

ARTH 340:

Italian Renaissance Art

Instructor: Laura McCloskey

Term: Fall 2018

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:30-11:30am, ROB B 373A or by appointment



Description and Goals

This course explores the rich artistic tableau of the Italian Renaissance from roughly the fourteenth through the early sixteenth centuries. We will get to know some of the best known names of Renaissance art: Giotto, Ghiberti, Masaccio, Botticelli, da Vinci, and Michelangelo to name a few. What is it about their art that has allowed it to endure for so long and what impact did these artists have during the Renaissance? The course begins with an overview of the artistic heritage of Italy, briefly surveying the art of the Mediterranean in the pre-Christian and early Christian periods. Next we lay a foundation for understanding the rise of the Renaissance in context, touching upon the artistic styles of the Middle Ages. Our course ventures onward to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, exploring the rise of Medici power, changes in papal authority, and the development of scientific, artistic, and political advances in Florence, Venice, and Rome. We will end with the High Renaissance, reflecting back on Giorgio Vasari's initial introduction to the Renaissance and analyzing the importance of Renaissance artistic conventions and symbols that have withstood the test of time.

This course meets the General Education Fine Arts requirement.

Texts and Readings

There are two required texts for our class. For the Paoletti text, the publisher provides additional online content that may be useful for study or review.

REQUIRED:

- 1) Paoletti, John and Gary Radke. *Art in Renaissance Italy*. Fourth Edition. New York: Prentice Hall, 2012. ISBN 978-0-205-01047-9.
- 2) Ferguson, George. *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*. London: Oxford University Press, 1961. ISBN 978-0-19-501432-7

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) Wilkins, David and Frederick Hartt. *History of Italian Renaissance Art*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003. ISBN 0-13-062011-4.
- 2) Vasari, Giorgio. *The Lives of the Artists*. London: Oxford University Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0199537198.

Assignments

The following assignments will be due throughout the course. The reflections and discussions constitute your attendance and class participation grades: these assignments allow you to interact with your fellow classmates and make deep connections with the course content. I will provide detailed personalized feedback to your quizzes, essays, and papers.

Here is how your grade will be calculated:

Quizzes- 20% (2 quizzes x 10% each)

Final exam- 20%

In-class reflections- 10% (5 posts x 2% each)

Museum paper - 20%

In-class discussions- 10% (5 discussions x 2% each)

Online Introduction post- 5%

Optional extra credit assignment- 5%

Midterm Essay - 15%

Introductory Post

For your introductory post, post a paragraph about yourself in the appropriate forum on our discussion board. You may want to include information such as your year at Mason (freshman, sophomore, etc.), major, future goals, and why you are interested in our course.

Midterm Essay

For the midterm essay, you will use our Ferguson class text to help "decode" Renaissance painting. Choose at least three different Italian Renaissance paintings from either a local museum, a museum website, or our class readings. You must identify a total of at least fifteen different signs or symbols amongst your selections. Introduce each art piece, provide a sentence or two of background information (artist, date, local, etc.) and then identify and briefly explain the significance of each sign or symbol. What do these symbols tell us about the artwork? Why were symbols used so extensively in the Renaissance period? Your essay should be no more than 3 pages, 12 point font, double-spaced. Upload this assignment on our Blackboard page.

Museum Paper

This essay is designed to help you "bring it altogether" so-to-speak and is due at the end of the semester. In this paper you will visit a local museum and choose three artworks that best exemplify key terms or concepts that we have studied in this course. You may choose to group your selections by genre, theme, time period, medium, or artist. What do these works of art tell us about the Renaissance in Italy? Can you identify any symbols or motifs that indicate religious or political significance to the works? Be sure to include a brief biography of the artist(s) and discuss any regional or local affiliations or connections that may have influenced the artist and their work. Using terminology from class, your course textbook, and at least two other scholarly peer-reviewed resources, you will need to articulate and explain your rationale for choosing these artworks. Your paper should contain an introduction with a thesis statement, a supporting paragraph for each art piece, and a conclusion. Total length should be between 5 pages, 12 point font, double-spaced. Upload this assignment on our Blackboard page.

Quizzes

There will be two quizzes: one quiz midway through the class and one before the final exam to make sure you are following the chronology, terms, and themes of the course. Quizzes will consist of ten multiple choice questions and two short answer responses. I often also include a vocabulary matching section or map.

Final Exam

The exam will be a combination of multiple choice questions, term matching, and essays. You **may not** consult notes, books, classmates, the Internet, etc.

In-Class Reflection Assignments

Prompts for individual comments related to the previous or current week's lecture, readings, or course progress will be provided in class each week listed on the syllabus. You must complete all 5 reflections to receive full grade points for this category. Reflections should be at least one paragraph in length (5-7 well-planned, cohesive sentences) and clearly demonstrate to me that you are actively engaging with course lectures, themes, and readings.

