

Terra Foundation for American Art Visiting Professorship at the Kennedy Institute

Laura Katzman's Courses in the Summer Term 2019

BA

New Deal Art: The Visual Culture of Thirties America

(course number: 32101)

Wednesdays 10 a.m. – noon, Kennedy Institute (Lansstr. 7-9, 14195 Berlin) room 319;

first session on April 10, 2019

This seminar examines the visual culture of 1930s America, in the context of the economic crisis of the Great Depression and the rural devastation wrought by the Dust Bowl that ravaged much of the American South and the Midwest. We will investigate the unprecedented role the New Deal government played as art patron, with the establishment of federal art programs that commissioned artists to create public murals, sculpture, graphic art, photography, film, theatre, and music, which aimed to bring art to the “masses” and construct a national artistic culture. Contemporaneous and controversial debates about government support for the arts and the role of art in a Western capitalist democracy will also be studied, along with recent scholarly approaches to New Deal art that consider perspectives of race, class, and gender. Other topics of discussion will include the political radicalization of artists, art as weapon against war and fascism, and art and the labor movement. We will analyze artistic styles ranging from Midwestern regionalism to urban social realism and the phenomenon of American scene painting. Particular attention will be given to the documentary aesthetic, as exemplified by the now iconic photography commissioned by the legendary Farm Security Administration (FSA).

Please register at: culture@jfki.fu-berlin.de with your name, matriculation number, study program, zedat email address or email address of home university, and type of exchange program (if applicable). **Deadline for registration is April 8, 2019.** Self-enrollment in Campus Management and Blackboard is not possible. A final list of participants will be published in the first session of the course on April 10.

MA

Commemoration and Controversy: Public Art in the United States

(course number: 32113)

Wednesdays 2 – 4 p.m., Kennedy Institute (Lansstr. 7-9, 14195 Berlin) room 319;

first session on April 10, 2019

This seminar examines the artistic, social, historical, political, and philosophical issues in public art at critical moments in the history of the United States, from the early Republic to the present day. We will investigate the nature of public art, its uses and functions, as well as civic and official attitudes towards art in the public sphere. Particular attention will be given to issues of censorship, propaganda, and the “culture wars” that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, as they relate to on-going, heated debates over government support of the arts. Many of our sessions will focus on commissioned monuments and memorials, looking at the ways in which Americans remember, articulate, and memorialize their past. Given the highly contentious debates that have exploded in recent years around Confederate monuments and Civil War commemoration, we will probe the multi-faceted national discussion about America’s slave history and the legacy of racism in contemporary U.S. culture. As Berlin is a city with a renowned memorial culture, cross-cultural comparisons between German and American public monuments will be an essential part of this seminar, as will field trips to iconic memorials in the German capital.

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