

ARTH 340 -- Early Renaissance Art in Italy, 1300-1500

Dr. Lisa Passaglia Bauman

Class times: TTh 1:30-2:45

Office hours: T 10:30-11:45; and by appt

Fall 2016E-mail: lbauman@gmu.edu

Classroom: AB L008

Office: Robinson B 373

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is a survey of the major monuments of Italian art and architecture from 1300 to 1500. Traditionally, this period is studied through the productions of one great artist after another from Giotto, Donatello, Brunelleschi and Botticelli to Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. But this course will also give equal emphasis to the broader intellectual trends and social realities that provide a context for our understanding of the artist's creations. Thus, Italian churches will be juxtaposed with gender-segregated social practice, theories of genius with concepts of handicraft, and pagan ideals with Christian rituals. Some of the themes and issues we'll cover include: the patronage system and the artist's workshop, church decoration, monumental sculpture in the city, narrative art, the invention of perspective, and the similarities and differences between art for a domestic context and art at court.

Course objectives include:

- to achieve proficiency in the analysis of the **formal** (stylistic) qualities of works of art in their **historical contexts**.
- to read critically and comment on primary sources
- to become more familiar with the methods of art historical research

ARTH 340 fulfills the Fine Arts component of the University General Education requirement.

TEXT: John Paoletti and Gary Radke, *Art in Renaissance Italy*, fourth edition (Pearson Prentice Hall, 2011). Pearson Prentice Hall retails this book for \$160, but it is available on Amazon for \$62 used. This text is a somewhat new approach to the teaching of Italian art, rarely mentioning the word humanism and arguing for continuity rather than change up until the 16th century. Hmmm..... However, the text is clear, the monuments chosen are interesting, and the breadth of choices novel; I have organized this class around its framework. It also contains a helpful glossary as well as images of most of the works we discuss in class. You may find it helpful to have the book on hand when you study for your exams.

In addition, I have selected a group of readings for this course. These individual pieces provide an opportunity to read primary sources from the period we are covering.

TECH SKILLS REQUIRED: Please activate your GMU e-mail account so that I can communicate with the class at large if necessary. I will use Blackboard to distribute a study guide for the exams, post study slides, and make announcements.

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Class attendance: (10% of your grade) I happen to feel very strongly that a university is a community of learners. Poor attendance thus undermines the work of the whole classroom. Students who fail to attend regularly should not have unreasonable expectations about their final grade. Tests derive from what we do in class, plus the reading. I will be using power point presentations, so all terms and objects for which you are responsible will be clearly labeled, spelled, dated, and emphasized in class. Thus, regular attendance is necessary. I will circulate a sign-in sheet each class and attendance is worth 10% of your final grade. (There are 27 possible class days, starting Thursday. You are allowed 2 absences. Thus, I will calculate your attendance grade by taking the total number of days you attended class and divide by 25. If you do not use your free days, your additional attendance in class counts as extra credit, that is, instead of 100% for attendance you would earn 108% for attendance.) If you miss a class, get the list of key works and notes from another class member. (The first class would be an opportune time to exchange some e-mail addresses with each other.) I cannot re-teach material you missed in an email.

2. Question sets: (15% of your grade) The discipline of art history is grounded in history, and historians use primary source documents from the time as evidence for arguments. On the schedule are short excerpts from letters and contracts written in the 15th century listed as **Documents**. This is the voice of the time and I am interested in you hearing it and thinking about it. The purpose here is less information-gathering so this is not material on which you will be tested and is more to help you learn to read critically. For each set

of documents, you will answer a few short questions that you turn in to me on their date listed on the schedule. There are 6 of them total. Question sets are due on their due date. I will take a late question set at the next class meeting for 50% of the points. I will not take them after that.

3. Exams: (50% of your grade) There are three exams in this class. I will post a study guide one week before each exam on Blackboard. Exams are not cumulative except in the way that big ideas are continued throughout the semester.

Quiz: (10% of your final grade) September 22 (30 minutes)

Midterm (20% of your final grade) October 27 (75 minutes)

Final (20% of your final grade) Tuesday, December 13, @ 1:30. The date is set by the registrar; I cannot change it.

The exams will consist of:

- definitions. Technical terms discussed in the readings and in class will be listed and you will be asked to define them clearly; give an example of their use in an appropriate work; and state the significance of the term to the history of the 14th and 15th c art, bringing in relevant points from the assigned reading.
- slide identifications. Single slides will be shown for 4 minutes each. In each case, identify the work shown by naming the artist and providing the title, date, location (if still in its original place), and medium. Then, as succinctly as possible, state the significance of the work to the history of art. Do not describe it or explain its subject matter, but state WHY this work is important. How is this work demonstrative of important issues in 14th and 15th c art?
- slide comparisons. A pair of slides will be shown. After identifying them completely (as above), discuss the similarities and differences in the two works, keeping in mind their historical contexts. You must draw a conclusion stating what this particular comparison teaches us about the history of art of the period.
- Long essay. MIDTERM AND FINAL ONLY. This is a question that will allow you to discuss major themes and issues from the entire semester. This might be the history of a particular art form (the portrait, for instance), or the social function of art (art at court). You must refer to specific examples of works of art in your answer. I will distribute a list of possible questions, one of which I will choose for the exam, one week in advance of the exam.

