This undergraduate lecture course introduces one of the most contested terms of art-historical inquiry today: modernism. For some, the word simply defines Western art of the last two hundred years. For others, modernism refers 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, colonialism, industrialization, imperialism, and war that continue to define our world. Over the course of the quarter, we will keep these competing definitions in play as we examine signal episodes of European and U.S. modernism from the mid-nineteenth- through mid-twentieth- centuries as well as their counterparts in China, Haiti, India, Japan, Mexico, and Nigeria. At the same time, we will engage the work of thinkers from Freud to Marx whose writing has come to define the modern era and our approaches to its understanding within humanistic discourse. We will proceed more or less chronologically, doubling back or projecting forward when necessary to understand the determinative historical influences that have shaped the development of modernist idioms in particular times and places. In every instance, we will study 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.

**Required Textbooks**

Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, and David Joselit, *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism, 1900-1944, Volume 1, 2nd Edition* (0500285349). All other readings will be available via Canvas.

**Assessments**

Written assignments will include: 1-2-page visual analysis; 1-2-page lecture précis; 4-5-page art-historical essay; mid-term and final examinations.