Discussion Participation

Prompts for discussions will be provided each week listed in the syllabus. The topics in our course build on each other; taking content week-by-week helps you break it into manageable chunks. There is a good deal of complicated vocabulary in the course – engaging with others while practicing the terms is a great way to build fluency. (It also ensures that you're on target for what will be tested on the quizzes and final.)

Late Work

- Any midterm essays received after the due date will incur a 10% penalty for each day it is late.
- Discussions and Reflections must be completed in class. You will not earn points if you are absent.
- Quizzes can only be completed on the dates assigned. If you will be absent from a quiz please let me know beforehand so that we can reschedule a time for you to complete the assessment.
- Your museum paper can be submitted for full points any time until midnight on Saturday, December 8. No papers will be accepted after that date.
- The final exam will take place according to the University calendar. Extensions will only be granted if you have a legitimate and documentable excuse (doctor note, note from an employer, etc.).

Grading

I use a 100 total point system for the entire semester.

Gentle warning: It is easy to let things slip. I strongly urge you to make a solid plan for each week and follow it to the best of your ability.

Grading Scale

A+ = 101 and above
A = 95-100
A- = 91-94
B+ = 87-90
B = 84-86
B- = 81-83

C+ = 77-80
C = 73-76
C- = 69-72
D = 65-68
F = 64 and below

IN = incomplete (You must request an IN no later than two weeks before the end of the semester and be passing the course at the time of your request; deadlines for IN work follow the Registrar's calendar.)

Extra Credit

We are very fortunate to be so close to a wealth of art museums in Washington D.C. and the surrounding areas. You can earn up to five additional points of extra credit by writing a second, mini midterm-essay. For that assignment, visit a local museum and choose one painting (not one of the ones you used in your midterm or museum essays) and explain five "hidden" symbols and their meanings found within your chosen artwork.

Alternately, you may attend an on-campus Learning Services Workshop at any point during the semester.

This review is due by the last day of class and should be 1-2 pages in length.

What I need in your synopsis:

- What did you do/see and when was it?
- How was it related to images, ideas, or themes we have discussed? OR, if you attended a campus event, what was your impression of the event?
- What are your "take-aways" from the event - how has it impacted you?

Class Policies

Participation/Attendance- I have built in numerous participation checkpoints for you in the curriculum: it shows me that you are following the course themes and truly comprehending material. The Mason online catalog states: "Students are expected to attend class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class participation is important not only to the individual student, but also the class as a whole. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of nonparticipation." Patterns of non-participation in self-reflection or group work will be noted and points deducted accordingly. If you are ill for two weeks or more (consecutively) or you have other personal matters that will require you to frequently miss participation deadlines, you should let me know immediately and provide a doctor note or other acceptable documentation.

Disability Assistance- Mason has a wonderful Office of Disability Services on the main floor of SUB I; if you have a documentable learning disability, I urge you to pay the ODS a visit early in the semester. I am happy to work with you to accommodate your needs, but I will need written documentation from the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu/>

Writing Center- If you need some assistance in writing your paper or would like to attend study skills workshops, please do not hesitate to take advantage of the resources on campus. The Writing Center is in Robinson Hall B room 213. <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>

Academic Workshops - Academic Workshop schedules can be found in Learning Services within Counseling and Psychological Services on the 3rd floor of SUB I. <http://caps.gmu.edu/>

Office Hours - I will be available on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:30-11:30. If that time does not work for you, I am flexible – just let me know a day ahead of time when you would like to chat via back-and-forth email.

If you have a request for an incomplete or an assignment extension, I will only address those matters via Mason email.

Email and Course Communication - It is critical that you have a reliable way to obtain course information. Please be sure that you check your GMU email account regularly or have your GMU email messages forwarded to your preferred email account. If I need to send a message to you individually, I will send it to your GMU email account. Please note that if you have trouble with your GMU email, you can also use the messaging feature in Blackboard if necessary.

Honor Code

Abiding by the Mason Honor Code is essential if you plan on passing this course:

"Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work."

Academic Integrity: <http://oai.gmu.edu/>

FAQ regarding the Honor Code: <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/>

Important Mason Dates

- ☑ Last day to add classes: 9/4.
Check PatriotWeb to be sure that you are registered for this class.
- ☑ Last day to drop classes: 9/30.
- ☑ Selective withdrawal period (undergraduates): 10/1-10/28.
- ☑ Labor Day break: 9/3.
- ☑ Columbus break: 10/8.
- ☑ Thanksgiving break: 11/21-11/25.

Class Schedule and Readings

Units will be incrementally released to help you pace yourself. Additional primary source readings may be added.
Each quiz and the final exam have comprehensive study guides: plan ahead to do your best.

