

Art History 3500: Transatlantic Modernisms: New York/London
Professor Pamela Fletcher
Spring 2021

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At the turn of the twentieth century, artists in New York and London grappled with the changes of modernity experienced in two of the largest industrialized cities in the Western world. Exploring new artistic styles and subjects, the artists of the Ashcan School and the Camden Town Group engaged new technologies and communication networks; new relationships between the rural, the urban, and the emerging suburban; the changing population of cities; and fights for social justice around questions of class, ethnicity, race, and gender. This course puts these two national stories into conversation, bringing together works produced on both sides of the Atlantic at a moment of artistic and social revolution.

The seminar is part of ongoing planning for an exhibition at the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, in association with the Centre for American Art at the Courtauld in London. Students will help generate an intellectual framework for such an exhibition, including exploring the collection and potential themes and comparisons, and learn some of the skills involved in mounting a loan exhibition. On April 15th, there will be a virtual symposium hosted by the Courtauld during which scholars – including you! – will present short comparisons of the works of Ashcan and Camden Town artists. As a group, we will come up with and prepare one comparison for the symposium, but we will also generate longer potential checklists and themes for the exhibition.

Assignments and Grading

As this is an exhibition-oriented class many of our activities and assignments will involve informal and/or collaborative work (picking works of art to discuss, bringing in discussion questions, generating comparisons and themes). All of this work will be counted toward “class participation,” which will accordingly be a larger percentage of your grade than usual. Of course, class participation also means active participation in reading, listening, and discussion as in any seminar class. I will provide informal feedback on your class participation as we move through the semester, particularly if I have any concerns. I encourage you to reflect on your participation as the class progresses and reach out to me if you have questions or concerns.

The first two-thirds of the semester will be aimed at exploring the comparative model as a way of bringing the work of the Ashcan School and Camden Town groups together into conversation and identifying themes and questions suggested by those comparisons. You will be responsible for generating comparisons for discussion and for writing a research-based essay about one comparison and presenting it to the class. Together as a group, we will then develop a

comparison to present at the Courtauld Symposium on April 15th. (We will use a work of art in the BCMA collection as one-half of this comparison.)

The final third of the semester will be focused on exhibition planning. We will work closely with Anne Collins Goodyear (Co-Director of the BCMA) as we develop an exhibition checklist, including objects from the BCMA collections and a wish list of objects that will complement those works, and identify and develop additional supporting material.

Readings/Videos

All reading for the class are either online resources or scanned PDFs available on Blackboard. In addition, some days I will ask you to watch presentations from the December 2020 symposium on Ashcan/Camden hosted by the Centre for American Art at the Courtauld, found here:

<https://courtauld.ac.uk/event/call-for-participants-the-ashcan-school-and-camden-town-group-comparative-project>

Direct link to the YouTube video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sH6mEq4QFrc&feature=youtu.be>

Timestamps for the video are available on specific assignments, but also on the complete scheduled appended to this syllabus.

Tentative Class Schedule

I. Frameworks

Tu 2/9 Introduction

Th 2/11 Modernism and the City

Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life" (1846)

Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," (1902-03)
in *Art and Theory*, 132-136

Tu 2/16 London: The Camden Town Group

Robert Upstone, "Painters of Modernity: The Camden Town Group"
in *Modern Painters: The Camden Town Group* (Tate, 2008)

David Peters Corbett, "Modern Themes in Camden Town Painting"
in *Modern Painters: The Camden Town Group* (Tate, 2008)

Browse artworks in Tate Britain collection:

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/artworks-r1105779>

Th 2/18 New York: The Ashcan School

Rebecca Zurier "Introduction" and "Another Look at Ashcan School" in *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School* (2006)

Tu 2/23 * Transatlantic Modernisms
(David Peters Corbett, Anne Goodyear, Kelsey Gallagher)

*We will meet on Zoom today so that our guests can join us

David Peters Corbett, 'Camden Town and Ashcan: Difference, Similarity and the "Anglo-American" in the Work of Walter Sickert and John Sloan', *Art History*, 34:4 (September 2011): 774-795

Symposium video, Charles Brock, David Fraser Jenkins, Q+A,
Timestamp: 00:16:30

II. The Artists

Each day, you should prepare for class by reading any assigned essays; reviewing the very brief biography; and spending time with images of works available online. Choose one work that you want to talk about. Do some basic background research on the work in preparation. Be sure you can identify the location of the object, and be sure to look for holdings in U.S. collections.

Please note that the *Grove Dictionary of Art* entries often include very useful bibliographies and links to works of art in various collections.

Th 2/25 Robert Henri, William Glackens, Everett Shinn, George Luks (BCMA)

M. Sue Kendall, "Robert Henri," *Grove Dictionary of Art* (2003)
<https://doi-org.ezproxy.bowdoin.edu/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T037549>

M. Sue Kendall, "William Glackens," *Grove Dictionary of Art* (2003)
<https://doi-org.ezproxy.bowdoin.edu/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T032734>

Janet Marstine, "Everett Shinn," *Grove Dictionary of Art* (2003)
<https://doi-org.ezproxy.bowdoin.edu/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T078275>

Janet Marstine, "George Luks," *Grove Dictionary of Art* (2003)
<https://doi-org.ezproxy.bowdoin.edu/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T052401>

Tu 3/2 Walter Sickert

Lisa Tickner, 'Walter Sickert: The *Camden Town Murder* and Tabloid Crime', in *Modern Life and Modern Subjects* (2000), 11-47