These three examinations are scheduled. You should mark those dates on your personal calendar immediately. I won't give an exam earlier or later than the scheduled slot. Yes, this includes Thanksgiving, end of the semester, and weekend plans. Please do not request special favors that cannot be granted to all of your peers. If you cannot make an exam at the specified time and date, you have 24 hours to contact me and provide me with a legitimate written medical excuse or police report, on printed letterhead stationery, with a phone number I can call for confirmation. I mean this seriously. If I don't hear from you within 24 hours of the exam and if you do not have a legitimate written excuse, you will receive a 0 for that exam. Do not e-mail or call me with any excuses about car accidents or bad love affairs—even if it's true. Better to take the exam and get an F than to receive a 0.

All exams begin on time, so please plan ahead and allow sufficient time for parking. **Unlike my 100-level courses, I will not repeat slides for latecomers.** (Why? You are going to need to concentrate in these exams and the flipping back and forth of slides while others are trying to write essays is badly distracting.)

Let me say a few things up front about my expectations regarding exams. Art history demands a certain degree of memorization of information about works of art. It is only one part of the work and learning required, but it is an area that demands discipline and regular practice. If you keep up-to-date (flashcards were always my preferred method), memorization of the works will be easy and will help your understanding of new material. If you wait until the exams, memorization will be a nightmare.

A few words about **dates**: Dating a work is essential to understanding its origins and background in a specific period and place. Why? What matters is not so much your ability to memorize a set of numbers, but that you come away from this class knowing that Michelangelo's *David* was not an inspiration for Donatello's *David*.

And finally, as in any discipline, a student is required to know the material. $2 + 2 = 5$ is not correct, and neither is Botticelli spelled Bottacelli.

4. Museum Assignment (25% of your final grade)

You will be writing a paper (about 6 pages) about a selection of objects from the National Gallery of Art. This will involve a visit to the museum to select your objects, thorough reading on the NGA website for content, library research on your objects, and some creativity. The paper is due Tuesday, November 15.

I will take those assignments late but it will be penalized 5 points for every day it is late. Yes, the weekend counts. After one week, I will not take any late assignments. Remember that we are in the computer age where Murphy's Law applies with a vengeance. Assume that your computer will break down, that your flash drive will be ruined, that every other student in the school will be trying to print a paper on the same night, and so forth. Plan accordingly! There are no excuses for turning in a late paper. You simply take the point deduction. No electronic submissions; no turning your paper into my mailbox.

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Attendance	-	10%
Question sets	-	15%
Quiz	-	10%
Midterm	-	20%
Final	-	20%
Museum Project	-	25%

GRADING POLICY: In order to receive a grade in this course, students must complete all assigned work. **Other than the opportunity in attendance, there are no extra credit projects.**

There are often questions about grading and evaluation policies, especially for those who have never taken an art history class before and are concerned about how their work will be evaluated. Grade ranges and a description of the sort of work expected are as follows—please read them carefully.

- A (90-92 is an A-; 93-96 is an A; 97-100 is an A+) Startlingly good, exceeding my expectations, and well-written. Must be imaginative; NOT given for simply following directions.
- B (80-82 is a B-; 83-86 is a B; 87-89 is a B+) Good effort with a good result.
- C (70-72 is a C-; 73-76 is a C; 77-79 is a C+) Perfunctory; or tried but missed the point; or did something well but it wasn't the assignment; or a good idea but careless or sloppy.
- D (60-69) Warning: accepted under protest
- F (Below 60) Unacceptable as college-level work. See me immediately if you find yourself in this situation.

CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE: Courtesy and common sense please. We're all adults; sometimes emergencies come up. However, talking to friends during lectures and coming in late are badly distracting to everyone else. Cell phones, Smartphones, and anything that rings, beeps or makes noise are not permitted. If you know you will have to leave a few minutes early, please sit toward the back of the room on the aisle and let me know. I will allow laptops for note-taking only, but if I begin to notice that you are busy watching your personal screen when you should be looking at the classroom screen I will assume you are checking email or Facebook, on-line shopping or watching *I Love Lucy* and you will forfeit your right to use that device in class. No questions asked; you'll just get an email from me.

PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING: These are not fooling-around offences with me. Your writing assignments are to be the product of your own thinking. Ditto with tests. Be warned: **if you cheat, I will send you and your work on to the Dean of Students.** No excuses, no tears, no "I didn't understand about footnotes/talking during an exam" stories.

If you are not sure how the University defines plagiarism, please see the Plagiarism Statement in the George Mason University Honor System and Code at <http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>.

DISABILITIES: If you have a learning disability, it must be properly documented by the Disabilities Service office. Please contact them for more information.