

ART-911: Understanding Western Art (The Great Courses Series)

Independent Study Online Course Syllabus

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Number of Graduate Semester Units: 3 units
Target Audience: K - 14th grade teachers
Course Access: <https://connect.fresno.edu>

Course Description

Western art, from the ancient world to the present, offers far more than beautiful images—it provides powerful stories, cultural insight, and rich opportunities for teaching across the curriculum. In this 25-lecture course, K–12 educators gain both a strong foundation in Western art history *and* practical strategies for bringing these ideas into their classrooms through engaging lessons, interdisciplinary connections, and creative student activities.

Designed with teachers in mind, this course explores the major themes, principles, and expressive movements of Western art while continually connecting them to instructional practice. Participants will examine masterworks by artists such as Phidias, Michelangelo, Leonardo, Rembrandt, Vermeer, Monet, Van Gogh, and many others—and learn how to use these works to support learning in art, history, literature, and beyond.

By the end of the course, teachers will not only deepen their appreciation of Western art but will also leave with practical tools, adaptable lesson ideas, and renewed confidence in using art to enrich student learning across subjects. This course empowers educators to make art a living, meaningful part of the K–12 classroom—one that strengthens critical thinking, creativity, and cultural understanding.

Note: Course guidebook is included with the cost of the course.

Required Texts and Course Materials

Course Guidebook: Charney, Noah. (2025). Post-Impressionism: The Beginnings of Modern Art. The Teaching Company.

Canvas: This course will be delivered totally online. Canvas is a web-based learning management system (LMS) that provides students access to online resources, documents, videos, assignments, quizzes, forums, etc. Canvas is easy to learn and has a user-friendly interface.

Online Resources: Relevant online resources that support the course content and encourage further investigation will be available throughout the course assignments. Active hyperlinks are

utilized throughout the course and will link to the appropriate information when clicked. These include videos, podcasts, worksheets, online activities, journal articles and other resources.

Course Dates

Self-paced; students may enroll at any time and take up to one year, from the date of registration, to complete assignments. Students may complete assignments in no less than three weeks for a 3-unit course (one week per unit).

National Standards Addressed in This Course

National Core Arts Standards (NCCAS) (<https://www.nationalartsstandards.org>)

- Anchor Standard #1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- Anchor Standard #2. Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.
- Anchor Standard #3. Refine and complete artistic work.
- Anchor Standard #4. Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.
- Anchor Standard #5. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.
- Anchor Standard #6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
- Anchor Standard #7. Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- Anchor Standard #8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- Anchor Standard #9. Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.
- Anchor Standard #10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences in art.
- Anchor Standard #11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

Continuing Education Student Learning Outcomes (CE-SLO)

CE-SLO 1	Demonstrate proficient written communication by articulating a clear focus, synthesizing arguments, and utilizing standard formats in order to inform and persuade others, and present information applicable to targeted use.
CE-SLO 2	Demonstrate comprehension of content-specific knowledge and the ability to apply it in theoretical, personal, professional, or societal contexts.
CE-SLO 3	Reflect on their personal and professional growth and provide evidence of how such reflection is utilized to manage personal and professional improvement.
CE-SLO 4	Apply critical thinking competencies by generating probing questions, recognizing underlying assumptions, interpreting and evaluating relevant information, and applying their understandings to the professional setting.
CE-SLO 5	Reflect on values that inspire high standards of professional and ethical behavior as they pursue excellence in applying new learning to their chosen field.
CE-SLO 6	Identify information needed in order to fully understand a topic or task, organize that information, identify the best sources of information for a given enquiry, locate and critically evaluate sources, and accurately and effectively share that information.

Course Student Learning Outcomes (C-SLO)

Student Learning Outcomes for This Course By the end of this course, the students will be able to:		National Standards Addressed*	CE-SLO Addressed**
C-SLO 1	Identify the influences that developed the genres of art that flourished in Western culture.	NCCAS 1, 7, 8, 11	CE 2, 4
C-SLO 2	Identify the cultural, religious, and philosophical influences on the symbolism evident in Western art.	NCCAS 1, 7, 8, 11	CE 2, 4
C-SLO 3	Develop lessons and activities to engage students at higher levels of thinking as they learn to see art as a reflection of and influencer of culture and thought.	NCCAS 7, 8, 9, 11	CE 5, 6
C-SLO 4	Develop lessons and activities that deepen awareness of societal concerns and encourage involvement and empathy.	NCCAS 7, 8, 9, 11	CE 5, 6
C-SLO 5	Identify strategies to integrate arts education into the curriculum in ways that increase student creativity, confidence in finding solutions to problems, and ability to make interdisciplinary connections in their learning.	NCCAS 7, 8, 9, 11	CE 6

