

ARTH 333: Early Christian and Byzantine Art
Spring 2023

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12-1.15 pm
Art and Design Building 2026
Instructor: Dr. Heidi Gearhart
Email: hgearhar@gmu.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays 2–4 pm, or by appointment
Office: Horizon Hall 3202

In this course we will look at art from the period after the fall of the Roman Empire, known as Late Antiquity. This period was one marked by migration and the movement of peoples, the establishment of new power hierarchies, and the creation of a new kind of art to promote new empires. In the east, this meant the founding of Byzantium, and glittering monuments like the church of Hagia Sophia; in the west, this meant grand churches of Rome and Ravenna, and new artistic trends brought from the world of Vikings and Gothic tribes to the north and west. As Christianity took hold in the region, questions about how imagery might serve religion became paramount, and thus we will examine theories of images and art-making and the controversies surrounding the production of icons and figural art in what is known as the iconoclastic period of the 8th-9th centuries. We will also look at art made for Judaism and Islam and the artistic exchanges that occurred across cultures of the Middle East and Europe. Throughout the course, we will look at art of a variety of media: impressive imperial architecture as well as humble early monastic buildings; sumptuous books that were produced for members of the Byzantine court and rare surviving copies of classical texts like Virgil and the earliest manuscripts of the Bible; objects of devotion, like icons, and objects of portable wealth, like luxurious jewels and weapons, that proclaim the power and status of their owner.

This course fulfills the requirements for the Arts category of Mason Core.

Learning Objectives

The goal of this course is to become conversant with the development of art in Late Antiquity. If you work hard, you will be able to:

- Use terms of art history to discuss and analyze works of art
- Describe the characteristics of a work of art and articulate its formal and/or spatial logic
- Assess the production, function, and reception of late Antique art
- Through sustained study, gain an understanding of the meanings and significance of late Antique art
- Identify works of art within a chronology of the history of art in late Antiquity and situate a work within its cultural context
- Critically assess art historical literature about early Christian and Byzantine art

Learning Objectives for the Mason Core

Students who successfully complete a course in the Arts category must meet the first learning outcome and a minimum of two of the remaining four learning outcomes:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between artistic process, and a work's underlying concept, and where appropriate, contexts associated with the work.
- Identify and analyze the formal elements of a particular art form using vocabulary and critique appropriate to that form.
- Analyze cultural productions using standards appropriate to the form, as well as the works cultural significance and context.
- Analyze and interpret the content of material or performance culture through its social, historical, and personal contexts.
- Engage in generative artistic processes, including conception, creation, and ongoing critical analysis.

For these outcomes and further information on the Mason Core see: <https://masoncore.gmu.edu>

Evaluation

Attendance and Participation	15%
Quiz 1	20%
Quiz 2	20%
Quiz 3	20%
Final Project	25%

Attendance and Participation

In order to pass this course you will have to keep up with assigned readings. Attendance and participation in class discussion is also critical and will be a part of your grade. If you attend all classes but do nothing else, your attendance and participation grade will be a B-. Thoughtful participation will raise this grade. More than two unexcused absences or disruptive behavior (including repeated lateness), will lower it.

Deadlines:

All assignments will be due at the start of the class time. If you need an extension you must contact me 24 hours before the deadline to request more time. If you do not submit an assignment, your grade will be a zero. Likewise, if you do not attend class on the day of a quiz, your grade will be a zero.

There will be NO MAKEUP QUIZZES WITHOUT FORMAL DOCUMENTATION OF ILLNESS OR EMERGENCY.

If you wish an exemption for religious holidays you must contact me within the first two weeks of the semester with the appropriate dates.

Readings

For this class, our main text will be Caskey, Jill, Adam S. Cohen, and Linda Safran. *Art and Architecture of the Middle Ages : Exploring a Connected World*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022.

This book is required for this course. It is available in the GMU bookstore, and it is also held on reserve at the Library, where you can check it out for two hours at a time. The book has an accompanying website, which complements the book (but does not replace it!). You will find it useful for images, maps, plans, and timelines. See <https://artofthemiddleages.com/s/main/page/welcome>. We will also be reading articles dealing with specific works and ideas about how we think about culture and cultural relations. These additional readings will be available on Blackboard.

Quizzes

You will have three quizzes over the course of the semester, on **Feb. 16, March 9, and April 13** (see course schedule below). Each will ask you to identify and discuss works we have examined in class and will take 30 minutes.

