICAL FORM.