* Please refer to the section on **National Standards Addressed in This Course**

** Please refer to the section on **Continuing Education Student Learning Outcomes**

Topics, Assignments, and Activities

Module Title	Module Assignments and Activities	Points Possible
Home Page	- Welcome Video - Course Syllabus - Introduce Yourself Forum	
Module 1 – Capturing Form; Order and Symmetry	- Watch videos 1-3 - Read Guidebook Lectures 1-3 1.1 Knowledge Check on Lectures 1-3 1.2 Reflective Forum (Choice of 3 Prompts) 1.3 Choice Application Assignment	10 20 30
Module 2 – Symbols in Art, Color, Textiles and Women Artists	- Watch videos 4-6 - Read Guidebook Lectures 4-6 2.1 Knowledge Check on Lectures 4-6 2.2 Reflective Forum (Choice of 3 Prompts) 2.3 Choice Application Assignment	10 20 30
Module 3 – Renaissance, Perspective, Illusion, Stories and Allegories	- Watch videos 7-9 - Read Guidebook Lectures 7-9 3.1 Knowledge Check on Lectures 7-9 3.2 Reflective Forum (Choice of 3 Prompts) 3.3 Choice Application Assignment	10 20 30

Module Title	Module Assignments and Activities	Points Possible
Module 4 – Rivalry, Competition, Portraiture, Light and Dark	• Watch videos 10-12 • Read Guidebook Lectures 10-12 • 4.1 Knowledge Check on Lectures 10-12 • 4.2 Reflective Forum (Choice of 3 Prompts) • 4.3 Choice Application Assignment	10 20 30
Module 5 – Puzzle Pictures, Mass-Produced Art, Everyday Life	• Watch videos 13-15 • Read Guidebook Lectures 13-15 • 5.1 Knowledge Check on Lectures 13-15 • 5.2 Reflective Forum (Choice of 3 Prompts) • 5.3 Choice Application Assignment	10 20 30
Module 6 – Love and Lust, Death and Sorrow, Collectors and Markets	• Watch videos 16-18 • Read Guidebook Lectures 16-18 • 6.1 Knowledge Check on Lectures 16-18 • 6.2 Reflective Forum (Choice of 3 Prompts) • 6.3 Choice Application Assignment	10 20 30
Module 7 – Water, Self- Portraits, Photography	• Watch videos 19-21 • Read Guidebook Lectures 19-21 • 7.1 Knowledge Check on Lectures 19-21 • 7.2 Reflective Forum (Choice of 3 Prompts) • 7.3 Choice Application Assignment	10 20 30
Module 8 – Modernism, Abstraction, Animals, Conservation, Authenticity	• Watch videos 22-25 • Read Guidebook Lectures 22-25 • 8.1 Knowledge Check on Lectures 22-25 • 8.2 Reflective Forum (Choice of 3 Prompts) • 8.3 Choice Application Assignment • 8.4 Final Reflection Forum	10 20 30 20
Course Wrap-up – Grading and Evaluation	• Final Reflection Forum • Course Evaluation • Course Completion Checklist • Grade Request / Transcript Request	
	TOTAL POINTS	500 points

Grading Policies, Rubrics, and Requirements for Assignments

Grading Policies

- Assignments will be graded per criteria presented in the course rubrics.
- A = 90-100% and B = 80-89%, (anything below 80% will not receive credit.)
- The discernment between an A or a B letter grade is at the discretion of the instructor based on the quality of work submitted (see course rubrics).
- Coursework falling below a B grade will be returned with further instructions.
- All assignments must be completed to receive a grade and are expected to reflect the quality that teacher-training institutions require of professional educators. If completed assignments do not meet this standard, students will be notified with further instructions from the instructor.

Grading Rubrics

Grade	Percent	Description	Rubric
A	90-100%	Excellent	Meets all course / assignment requirements with significant evidence of subject mastery and demonstration of excellent graduate level professional development scholarship.
B	80-89%	Very Good	Adequately meets criteria for all course/assignment requirements - demonstrates subject competency with very good graduate level professional development scholarship.
NC	Below 80%	Unacceptable	Does not meet the minimum criteria for all course/assignment requirements and demonstrated little, if any, evidence of acceptable graduate level professional development scholarship.

Writing Requirements

- **Superior:** Writing is clear, succinct, and reflects graduate level expectations. Clearly addresses all parts of the writing task. Maintains a consistent point of view and organizational structure. Includes relevant facts, details, and explanations.
- **Standard:** Writing is acceptable with very few mistakes in grammar and spelling. Addresses most parts of the writing task. Maintains a mostly consistent point of view and organizational structure. Includes mostly relevant facts, details, and explanations.
- **Sub-standard:** Writing contains noticeable mistakes in grammar and spelling. Does not address all parts of the writing task. Lacks a consistent point of view and organizational structure. May include marginally relevant facts, details, and explanations.

Lesson Plan Requirements

- **Superior:** Instructional goals and objectives clearly stated. Instructional strategies appropriate for learning outcome(s). Method for assessing student learning and evaluating instruction is clearly delineated and authentic. All materials necessary for student and teacher to complete lesson clearly listed.
- **Standard:** Instructional goals and objectives are stated but are not easy to understand. Some instructional strategies are appropriate for learning outcome(s). Method for assessing student learning and evaluating instruction is present. Most materials necessary for student and teacher to complete lesson are listed.
- **Sub-standard:** Instructional goals and objectives are not stated. Learners cannot tell what is expected of them. Instructional strategies are missing or strategies used are inappropriate. Method for assessing student learning and evaluating instruction is missing. Materials necessary for student and teacher to complete lesson are missing.

