Defining Modernism:
Towards a Definition of Postmodernism

Defining Postmodernism:
In response to Modernist Architecture and the International Style
Modernist International Style Architecture- new style of architecture that emerged simultaneously in Germany, France, and the Netherlands in the 1920s

International Style’s characteristics- steel columns support reinforced concrete floors and roof so the exterior walls did not have to carry any weight- they could be curtain walls made of glass and even interior walls were non-load-bearing

Mies, *German Pavilion*, for International Exposition, Barcelona, International Style architecture, Modernism

Walter Gropius, *Bauhaus*, Germany, International Style architecture, Modernism
De Stijl (The Style)- movement inspired by the formal qualities of Cubism and led by painter Piet Mondrian who used nonrepresentational geometric elements in a group style. The movement’s goal was to use the newly independent vocabulary of “pure” visual form to create a world of universal harmony.

Mondrian, *Composition in Red and Blue*, oil on canvas
De Stijl, Modernism
Gerrit Rietveld, *Schröder House*

International Style Architecture, Modernism
Frank Lloyd Wright, *Fallingwater*, 1930s

Influenced by the International Style but contextualizes it in the literal landscape of the United States by fusing the architecture with nature.

Modernism adapted to a specific context, challenging pure modernism.
International Style at Mid 20th Century - tall, glass skyscrapers - reject tradition, ornament, and references to the past, as well as showcase and use only modern materials

Mies and Philip Johnson, *Seagram Building, New York*, International Style at Mid Century, Modernism
While the **International Style Mid 20th Century**—tall, glass skyscrapers—rejected tradition, ornament, and references to the past, centralizing function in that function determines form, **Postmodern architecture** embraced an eclectic mix of historical styles, decorative tendencies and applied arts. Postmodern architects celebrate the very qualities of life that the proponents of the machine aesthetics rejected; complexity, contradiction, ambiguity, romance, popular taste.
Johnson brings together elements from several historical styles in the Postmodern AT&T Building…

The huge round arched portal recalls Roman architecture

The round windows at the side are merely decorative

The top of the building with its curved gables quotes colonial style American furniture

Exterior sheathed in warm brick rather than modern concrete or steel

Philip Johnson, *Model of the AT&T Building, New York*, Postmodernism
Michael Graves, *Public Services Building*, 1980s, Postmodernism