Final Project

Your final project will be an analysis of a theme found in art discussed in the course. It should be roughly 8 pages and will be due via Blackboard by **11.59 pm on Thursday, May 11**, the date scheduled for your final exam.

Evaluation:

Your work will be evaluated as follows:

A+ (98-100)	A (93-97)	A- (90-92)	Outstanding and exceptional level of work
B+ (87-89)	B (83-86)	B- (80-82)	Good to very good level of work
C+ (77-79)	C (73-76)	C- (70-72)	Satisfactory to average level of work
D (60-69)			Below average work -- marginally acceptable
F (below 60)			Unacceptable work – very poor quality or quantity

Important University Deadlines:

Last Day to Add	Mon. Jan. 30
Last Day to Drop (with 100% tuition refund)	Mon. Feb. 6
Last Day to Drop (with 50% tuition refund)	Mon. Feb. 13
Unrestricted Withdrawal (100% tuition liability)	Tues. Feb. 14–Mon. Feb. 27
Selective Withdrawal (Undergrad only; 100% tuition liability)	Tues. Feb. 28–Mon. Apr. 3

GMU Calendar:

For further information regarding these dates and other University deadlines, please consult the University calendar: https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/spring_2023/

Technological Requirements:

A GMU email address is required for this course. All communication will be through Blackboard and email, and you will be expected to submit your final assignment via the Blackboard site.

GMU Software Recommendations:

This course uses Blackboard as the learning management system. You will need a browser and operating system that are listed compatible or certified with the Blackboard version available on the [myMason Portal](#). See [supported browsers and operating systems](#). Log in to [myMason](#) to access your registered courses.

Readings beyond the textbook will be posted on Blackboard as pdf files. Please be sure you have the appropriate software to read these files. Powerpoint files of lectures will be posted on Blackboard 24 hours after class.

Occasionally, I will give you resources using [Flash](#), [Java](#), and [Windows Media Player](#), [QuickTime](#) and/or [Real Media Player](#). Your computer should be capable of running current versions of those applications. You can access Microsoft Office for free through GMU, at: <https://its.gmu.edu/service/microsoft365apps>. Also, make sure your computer is protected from viruses by downloading the latest version of Symantec Endpoint Protection/Anti-Virus software for free [here](#).

Nota Bene: If you are using an employer-provided computer or corporate office for Blackboard access, please verify with your systems administrators that you will be able to install the necessary applications and that system or corporate firewalls do not block access to any sites or media types.

Technical Devices:

Cell phone use is **not permitted** in class. Please be sure your phone is put away and silenced. I strongly discourage the use of laptops in class, as they add extra distraction and hinder participation and connection with your fellow students. Please be advised that if you engage in activities unrelated to class during class time (e.g. messaging, games, browsing, videos) your participation grade will suffer.

GMU Statement on Academic Integrity:

At George Mason University, Academic Integrity is demonstrated in our work, community, the classroom and research. We maintain this commitment to high academic standards through Mason's Honor Code. It is an agreement made by all members of our community to not "cheat, steal, plagiarize, or lie in matters related to your academic work." Students sign an agreement to adhere to the Honor Code on their application for admission to Mason and are responsible for being aware of the most current version of the code.

The Honor Code Pledge reads as follows:

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University Community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set for this Honor Code: Student Members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

The Honor Committee is selected to promote academic integrity as a core value for our university community. Members of the committee serve on hearing panels established to investigate and resolve alleged violations of the Honor Code. Undergraduate and graduate students at Mason are subject to the university Honor Code. Mason's law school, the Scalia School of Law, has an Honor Committee that is independent from the rest of the University's Honor Committee. Questions about cases brought by the Scalia School of Law should be referred to that committee.

In addition, Mason has an office that deals with issues around research misconduct. Those incidents are investigated through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance. As it states in policy 4007, "Allegations of academic misconduct against graduate students are governed solely by the university's honor code, except for 1) research activities as defined above regardless of sponsorship; and 2) master's theses and doctoral dissertations, both of which are governed by this policy. Allegations of academic misconduct against undergraduate students are governed solely by the university honor code, except for sponsored research activities which are governed by this policy." For more information, visit the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance website at <https://rdia.gmu.edu/topics-of-interest/research-misconduct/>.

