ARHA 351 Nicola Courtright

Amherst College Fayerweather 206

Fall 2011, M/W 2:00-3:20 Off. Hours: T 3:30-4:30

or by appt.

**RENAISSANCE ART IN ITALY**

This course treats painting, sculpture, and architecture of the art historical periods known as the Early and High Renaissance, Mannerism, and the Counter Reformation. It will dwell upon works by artists such as Giotto, Donatello, Botticelli, Leonardo, Raphael, Bramante, Michelangelo, and Titian in the urban centers of Florence, Rome, and Venice, art produced for patrons ranging from Florentine merchants and monks to Roman princes and pontiffs. The art itself--portraits, tombs, altarpieces, cycles of imagined scenes from history, palaces, churches, civic monuments--ranges from gravely restrained and intentionally simple to monumental, fantastically complex or blindingly splendid, and the artists themselves range from what contemporaries considered skilled artisans to ever more sought-after geniuses. Emphasis will be upon the way the form and content of each type of art conveyed ideas concerning creativity, originality, and individuality, but also expressed ideals of devotion and civic virtue; how artists dealt with the revived legacy of antiquity to develop an original visual language; how art imparted the values of its patrons and society, but also sometimes conflicted with them; and how art and attitudes towards it changed over time.

Rather than taking the form of a survey, this course, based on lectures but regularly incorporating discussion, will examine selected works in depth and will analyze contemporary attitudes toward art of this period through study of the art and the primary sources concerning it.

***LECTURES***

Attendance is extremely important, for the substance of this course is in the lectures and discussions, not in a textbook.

***READING***

The following books can be purchased online. You may also find used copies at The Option.

* Michael Baxandall, Painting and Experience in 15th-Century Italy (2nd ed., Oxford UP, 1988)
* Patricia Fortini Brown, Art and Life in Renaissance Venice (Prentice Hall, 2005)
* James F. O’Gorman, ABC of Architecture (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997)
* Evelyn Welch, Art in Renaissance Italy 1300-1500 (Oxford UP, 2000) [*recommended*]

Required readings are largely from books and articles placed on electronic reserve in Frost Library. The required readings will serve as the basis for questions in discussions, responses on Blackboard, and on exams.

**Please read the required selections *before* class once they are available on physical or electronic reserve.**

***OUT-OF-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS***

***1)* RESPONSES**

I ask you to post reading responses every week, and reflect upon a work of art or write about the readings. Your overall grade will suffer if you do not post (you can miss one: we’re all human.) I don't grade them and don’t usually comment upon them individually because I wish you to 1) find what interests *you* in the material -- if anything, and 2) deal in an unconstrained fashion with unfamiliar ideas.

***2)* GRADED PAPERS**

. The **first** is a *3-page formal analysis* of a work of art. It is on a work from a museum in the vicinity.

. The **second** type is a *10-15 page investigation* of a visual problem and its historical context. Solving it will involve research. To assure all-around excellence in the quality of your research papers, I ask you to devise a three-pronged attack: 1) to submit a bibliography and summary of the direction your investigation of an imaginative subject will take; 2) to write a good first draft; and 3) to hand in a polished and well-argued final product. Showing me your draft is required. We talk about what your problem is and where you’re going most thoroughly at that point.

I recommend that you go to the Writing Center with all of your graded papers (of course, you can consult with me, too, if you wish).

***EXAMS***

There will be a mid-term and a final exam. They will consist of slide identifications of known and unknown works of art and formal comparisons. Additionally, at midterm, you will write an open-book, take-home essay on broad issues of the course. The ID’s and unknowns for the final will take place during the scheduled exam period. The works of art you are expected to know are listed on the handout for each lecture. You can find the images in books on reserve or on-line.

A final open-book essay is optional for those who wish to improve their grade.

A suggestion to those who are not accustomed to traditional art history exams: it makes sense to study the works of art as you go along, and not wait for the moment before the exam to attempt to distinguish Leonardo from Pietro Poco Interessante.

***DATES TO REMEMBER***

***Week 4*: Friday, September 30**, formal analysis due **5:00 in Dropbox**.

***Week 7*: Wed., October 12**, in‑class part of midterm;

**Friday, October 14** take-home, open-book essay due **5:00 in Dropbox.**

***Weeks 8- 9:*** Meet with Prof. C. about paper.

***Week 10***: **Wed., Nov. 10,** bibliography and summary of thesis hypothesis due.

***Week 11:*** **Wed., Nov. 17,** rough draft of final paper due.

***THANKSGIVING BREAK***

***Week 12****:* Meet with Prof. C. about paper. Rewrite.

***Week 14***: **Fri., Dec. 15,** final paper due.

**Scheduled exam period**: final.

**RENAISSANCE ART IN ITALY**

*SYLLABUS, Part I*

*Week 1* **1. Intro: Ways of thinking about the Renaissance;**

**Crafting a language of forms for a new age in early 15th‑century Florence**

Wed. 9/7 *Devotional art, civic sculpture*

*Competition; the state; languages of art*

*Giotto, Ghiberti, Brunelleschi*

READING (*for discussion* ***next******Wednesday****, 9/14*):

* Vasari, "Preface to the Lives;” “Preface to Part Two,” *you can find these in various editions*, e.g. George Bull (Middlesex: Penguin, 1954), v. I: 25-47 83-93
* James S. Ackerman, “On the Origins of Art History and Criticism,” in his Origins, Imitation, Conventions: Representation in the Visual Arts (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 1-25
* *for majors:* Erwin Panofsky, Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art (NY : Harper and Row, 2nd ed. 1972), Chap. 1, 1-41 [*available in e-book format*]
* *for majors:* Rebecca Zorach, “Renaissance Theory: A Selective Introduction,” in Renaissance Theory, ed. James Elkins and Robert Williams (NY: Routledge, 2008), 3-36 [*available in e-book format*]