Instructor/Student Contact Information

Throughout the course participants will be communicating with the instructor and their classmates on a regular basis using asynchronous discussion forums. Students are provided with instructor contact information in the event they want to make email or phone contact. In addition, students are encouraged to email or phone the instructor at any time. Students will also receive feedback on the required assignments as they are submitted.

Forums

Participation is an important expectation of this course and all online courses. Online discussions promote reflection and analysis while allowing students to appreciate and evaluate positions that others express. While students may not be engaging with the same students throughout this course, they will be expected to offer comments, questions, and replies to the discussion question whenever possible. The faculty role in the discussion forum is that of an observer and facilitator.

Coursework Hours

Based on the Carnegie Unit standard, a unit of graduate credit measures academic credit based on the number of hours the student is engaged in learning. This includes all time spent on the course: reading the textbook, watching videos, listening to audio lessons, researching topics, writing papers, creating projects, developing lesson plans, posting to discussion boards, etc. Coursework offered for FPU Continuing Education graduate credit adheres to 45 hours per semester unit for the 900-level courses. Therefore, a student will spend approximately 135 hours on a typical 3-unit course.

Services for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are eligible for reasonable accommodations in their academic work in all classes. In order to receive assistance, the student with a disability must provide the Academic Support Center with documentation, which describes the specific disability. The documentation must be from a qualified professional in the area of the disability (i.e. psychologist, physician or educational diagnostician). Once documentation is on file, arrangements for reasonable accommodations can be made. For more information and for downloadable forms, please go to <https://www.fresno.edu/departments/disability-access-education>.

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty

All people participating in the educational process at Fresno Pacific University are expected to pursue honesty and integrity in all aspects of their academic work. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will be handled per the procedures set forth in the Fresno Pacific University Catalogue and Handbook - <https://handbook.fresno.edu/graduate/academic-policies>

Technology Requirements

To successfully complete the course requirements, course participants will need Internet access, can send and receive email, know how to manage simple files in a word processing program, and have a basic understanding of the Internet. Please remember that the instructor is not able to offer technical support. If you need technical support, please contact your Internet Service Provider.

Getting Help with Canvas: If you need help with Canvas, please contact the FPU Help Desk by phone: (559) 453-3410 or email: helpdesk@fresno.edu. Help is available Mon-Fri 8:00 am to 7:00 pm.

Final Course Grade and Transcripts

When all work for the course has been completed, students will need to request their final grade by accessing the form at ce.fresno.edu/grade-request. Once the instructor receives the request and

posts their final grade, students will receive an email communication from the University. Please allow at least two weeks for the final grade to be posted before you order your transcripts online.

University Policies and Procedures

Students are responsible for becoming familiar with the information presented in the Academic Catalog and for knowing and observing all policies and procedures related to their participation in the university community. A summary of university policies may be found on the university website at <https://www.fresno.edu/departments/registrar-office/academic-catalogs>.

Fresno Pacific University Student Learning Outcomes (FPU-SLO)

FPU-SLO 1	Oral Communication: Students will <i>exhibit</i> clear, engaging, and confident oral communication – in both individual and group settings – and will critically <i>evaluate</i> content and delivery components.
FPU-SLO 2	Written Communication: Students will <i>demonstrate</i> proficient written communication by <i>articulating</i> a clear focus, <i>synthesizing</i> arguments, and utilizing standard formats in order to <i>inform</i> and <i>persuade</i> others.
FPU-SLO 3	Content Knowledge: Students will <i>demonstrate</i> comprehension of content-specific knowledge and the ability to apply it in theoretical, personal, professional, or societal contexts.
FPU-SLO 4	Reflection: Students will <i>reflect</i> on their personal and professional growth and <i>provide evidence</i> of how such reflection is utilized to manage personal and vocational improvement.
FPU-SLO 5	Critical Thinking: Students will <i>apply</i> critical thinking competencies by <i>generating</i> probing questions, <i>recognizing</i> underlying assumptions, <i>interpreting</i> and <i>evaluating</i> relevant information, and <i>applying</i> their understandings to new situations.
FPU-SLO 6	Moral Reasoning: Students will <i>identify</i> and <i>apply</i> moral reasoning and ethical decision-making skills, and <i>articulate</i> the norms and principles underlying a Christian worldview.
FPU-SLO 7	Service: Students will <i>demonstrate</i> service and reconciliation as a way of leadership.
FPU-SLO 8	Cultural and Global Perspective: Students will <i>identify</i> personal, cultural, and global perspectives and will employ these perspectives to <i>evaluate</i> complex systems.
FPU-SLO 9	Quantitative Reasoning: Students will accurately <i>compute</i> calculations and symbolic operations and <i>explain</i> their use in a field of study.
FPU-SLO 10	Information Literacy: Students will <i>identify</i> information needed in order to fully understand a topic or task, <i>explain</i> how that information is organized, <i>identify</i> the best sources of information for a given enquiry, <i>locate</i> and critically <i>evaluate</i> sources, and accurately and effectively <i>share</i> that information.