This page provides the full text of the Honor Code: <https://oai.gmu.edu/full-honor-code-document/>

GMU Policy on AI Text Generation and Academic Integrity

This class will require you to write. Because the act of composing a response in your own words actually increases your learning, it is important that you complete the task yourself, rather than rely on an artificial intelligence (AI) tool. Completing all writing assignments yourself will help strengthen your performance in this class, as well as help you develop professionally and succeed in your career goals. You should also be aware that AI text generation tools may present incorrect information, biased responses, and incomplete analyses; thus they are not yet prepared to produce text that meets the standards of this course. If you do choose to experiment with AI text generation, you are expected to indicate your usage of it and give credit for text that has been generated by AI. Use of AI-generated text without proper attribution is a violation of academic integrity.

Student Privacy:

For Mason's policy on student privacy, please see <https://registrar.gmu.edu/ferpa/>

Proper Etiquette for our Course:

Rules of respect and etiquette are important in this course. Some of the material we will deal with in this class may be controversial, and in some cases, politically loaded or difficult. Each student is expected to treat their fellow students and Instructor with utmost respect, and treat all persons fairly and kindly.

Our classroom is a safe, open space for the exchange and debate of ideas. Please respect your fellow students and listen to everyone's comments. We want our class to be a supportive, amicable and also challenging place for learning. We are all in this together!

Diversity:

George Mason University values the diversity of its students. So do I. The University's Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education (ODIME) seeks to create and sustain inclusive learning environments where all are welcomed, valued, and supported. Harmful or hateful behavior will not be tolerated.

Religious Holidays:

Please consult the George Mason religious holiday calendar here:

<https://ulife.gmu.edu/religious-holiday-calendar/>

If religious observances will require an adjustment to your course schedule, please let me know within the first two weeks of class.

Student Privacy:

Student privacy is governed by Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. I will not respond to messages sent from or send messages to a non-Mason email address. For Mason's policy on student privacy, please see <https://registrar.gmu.edu/ferpa/>

GMU Policy on Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, and Interpersonal Violence:

George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment that is free from discrimination and a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage students and employees who believe that they have been sexually harassed, sexually assaulted or subjected to sexual or interpersonal misconduct to seek assistance and support.

<https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy>

University Policy 1202: Sexual Harassment and Misconduct speaks to the specifics of Mason's process, the resources, and the options available to students and employees.

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual or interpersonal misconduct: As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, complicity, and retaliation to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

From the GMU Disability Services Office:

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit <https://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474. Please see the office website at <https://ds.gmu.edu> for further information.

Other Student Services:

Mason provides many services to help you learn. Take advantage of them! Here are a few:

- Keep Learning, Learning Services: learningservices.gmu.edu/keeplearning/
- Online Education Services, University Libraries: library.gmu.edu/for/online
- University Libraries: library.gmu.edu
- The Writing Center: writingcenter.gmu.edu
- Counseling and Psychological Services: caps.gmu.edu

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Week One

Tues. Jan. 24: Introduction to the Course

UNIT ONE: ROME AND THE MEDITERRANEAN, c. 100–600 CE

Thurs. Jan. 26: Standardization and Variation in the Empire and its Environs I

READING:

Caskey, Cohen, and Safran, *Art and Architecture of the Middle Ages*, Introduction: 2–23.

Week Two

Tues. Jan. 31: Standardization and Variation in the Empire and its Environs I

READING:

Caskey, Cohen and Safran, *Art and Architecture of the Middle Ages*, ch. 1: 24–49

Thurs. Feb. 2: Visualizing a New Religion: Early Christian Art

READING:

Caskey, Cohen and Safran, *Art and Architecture of the Middle Ages*, ch. 2: 50–75

Week Three

Tues. Feb. 7: Building a New Religion: Early Christian Architecture

READING:

Boin, Douglas. “The Memory of ‘Peter’ in Fourth-Century Rome: Church, Mausoleum, and Jupiter on the Via Praenestina.” *The Art of Empire: Christian Art in Its Imperial Context*, edited by Lee M. Jefferson and Robin M. Jensen, 1517 Media, 2015. 87–114.

Thurs. Feb. 9: Displays of Power: Christian Rome in Late Antiquity

READING:

Latham, Jacob A. “Representing Ritual, Christianizing the Pompa Circensis: Imperial Spectacle at Rome in a Christianizing Empire.” *The Art of Empire: Christian Art in Its Imperial Context*, edited by Lee M. Jefferson and Robin M. Jensen, 1517 Media, 2015. 197–224.

