

Introduction to American Art

Instructor: Laura Fravel (Curator, Biggs Museum of American Art)

Description

Learn about American Art from the colonial period to the present with a focus on the art & artists of Delaware and the Delaware River Valley. This course will cover Federal era portraiture and decorative arts, 19th century landscape painting, the rise of impressionism, 20th-century modernism, and contemporary art. Each class will feature objects in the collection of the Biggs Museum of American Art in Dover, Delaware, and connect these to national trends. A sixth optional class will be held in person at the museum.

Weekly Overview

Week 1 (Sept. 6) | EARLY AMERICAN ART

- Federal era portraits, genre scenes, and history painting by artists including John Singleton Copley, Gilbert Stuart, Benjamin West, and Charles Willson Peale
- 18th & early 19th century furniture from Delaware and Philadelphia
- Export porcelain & other ceramics

Week 2 (Sept. 13) | LANDSCAPE PAINTING & EARLY PHOTOGRAPHY

- Hudson River School (1830-1870) landscape painting, including works by Thomas Cole, Asher B. Durand, and Frederic Edwin Church
- Early photographic processes (with guest lecturer Victoria Kenyon, PhD student at the University of Delaware)

Week 3 (Sept. 20) | REALISM & IMPRESSIONISM

- Late 19th-century American painters looking to Europe for training and inspiration
- Artists including Thomas Eakins, Winslow Homer, John Singer Sargent, Childe Hassam, Mary Cassatt, and James McNeill Whistler

Week 4 (Sept. 27) | ILLUSTRATION & EARLY MODERNISM

- Howard Pyle and the Brandywine School, with artists including N.C. Wyeth, Frank Schoonover, and the Red Rose Girls
- Ashcan School painters including Robert Henri, William Glackens, and John Sloan
- The Armory Show (1913) and the introduction of cubism

Week 5 (Oct. 4) | MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART

- Alfred Stieglitz and his gallery "291"
- Artists including Georgia O'Keeffe, Marsden Hartley, and Edward Hopper
- The Great Depression and the rise of American Regionalism, including artists Thomas Hart Benton and Grant Wood
- Abstract Expressionism, including artists Jackson Pollock and Robert Motherwell
- Art from the 1970s through the present, including works by Elizabeth Catlett and Mickalene Thomas

Week 6 (Oct. 11) | OPTIONAL (MUSEUM VISIT)

- Optional in-person visit to the Biggs Museum of American Art in Dover, DE, and tour of the collections (focusing on objects featured in this course)