From Neoclassicism (pp. 330-334) to Romanticism (pp. 339-348)

Neoclassicism:
- History Painting: Antiquity as moral example
- **Kauffmann** and **David**
- Neoclassical (Federal) architecture: Thomas **Jefferson**

Romanticism:
- Spain **Goya**: the artist as a revolutionary
- France **Gericault**: contemporary History Painting
- England **Constable** and **Turner**: industrial revolution and new perception of nature
Neoclassicism:

During the 18th century, European culture was transformed by an interest in ancient Greece and Rome. Classical culture was not just an artistic/stylistic model. Politicians, writers, and artists, inspired by Classical Antiquity, promoted lessons from ancient literature and history as models for behavior.

Angelica Kauffmann’s *Cornelia Mother of the Gracchi*

Is a typical work in the ancient “manner” (style) with moralizing subjects drawn from antiquity.

Angelica Kauffmann, *Cornelia Mother of the Gracchi*, oil on canvas, 1785
Subject matter: a Roman woman, Cornelia, was asked by her friend to display her jewels; the friend was surprised when Cornelia presented her children.

Like much of Neoclassical art, Kaufmann’s painting is meant to instruct her contemporaries in what were held at the time to be enduring values of life:

The Romans were taken as a model of laic virtuosity and simplicity that corresponded to the ideas promoted by the Enlightenment (as opposed to the religious emotionalism of Baroque).
Angelica Kauffmann, *Cornelia Mother of the Gracchi*, oil on canvas, 1785

This type of works, regarded as the highest form of painting in the 18th cent., were called **history paintings**

**History painting**: Painting in which the subject-matter is taken from classical, mythological, or biblical history.

The artist had to show all his/her talents—not only the skill of eye and hand, but also his/her mastery of the erudite subject-matter

Angelica Kauffmann achieved success in this area and was chosen to be a founding member of the Royal Academy in London
The most famous author of History paintings was the French David,

In his celebrated *Oath of the Horatii*, Classical history is taken as model for morality

**Subject:** Republican Rome, 3 sons will fight to save their patria,

Moment represented: Their *oath to their father*: they will win or die

**Despair of their wives**
David, *Oath of the Horatii*, 1784, oil on canvas

Classical moral example, values

Reminds us of…

The project of Enlightenment: ideals can change the world!

We are just **before** French Revolution
Antiquity is filtered through the Italian Renaissance (3 elements):

1) rational use of space (scientific perspective with central focal point)
2) archeological representation of history,
3) perfectly defined/drawn figures (line = rationality)
In America, the Classical example was even more important

More than painting, it was the Neoclassical architectural style that became particularly meaningful here

Neoclassicism was interpreted as the perfect image of the United States, as the nation adopted a democratic form of government following the Revolution (1775-1783)
This style is known in the US also as Federal style because of its prominent use for government buildings.

**Thomas Jefferson** (1743-1826), the principal author of the *Declaration of Independence* (1776) and 3rd president of the US (1801-09)

was the main architect in this style, designing both public and private buildings.

He studied Roman architecture while he was serving as US ambassador to France.

in the years (1780s) of the excavations at Pompeii.
In his country home, Monticello, the combination of pedimented entrance and dome is clearly inspired by the Roman Pantheon, but readapted to a domestic building.

Soon houses throughout the United States would sport Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian capitals and pediments as an indication of American democratic ideals.
James Hoban,
The White House,
Washington,
D.C., c. 1795
Romanticism

Goya, Disasters of War, No. 15: And It Can't Be Helped, 1810-1820, etching

The **revolutions** of the 18th cent. were seen as the consequences of the Enlightenment’s ideas that expressed itself through a Neoclassical style. **Romanticism** was the product of the following generation, those who **suffered the violent years of the Napoleonic conquests**
Romanticism

Goya, Disasters of War, No. 15: And It Can't Be Helped, 1810-1820, etching

3 main themes/dichotomies emerged:

1) individual vs. History
2) Individual vs. People
3) Humanity vs. Nature
Spanish painter Goya was the same age as David,

Nevertheless, he expressed through images the sufferings of his people

Scholars have identified him as the first Romantic (modern) artist
Goya, *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, from *Los Caprichos*, ca. 1798, etching

He represents the crisis of David’s world

*The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* opens a long series of etchings

**Etching:** A printing technique: produced through an engraved metal, glass, or stone

Subject matter: the artist asleep and his nightmares created by his mind

The Enlightenment is over and the Neoclassical rationality is substituted by a new kind of imagery:

the irrational aspects of the individual

and the disquieting mood of his historical moment
Goya, *The Third of May 1808*, 1814, oil on canvas

Most famous painting by Goya:

**Subject matter:**
Napoleonic soldiers **executing** Spanish citizens after their **rebellion**

It is night, just outside the sleeping, silent town
Goya depicts the wall of soldiers without faces

Murdering the terrified Spanish peasants

A lantern on the ground illuminates the scene

In the foreground are dead bodies of those already executed:

the viewer’s gaze should pass over them to see the main figure

In the background those waiting for their turn

Goya, *The Third of May 1808*, 1814, oil on canvas
Formal analysis:

Light:

contrast light/dark=
victim/executioner=
Individual/history

Goya, *The Third of May 1808*, 1814, oil on canvas
instead of the rational use of lines that Neoclassicism employed to define each figure

Goya uses pure colors given with violent brushstrokes (there is no drawing)
Victims and executioners are represented unrealistically close in order to enhance this dramatic encounter.

2 symbols (iconographic interpretation):

1) The lantern has been interpreted as a sarcastic comment to the effect of the Enlightenment. That was supposed to be the age of reason, but produced the total irrationality of war.

Goya, *The Third of May 1808*, 1814, oil on canvas
2) **victim** repeats the iconography of the **crucified Christ**:

Christ sacrificed his life to save humanity,

**this sacrifice is useless**

The beginning of modernity corresponds with the **lost of faith**

Enlightenment and the Revolution had **destroyed the consolation of faith**

Humans now face a **senseless, cruel History**

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Goya, *The Third of May 1808*, 1814, oil on canvas
Goya introduced 2 characteristics that would be considered a fundamental peculiarity of the modern artist:

1) **Contemporary facts** are worthy subject matters for public, monumental artworks

2) And art is a way to effectively express **thoughts and criticism** about main issues in the current debate (the artist as a revolutionary)
After the restoration of an authoritarian monarchy, Goya spent the last years of his life in exile.

He became progressively disillusioned and pessimistic.

His last works, called the Black Paintings, were covering the walls of his house, Quinta del Sordo. Here Goya’s monsters became the terrifying characters of monumental visionary paintings.

Goya has been considered the first modern artist in the history of art for a further reason:

A person able to represent the feelings, the nightmares, and the weakness of a whole society or historical period by means of his/her art.
French painter **Géricault** readapted **David’s way of painting** to his generation’s sensibility

**Subject matter:** contemporary political scandal

The French ship **Medusa** had foundered off the African coast in **1816**

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Géricault, *Raft of the Medusa*, 1818-1819, oil on canvas 16’ x 23’
The incident was the result of tragic mismanagement by corrupted officials:

Scandal against the restored monarchy

The painting is a POLITICAL MANIFESTO

Presenting some of the most debated themes

Géricault, *Raft of the Medusa*, 1818-1819, oil on canvas 16’ x 23’
Géricault, *Raft of the Medusa*, 1818-1819, oil on canvas 16’ x 23’

G. represents the most tragic moment (useless hope)

Without faith humanity is now alone also before the terribleness of Nature: the **SUBLIME**

**Sublime:** such excellence, grandeur, or beauty as to inspire great admiration but also awe
History is *every day* in the newspaper

The life of *common people* is determined by *chance*

*Ocean*: natural, irrational, infinite, stormy, liquid

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1) **History** is Rome

2) The will of **heroes** determine History

3) The environment reflects characters: events take place in a man-made, rational, measurable, sober, solid **architecture**
Constable, *The Haywain*, 1821, oil on canvas

**Subject matter:**

There is no significant subject:

Only the quite, everyday life of the British countryside.
The developments of the Industrial Revolution are changing the face of Europe. There is a new consciousness (2 aspects):
1) Dichotomy natural as opposed to artificial, countryside as opposed to city (two different ways of life)
2) landscape as NATIONAL IDENTITY. This is OUR landscape!
The Industrial Revolution has changed the perception of TIME (no longer a natural/biological time)

Search for an **OBJECTIVE gaze**

C. Was particularly famous in his time for his skies

he painted several **studies of clouds** (studies for more complex paintings)

New attention to **time** (he wrote time and atmospheric conditions on the back of each canvas)
British painter Turner expressed another way of feeling Nature. The relationship Humans-Nature in Turner is linked to the new notion of History. Humans and their History are little and insignificant if compared to Nature.
Turner, *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On*, 1840, oil on canvas

Contemporary debate: slaver ship in the midst of a coming typhoon:

dead and dying slaves are being thrown overboard in order to lose weight (and to be refunded)

Turner was an active abolitionist

the ship is very likely going to perish anyway being in the middle of the VORTEX

The storm-tossed boat is a common Romantic subject matter (metaphor for life)

How does Turner paint it?
Turner, *Yellow Sky*, 1840–1845, oil on millboard