Details: Submit a paper that is no longer than 6 pages double spaced, and no shorter than 4. Modern Art as Self-Critical and the Shock of the New Modern art contains so many different and contradictory tendencies that it is often difficult to see what it all has in common. But one of the things that seems to tie it all together is a reflection on the very conditions of art and art making. This is famously described by Clement Greenberg: “The essence of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence. Kant used logic to establish the limits of logic, and while he withdrew much from its old jurisdiction, logic was left all the more secure in what there remained to it.” Greenberg went on to focus on the idea of “medium.” Modern art was not just a critical examination of its own conditions, but a critical examination of medium in particular. Each medium was engaged in experimenting with what is and is not necessary to remain what it is: what can you get rid of and still have a “painting”? What can you get rid of and still have “poetry”? Music? Film? And, once you have purified each medium, how can you explore the potential that is left over? This strikes me as a good starting point for understanding modern art, but it also seems too narrow, too programmatic. It doesn’t engage with the chaos that is modern art. And it doesn’t engage with some of the more philosophical or political dimensions to the art. Modernism isn’t just about making formal progress, but also about creating the “shock of the new.” Of creating artworks that challenge viewers and challenge traditional notions of what an artwork should be/look like. Furthermore, it is not always clear that a given movement is interested in “entrenching itself more firmly in its area of competence.” Is Dada trying to entrench painting, collage, art? Or is it getting after something more fully negative, critical? What about cubism? Bauhaus? Surrealism? In your final paper, I want you to read and summarize Clement Greenberg’s main argument in your own words. Then I want you to pick a period/movement and consider whether/how Greenberg’s idea of “medium-specific critical examination” fits or does not fit. In what ways is this period/movement truly reflecting on the conditions of its existence, and in what ways is it going beyond this to other considerations: whether they are philosophic, cultural, political? In your paper, you will thus have three main tasks: 1. Read and understand Greenberg’s argument, and put it in your own words. 2. Pick a movement and measure it against Greenberg’s definition of modernism, showing BOTH how it fits and how it might not fit. 3. Demonstrate this by comparing TWO works from the movement: one that seems to embody Greenberg’s principles more closely, and another that seems to depart in one way or another. Describe how each embodies/does not’ embody the idea of modernism as an examination of medium-specific potential.