UNIT 1: THE ITALIAN ARTISTIC HERITAGE AND THE RENAISSANCE

WEEK 1: August 27 - September 2

Introduction to the Course and the Heritage of Italian Art

Readings:

1. Syllabus
2. Wilkins: Italy and Italian Art (Blackboard)

Assignments:

Individual Reflection 1
Introductory Post (online)

WEEK 2: September 4 - September 9 (September 3 is Labor Day break)

Before the Rebirth: The Legacy of Medieval Art

Readings:

1. Paoletti: Introduction - pgs. 12-45
2. Stokstad: Gothic Art in Italy (Blackboard)
3. Calkins: The Gothic Fresco and Gothic Devotional Objects (Blackboard)

Assignments:

Discussion 1

WEEK 3: September 10 - September 16

The Renaissance in Context: Socio-political Change and Art

Readings:

1. Paoletti: The Origins of the Renaissance (pgs. 46-55) and Rome: Artists, Popes, and Cardinals (pgs. 56-66)
2. Hunt: Crisis and Renaissance (Blackboard)

Assignments:

Individual Reflection 2

WEEK 4: September 17 - September 23

Tradition and Innovation in Italian Art

Readings:

1. Paoletti: Assisi and Padua (pgs. 67-77) and Florence (pgs. 78-98)

Assignments:

Discussion 2

UNIT 2: REPUBLICS, PAPACY, AND SOCIAL CHANGE	
WEEK 5: September 24 - September 30 Siena, Naples, and Venice	
Readings: 1. Paoletti: Siena (pgs. 99-121), Naples (pgs. 122-135), and Venice (136-141)	Assignments: QUIZ 1 (Tuesday, September 25)
WEEK 6: October 1 - October 7 Venice, contd., Pisa, Florence, and Milan	
Readings: 1. Paoletti: Venice (142-152), Pisa and Florence (pgs. 153-173), and Visconti Milan (pgs. 174-184)	Assignments: Discussion 3
WEEK 7: October 9 - October 14 (October 8 is the Columbus Day break; our class meets Thursday ONLY) Padua and the Beginnings of the Fifteenth Century	
Readings: 1. Paoletti: Carrara Padua (pgs. 187-199), Florence: Commune and Guild (pgs. 200-248)	Assignments: Individual Reflection 3 Midterm Essay Due
WEEK 8: October 15 - October 21 The Medici and Papal Control	
Readings: 1. Paoletti: The Medici and Political Propaganda (pgs. 249-285) and Rome: Re-establishing Papal Power (pgs. 286-305)	Assignments: Discussion 4
WEEK 9: October 22 - October 28 Courtly Art and Splendor	
Readings: 1. Paoletti: pg. 310, Affirming Past and Present (pgs. 311-332), Courtly Art (pgs. 333-334 and 337-361)	Assignment: This is a lighter week - use this time to catch up or visit a museum.
UNIT 3: THE IMPACT OF HIGH RENAISSANCE ART	
WEEK 10: October 29 - November 4 'Science, Poetry, and Prose' Translated into Art	
Readings: 1. Paoletti: Leonardo da Vinci (pg. 371-383) 2. Wilkins: Science, Poetry and Prose (Blackboard)	Assignment: QUIZ 2 (Tuesday, October 30)
WEEK 11: November 5 - November 11 Perfection, Pleasure, and Crisis	
Readings: 1. Paoletti: The Arts at Court (pgs. 439-450) and Vision and Monumentality (pgs. 451-485) 2. Wilkins: Absolute and Perfect Painting (Blackboard)	Assignment: Individual Reflection 4
WEEK 12: November 12 - November 18 The High Renaissance in Florence and Rome	
Readings: 1. Wilkins: The High Renaissance in Florence and Rome (Blackboard)	Assignment: Individual Reflection 5
WEEK 13: November 21 - 25 NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING BREAK	
WEEK 14: November 26 - December 2 The High Renaissance and Mannerism	
Readings: 1. Paoletti: Mannerism and the Medici (pgs. 424-438) 2. Wilkins: High Renaissance and Mannerism (Blackboard)	Assignment: Discussion 5

WEEK 15: December 3 - December 8 Course Conclusions and Final Exam Review	
<i>Readings:</i> Catch up on past readings, re-read chapters as needed to help you complete the study guide for the final exam.	<i>Assignments DUE by Dec. 6:</i> MUSEUM PAPER DUE EXTRA CREDIT DUE Complete the course evaluation.
WEEK 16: Final Exam	
<u>THE FINAL EXAM WILL BE HELD THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13 FROM 10:30-1:15 IN OUR USUAL CLASSROOM.</u> *No extensions will be allowed unless you have a legitimate, documentable emergency that precludes you from taking the exam during the scheduled time period.	

Useful links:

- **GMU Registrar Semester Calendar:** <https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/fall-2018/>
- **Gateways to Art: Student Resources:** <http://books.wwnorton.com/books/students/>