

DRAFT

WOODSWORTH COLLEGE University of Toronto
2025 Siena Summer Abroad Program

FAH 394Y0: Italy in International Modernism: 1909 to the present

Instructor: Prof. Elizabeth Legge eliz.legge@utoronto.ca

This course follows Italian art within the history of European and international modernism, from the First Futurist Manifesto in 1909 rejecting the “eternal and futile worship of the past,” through the problematic modernity of Italian Fascism, the witty Arte Povera works made with unexpected things, the postmodern “transavantgarde” painters of the 1980’s who wanted to put together “a past removed from the rhetoric of the great traditions,” up to the controversial and parodic art of Maurizio Cattelan (whose real banana duct-taped to a wall just sold in November 2024 for \$6.2 million). All of these artists and movements work with, and sometimes play with, expectations created by the weight of Classical Antiquity and Italy’s Renaissance past.

We take field trips to the spectacular collections of Italian and international modern and contemporary art. These offer a rich context for this exploration of the dynamic Italy of the past hundred years. (Locations of field trips to be confirmed).

In this course you will be given the opportunity to think about what it’s like to be cutting-edge contemporary while living in a museum. The assignments give you the opportunity to work on your own critical writing skills, allowing you to approach the material as if you were a professional curator, critic, and creative writer.

Reading in support of your essays: When thinking about the work you want to write about for the course assignments consult these helpful online books offer an overview of modern and contemporary art.

Arnason, H. H. *A History of Modern Art : Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*. New York: 1998. https://archive.org/details/historyofmoderna00arna_0

Brettell, Richard R. *Modern Art, 1851-1929 : Capitalism and Representation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. Online: <https://archive.org/details/modernart18511920000bret>

Cottini, Luca. *Art of Objects: the Birth of Italian Industrial Culture, 1878-1928*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018. (Available online through U of T libraries)

Hopkins, David. *After Modern Art: 1945-2017*. Second edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. (Available online through U of T libraries)

Fallan, Kjetil, and Grace Lees-Maffei, eds. *Made in Italy : Rethinking a Century of Italian Design*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014. (Available online through U of T libraries)

White, Anthony. *Italian Modern Art in the Age of Fascism*. New York: Routledge, 2019. (Available online through U of T libraries)

Marking Scheme:

Class participation 5%

This means alert/awake attendance, and preparedness to enter into discussion.

1. Essay 35%

You should prepare this assignment in advance of the course beginning

One of the great twentieth century Italian contributions has been in the area of industrial design. Choose *one work* of twentieth century Italian design. Write a five page (1250 word) essay on that object.

*Part of this assignment is doing research and finding information. A good place to start looking for an object is in Claudia Neumann, *Design Directory Italy* in Files on the Quercus course page

Some things to consider:

What function does the object fulfill?

How is it innovative?

How does it fit into a particular social or historical context?

You need at least TWO *academic* sources, books or articles that **are not open online pages of Wikipedia**. Go into the U of T library catalogue and search for books or articles on your subject. These may include the books listed in “Reading” (above).

If you are unsure of your references, email the instructor for advice!

2. Two art response short essays

Value: 60% (30 marks each)

1000 words per work of art:

Due: September 1st

Write 2 individual responses to 3 works of art that you have seen in the Gori Collection, Venice, Rome, Tuscany, or anywhere during the course. This will be a *close examination and interpretation of a work of art*.

You might want to talk about how this work is typical of a given artist or movement, referring to the books in the reading list, or to the course lectures.

You might think about the ways that the artist’s choice of materials, techniques, and scale affect what we take away from the work. Consider the way that the physical location and installation of the work affects the way that it may be understood.

Take this opportunity to use your eyes, to look closely at the work. Try and find the language to describe it, the ways it’s made, and your own responses to it.

One way to prepare for this is to make notes as we visit different locations, so that you have material to work with.

You may only write about things we have actually seen during the course

Course Schedule – Field trips to be confirmed

Monday 4	Introduction
Tuesday 5	20 th Century Sculpture
Wednesday 6	Field Trip: Gori Site Specific Sculpture Collection, Pistoia
Thursday 7	Fascism, Sironi
Monday 11	Futurism
Tuesday 12	Surrealism, Pollock, Kapoor
Wednesday 13	Field Trip: Venice Guggenheim Museum
Thursday 14	Walking tour, Punta della Dogana Museum
Monday 18	Metaphysical Art
Tuesday 19	Burri, Fontana, Manzoni
Wednesday 20	Transavanguardia
Thursday 21	Bus Trip and walking: Contemporary Art Installations in Colle di Val d'Elsa, Poggibonsi, San Gimignano
Monday 25	Ara Pacis / Italian Design
Tuesday 26	Arte Povera
Wednesday 27	Field Trip: TBA
Thursday 28	TBA

*Note on Plagiarism from the University of Toronto Academic Integrity Handbook

If you plagiarize, or cut and paste from the internet, you will be given a failing grade.

Plagiarism is the most common academic offence.

Plagiarism includes failing to cite sources AND/OR failing to place within quotation marks material taken verbatim from a source, regardless of whether the material is acknowledged with a citation. **Failure to use quotation marks is an academic offence.**

The inclusion of false, misleading, or concocted references is an offence which often occurs in conjunction with plagiarism. This can be a product of sloppy research or a deliberate attempt to mislead the reader into thinking that the paper has been properly researched and cited. Both are inappropriate, the latter much more so.

“If you do not tell your reader where you found the material or idea by providing an accurate reference to the source from which you borrowed it or if you don’t place within quotation marks material taken word for word, this is plagiarism.”

Arts and Science Statement on What Grades Mean

Percentage	Letter Grade	Grade Point Value	Grade Definition	
90-100	A+	4.0	Excellent	Strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
85-89	A	4.0		
80-84	A-	3.7		
77-79	B+	3.3	Good	Evidence of grasp of subject matter, some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with literature
73-76	B	3.0		
70-72	B-	2.7		
67-69	C+	2.3	Adequate	Student who is profiting from the university experience; understanding of the subject matter and ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.
63-66	C	2.0		
60-62	C-	1.7		
57-59	D+	1.3	Marginal	Some evidence of familiarity with the subject matter and some evidence that critical and analytic skills have been developed.
53-56	D	1.0		
50-52	D-	0.7		
0-49	F	0.0	Inadequate	Little evidence of even superficial understanding of subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited or irrelevant use of literature.