Week four

Tues. Feb. 14: Writing it Down: Early Manuscripts in Latin

READING:

Weitzmann, Kurt. *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination*. 9-24.

Thurs. Feb. 16: Quiz #1

UNIT TWO: BYZANTIUM, c. 300–650 CE

Week Five

Tues. Feb. 21: Early Byzantine Architecture

READING:

Marsengill, Katherine. "The Visualization of the Imperial Cult in Late Antique Constantinople." *The Art of Empire: Christian Art in Its Imperial Context*, Lee M. Jefferson and Robin M. Jensen, eds. 1517 Media, 2015. 271–306.

Thurs. Feb. 23: NO CLASS

Week Six

Tues. Feb. 28: Glitz and God: Ivories, Mosaics, Icons in Byzantium

READING:

Caskey, Cohen and Safran, *Art and Architecture of the Middle Ages*, ch. 3: 76–103

Thurs. Mar. 2: Luxurious Learning: Early Manuscripts in Greek

READING:

Verkerk, Dorothy. "Early Christian Illuminated Manuscripts." *The Routledge Handbook of Early Christian Art*. Routledge, 2018, 254–271.

Week seven

Tues. Mar. 7: Presence and Absence: Ravenna

READING:

Mathews, Thomas F. "Convergence." *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art - Revised and Expanded Edition*. Princeton University Press, 1993. 142–76.

Thurs. Mar. 9: Quiz #2

Week eight

March 13-19 SPRING BREAK

UNIT THREE: EARLY MEDIEVAL ART IN WESTERN EUROPE, c. 400–800 CE

Week nine

Tues. Mar. 21: Women Patrons

READING:

Georgiou, Andriani. "Helena: The Subversive Persona of an Ideal Christian Empress in Early Byzantium." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 21 / 4 (2013) 597–624.

Thurs. Mar. 23: Whose Barbarians? Visigothic Spain, 5th -8th century

READING:

Caskey, Cohen and Safran, *Art and Architecture of the Middle Ages*, ch. 4, 104–125

Week ten

Tues. Mar. 28: Whose Barbarians? Early Medieval Art in the North

READING:

Winroth, Anders. "Weland, Ulfberht, and Other Artisans." *The Conversion of Scandinavia: Vikings, Merchants, and Missionaries in the Remaking of Northern Europe*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012. 61-75.

Thurs. Mar. 30: NO CLASS

Week eleven

Tues. Apr. 4: Convergence: Manuscripts in the British Isles

READING:

Schapiro, Meyer. "Frame, Field and Figure." *The Language of Forms, Lectures on Insular Manuscript Art*. 7-27.

Thurs. Apr. 6: A New Religion: Early Islam

READING:

Grabar, Oleg, "About a Bronze Bird." *Reading Medieval Images, the art historian and the Object*. Elizabeth Sears and Thelma K. Thomas, eds. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002. 117-125.

Week twelve

Tues. Apr. 11: New Kings of Gaul: Merovingians

READING:

Reimitz, Helmut. "Contradictory stereotypes: 'Barbarian' and 'Roman' rulers and the shaping of Merovingian kingship." *Evil Lords: Theories and Representations of Tyranny from Antiquity to the Renaissance*. Nikos Panou and Hester Schadee, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. 81–98.

Thurs. Apr. 13: Quiz #3

UNIT FOUR: THE PROBLEM WITH IMAGES: ICONS, ANICONISM, ICONOCLASM, c. 725–842 CE

Week thirteen

Tues. Apr. 18: Icons in Byzantium

Brubaker, Leslie. *Inventing Byzantine Iconoclasm*. London, 2012. 1-21.

Thurs. Apr. 20: The Iconoclastic controversy

Brubaker, Leslie. *Inventing Byzantine Iconoclasm*. London, 2012. 22–55.

Week fourteen

Tues. Apr. 25: The Restoration of Icons

Brubaker, Leslie. *Inventing Byzantine Iconoclasm*. London, 2012. 107–128.

Thurs. Apr. 27: Western Response: The Carolingians

READING:

Caskey, Cohen and Safran, *Art and Architecture of the Middle Ages*, ch. 5, 126-153

Week fifteen

Tues. May 2: Looking forward

Thurs. May 4: Wrap up