Read Sickert biography in *Camden Town in Context*:
<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/artists-r1105704>

Explore online painting archives at Tate and Art UK (etc.)
<https://artuk.org/>

- Th 3/4 George Bellows (BCMA)
- Edward W. Wolner, 'George Bellows, Georg Simmel and Modernizing New York', *American Art*, 29:1 (Spring 2015): 106-121
- M. Sue Kendall, "George Bellows," *Grove Dictionary of Art* (2003)
<https://doi-org.ezproxy.bowdoin.edu/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T007720>
- Tu 3/9 John Sloan (BCMA)
- Nick Yablon, 'John Sloan and "The Roof Life of the Metropolis,"' *American Art*, 25:2 (Summer 2011): 14-17
- Ilene Susan Fort, "John Sloan," *Grove Dictionary of Art* (2003)
<https://doi-org.ezproxy.bowdoin.edu/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T079198>
- Archives (FYI)
- John Sloan Manuscript Collection, Delaware Art Museum
<https://delart.org/researchers/digital-archives/john-sloan-manuscript-collection/>
- Th 3/12 Harold Gilman, Charles Ginner, Spencer Gore, Robert Bevens
- Read biographies of each artist on *Camden Town in Context*:
<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/camden-town-group/artists-r1105704>
- Explore online painting archives at Tate and Art UK (etc.)
<https://artuk.org/>
- Tu 3/16 Bellows and Sickert
- Th 3/18 Comparing Ashcan and Camden Town: Themes and Pairings
- We will each bring in 3 comparisons to share and discuss
NOTE NEW DATE FOR THIS WORK

Tu 3/23 Spring Break

III. Themes and Comparisons

(These are provisional; we can adapt according to our interests and discoveries)

III. Themes and Comparisons (Revised 3/16)

Th 3/25 Race/Immigration/Labor

Martin Berger, "George Bellows and the Complications of Race," in *George Bellows Revisited*, ed. M. Melissa Wolfe (2016)

Symposium video, Margarita Karasoulas (00:54) and Jackie Francis (2:31:15)

Margaret Stenz, "Notes on the Ethnic Image in Ashcan School Painting" in Part Four (Spring 1999) <http://brickhaus.com/amoore/magazine/ash.html>

Library Visit: Art History Research (Optional): Sunday March 27th at 3:00

Tu 3/30 Environment/Pollution/Animals/City as System

Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Visualizing the Anthropocene," *Public Culture* 26.2 (2014): 213-32.

Th 4/1 Comparison Presentations

Comparison Essay Due in class

Tu 4/6 Work Day: Preparing for the Symposium (BCMA, if needed)

Th 4/8* Rural Modernity/The Environment

A sample comparison (Kelsey Gallagher)

*We will meet on Zoom today so our guest can join us from New York.

Ysanne Holt, 'An Ideal Modernity: Spencer Gore at Letchworth', in *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past, 1880-1940*, eds, David Peters Corbett, Ysanne Holt and Fiona Russell (Yale UP, 2002)

Tu 4/13 Work Day: Preparing for the Symposium

Th 4/15* Courtauld symposium Ashcan/Camden Town, Part II
* The symposium will run from 12:00 to 3:40 pm EST on Zoom. You are invited and encouraged to attend as much of the program as you can, but are only required to attend during our class time.

Tu 4/20 Reflecting on the symposium

IV. Exhibition Planning: Developing an Exhibition Checklist and Supporting Materials (with Anne Goodyear)

At this point in the semester, we will move toward planning for the proposed exhibition. A key task will be identifying a set of core objects at the Museum that we would like to feature, and building a list of loan objects that would be good companions for them. This will be the beginning of an “exhibition checklist.”

As part of this planning, we will also consider what other kind of supporting material we might need and want to develop, potentially including literature reviews of the existing scholarship, identifying potential lenders and objects, and developing a spreadsheet or other database to keep track of our materials.

This will be collaborative and process-oriented, with all of us contributing according to our skills and interests.

Th 4/22 What is a Loan Exhibition? (Anne Goodyear)

Tu 4/27 Back into the Collections (BCMA)

Th 4/29 Exhibition Planning

Tu 5/4 Exhibition Planning (BCMA)

Th 5/7 Exhibition Planning (BCMA)

Tu 5/11 Exhibition Planning

Th 5/13 Exhibition Planning

Tu 5/18 Exhibition Planning (BCMA)

Exhibition Checklist and Supporting Materials Due

December 2020 Symposium Schedule

	Time	Speaker
	00:00:00	Introduction
Part 1	00:16:30	Charles Brock
	00:24:45	David Fraser Jenkins
	00:31:35	Discussion
	00:45:30	John Fagg
	00:54:00	Margarita Karasoulas
	01:04:30	Discussion
	01:14:05	Katie Bourguignon
	01:24:00	Frances Fowle
	01:40:00	Discussion
Part 2	01:48:20	Rebecca Zurier
	01:55:35	Michael Lobel
	02:08:30	Discussion
	02:18:20	Anna Gruetzner Robins
	02:31:15	Jackie Francis
	02:40:50	Discussion
Part 3	02:49:05	Leo Mazow
	03:00:30	Robert Upstone
	03:11:10	Discussion
	03:19:25	Heather Campbell Coyle
	03:30:00	Rachel Stratton
	03:40:50	Discussion
	03:48:15	Wrap-up Discussion and Conclusion