

northwestern university  
DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY

Quarter/Year

Fall 2016

Course Number

ART-HIST 255

Day/Time

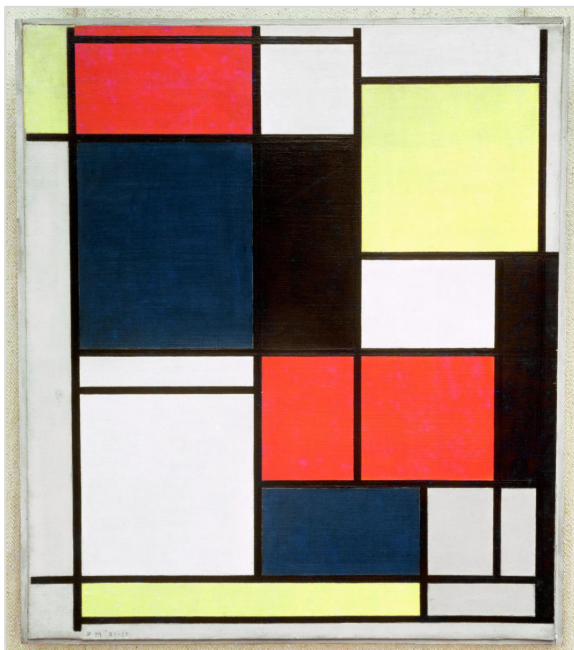
MW 12:30-1:50

Instructor

KIAER

Course Title

Introduction to Modernism



This course introduces the concept of modernism in art. The historical period we call modernity—defined by industrialization, urbanization, colonization, the rise of mass commodity culture, mass spectacle and technology, revolution and mass war, as well as the emergence of the art market as we know it today—has been called both a dreamworld and a catastrophe. Modernist art was its harbinger and spokesperson, optimistically mimicking the new forms of modernity’s mass visual culture or, more commonly, reworking or rejecting those forms in a critical commentary on both society and the artistic conventions that upheld its inequities. Proceeding from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century, primarily in Europe, we will examine the key modernist “isms”: Impressionism, Cubism, Dadaism, Surrealism, Suprematism, Constructivism, Purism and Socialist Realism, as well as the rise of abstraction culminating in Abstract Expressionism.

Image: Piet Mondrian, *Tableau No. 2 with Red, Blue, Black and Gray*, 1921-25

Required Textbooks

Hal Foster et al., *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism, Vol. 1: 1900-1944*

Assessments

Midterm & final exams; one ca. 2 pp. paper before midterm; one ca. 5 pp. paper after midterm; a 1-2-page report on an arts event, due date variable; participation in discussion section and class attendance.