



Visual Arts History  
Winter 2019

VAH 3392G - Special Topics in Art History  
Baroque Modalities in Modern and Contemporary Art  
Tuesdays, 8:30-11:30  
Visual Arts Building, room 249

**Professor John Hatch**  
Office: VAC 200C  
Hours: Monday and Wednesdays. 13:30-14:30, or by appointment  
Phone: 519-661-2111 ext. 86181 (or 519-661-3440)  
E-mail: [jhatch@uwo.ca](mailto:jhatch@uwo.ca)

**Prerequisite:** 1.0 from VAH 1040 or two of VAH 1041A/B - VAH 1045A/B or permission of the department.

**Course Description:** Revivals are a matter of course in the history of art, the most common being classical ones that look back to the art of the Greeks and Romans. The twentieth century embraced a return to the classical with the famous 'retour à l'ordre' in Europe during the First World War, but this was soon accompanied by an interest and revival of the Baroque that had festered since the publication of the German art historian Heinrich Wölfflin's *Renaissance and Baroque* (1888). Artistically this interest manifested itself initially with the Secession movement in Vienna, and possibly spread to other art nouveau centres. By the 1920s, the Baroque surfaced in Holland and conspired in instigating the break-up of De Stijl, while suffering some frightfully bad press amongst the Polish Constructivists, who nonetheless found the idea of the Baroque a useful critical tool for understanding their own work. However, other Constructivists would not be so damning of the Baroque, finding its approaches to the description of time and space pertinent. Shortly after World War II, there would be something of a larger and more positive explosion of interest in the Baroque; starting in the field of literary criticism, this fascination would soon surface in the cultural studies of Umberto Eco, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, and Michel de Certeau, and find an artistic outlet in the work of Francis Bacon, Emilio Vedova, Lucio Fontana, and the Arte Povera group, amongst many others. This attraction persists and has spread to a variety of media including film and has become a significant undercurrent in Post and Hyper-Modernism. This course outlines the development of this interest in the Baroque up to the present day, examines the possible reasons for it, and highlights its contemporary importance and relevance under the banner of the Neo-Baroque.

**Course Outcomes:** Students will develop skills in critical reading and analysis, as well as further their ability to write clearly and concisely about the topic at hand through a series of

short writing assignments and one lengthier essay assignment. The evaluation for the course also combines a variety of assignments that involve a full range of approaches to the course topic. The Neo-Baroque offers a cross-period study that focuses, in part, on methodology in the study of art history and serves to highlight the shortcomings of art historical concepts, as well as potential through their refinement, as this course proposes to do. In addition, the student is exposed to a new field of research that adds an important new dimension to current Post-Structural studies. In the end, students will have an excellent introductory understanding of what the Neo-Baroque is, its relevancy to the field, and will be provided with a solid grounding in modern and contemporary art practices that embrace a Neo-Baroque approach to production.

**Evaluation:** Marks will be based on the following:

1. 10% to present in 5 minutes an aspect of interest of one of the weekly assigned readings. You will be asked twice randomly during the course of this course what you thought was a particularly interesting idea from one of the readings assigned for a particular week. I will be drawing names out of a hat and I will be choosing which article I want you to provide the class feedback on. If you are absent from class without cause and your name is drawn, you will receive a 0.
2. 20% for a 15-minute presentation of one of the articles listed in the Supplemental Bibliography below. You must choose which article by January 29; select soon since once an article is picked it is no longer available for presentation. Presentations start February 5.
3. 20% for two assignments describing in 500 words what the Baroque/Neo-Baroque is. These are to be handed in at the end of February 15 and the second by March 22. No footnotes or bibliography are required.
4. 20% to make the case for a contemporary art work (1980 and after) to be a candidate for the label "Neo-Baroque". In 500-750 words (max) propose an art work or group of related works (this can include television shows or movies) as a strong candidate for this course. You will need to footnote and provide a bibliography for this assignment. Alternatively, you can opt to simply present your case in class and do so in 5-7 minutes; no write-up is required, but a bibliography must be supplied. This is due April 2 in either form, written or presented.
5. A major assignment worth 30% and due April 9 that can take the form of either:
  - a) the writing of standard academic essay of around 2000-2500 words (typed, double spaced, approx. 8-10 pages), or something a tad more creative such as a mock interview with an artist or group of artists.
  - b) the curation of an imaginary art show involving at least 10 works. The show must include documentation relevant to each work and an essay that explains the rationale for exhibiting these works together (this must be quite specific) -- the written documentation should add up to at least 2000 words (a bibliography must be included). A layout of how the works would be hung should be supplied as well.

c) The production of a website revolving around an artist or an art movement, or even one of the sections or sub-sections of the course. The website should have a well-laid out rationale for its existence, and there should be at least 1500 words worth of original text (and include a bibliography).

**N.B.** Team proposals/projects will be considered. Also, all written assignments must conform to the Chicago Manual of Style ([www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html)). All assignments must be handed in digitally to the OWL site.

**Penalties:** any assignment submitted late will be penalized 5% per day and will not be accepted 5 days past its due date.

**Course Materials:** The materials for this course are available either on-line, through the Weldon Library website, or will be posted on the OWL course site.