*Week 2*

Mon. 9/12**2. Architecture for civic regeneration**

*Intersection of civic and domestic worlds*

*The antique legacy: architecture as science*

*Architecture and the body*

*Brunelleschi and the Medici*

READING:

* James O’Gorman, ABC of Architecture
* Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood, Anachronic Renaissance (NY: Zone, 2010), chs. 1, 13: 7-19, 134-146, 369-72, 400-405
* John Onians, Bearers of Meaning: the Classical Orders (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988), 33-40, 331
* Christine Smith, Architecture in the Culture of Early Humanism (NY: Oxford, 1992), Ch. 4: 57-79

Wed. 9/14 **3. Ways of seeing, knowing, and believing**

*Styles of 15th-century painting in Florence*

*perspective and art as knowledge*

*the body, the spirit*

*chapels and the dead, but eternal life*

*Masaccio, Fra Angelico*

READING:

* Alberti, On Painting, in Creighton Gilbert, Italian Art 1400‑1500: Sources and Documents (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 51-75
* Baxandall, Painting and Experience, Chaps. I‑III
* Georges Didi-Huberman, ch. 1, “The History of Art Within the Limits of its Simple Practice,” in his Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art, trans. John Goodman (Univ. Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2005), 11-52
* Meyer Schapiro, “Style,” in his Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist and Society (NY: George Braziller, 1994), 51-102

*Week 3*

Mon. 9/19**4. Reconciling the imitation of antiquity with personal style**

*What is imitation in the Renaissance?*

*What is the individual? What is the public?*

*Civic sculpture and civic ideals*

*Ghiberti*, *Donatello*

READING:

* James S. Ackerman, “Imitation,” in Origins, Imitation, Conventions: Representation in the Visual Arts (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 125-41
* Irving Lavin, “On the Sources and Meaning of the Renaissance Portrait Bust,” in Sarah Blake McHam, ed., Looking at Italian Renaissance Sculpture (NY: Cambridge, 1998), 60-78
* Sarah Blake McHam, “Public Sculpture in Renaissance Florence,” Sarah B. McHam, ed., Looking at Italian Renaissance Sculpture, 149-164
* Review Baxandall, Painting and Experience, Chap. III

Wed. 9/21**5. Civic and devotional identity in Northern Italy, 1**

*Imitation, perspective, science and geometry*

*Court and authority via illusion*

*Alberti*

*Mantegna*

READING:

* Stephen J. Campbell, “Mantegna’s Triumph: The Cultural Politics of Imitation ‘all’antica’ at the Court of Mantua, 1490-1530,” in Campbell, ed., Artists at Court: Image-Making and Identity, 1300-1550 (Cambridge: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2004), 91-105, 216-219
* Alison Cole, Virtue and Magnificence: Art of the Italian Renaissance Courts (NY: Abrams, 1995), 17-43, 144-69

*Week 4*

Mon. 9/26 **6. Civic and devotional identity in Northern Italy, 2**

*Piero della Francesca*

*Bellini*

READING:

* P.F. Brown, Art and Life in Renaissance Venice, especially ch. 1, 9-37

Wed. 9/28**7. Achieving wisdom** **in Medici Florence**

*Science; mysteries; poetry; politics*

*But where is the body?*

*Botticelli*

READING:

* “Luxury Goods in the Room of Lorenzo the Magnificent,” in Renaissance Art Reconsidered: An Anthology of Primary Sources, ed. Carol M. Richardson et al. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 291-303
* Marsilio Ficino, “Five Questions Concerning the Mind,” in Ernst Cassirer, The Renaissance Philosophy of Man (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1948), 193-212
* Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance (London: Faber and Faber, 1958, repr. 1969), ch. 1, 1-25
* Charles Dempsey, The Portrayal of Love: Botticelli’s Primavera and Humanist Culture at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992), Intro., 3-19

*Week 5*

Mon. 10/3 **8. Leonardo: science, poetry, art**

READING:

* Leonardo, On Painting (ed. M. Kemp), 13-16, 22‑34, 144-6, 197‑99, 222‑27
* Vasari, “Preface to Part Three,” “Life” of Leonardo, in Lives of the Artists, ed. G. Bull (Middlesex: Penguin, 1965), v. I: 249-71
* J. Bialostocki, “The Renaissance Concept of Nature and Antiquity,” in The Renaissance and Mannerism: Acts of the XXth International Congress of the History of Art, 1963, II, 19-30
* M. Kemp, “Leonardo da Vinci: Science and the Poetic Impulse,” in Sixteenth-Century Italian Art, ed. Michael Cole (Malden, MA:  Blackwell, 2006), 94-114

***16th century: “High” Renaissance***

Wed. 10/5 **9.** **Languages of war, art, devotion and the imagination in court and city, 1**

*Rhetoric of genius*

*Foundations of art*

*Michelangelo*

*Raphael*

READING:

* “A meeting about where to place Michelangelo’s *David*,” in Renaissance Art Reconsidered: An Anthology of Primary Sources, ed. Carol M. Richardson et al. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007) 317-323
* Irving Lavin, “David’s Sling and Michelangelo’s Bow: A Sign of Freedom,” in his Past-Present: Essays on Historicism in Art from Donatello to Picasso (Berkeley: U Cal Press, 1993), 28-61, 268-74
* Elizabeth Cropper, “The Beauty of Women: Problems in the Rhetoric of Renaissance Portraiture,” in Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe, ed. Margaret W. Ferguson et al. (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1986), 175-90

***OCTOBER BREAK***

*Week 6*

Wed. 10/12 IN-CLASS EXAM

Fri. 10/14 Take-home essay due at midnight.