

IS102 RENAISSANCE FLORENCE

BA2 Core Course, Fall 2020

Module: Renaissance Art and Thought

Instructors: Ian Lawson, Geoff Lehman (coordinator), Katalin Makkai, Laura Scuriatti

Course Times: Tuesday, 10:45-12:15 and Thursday, 10:45-12:15

Email and Office Hours:

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Course Description

In this course we examine the visual and intellectual culture of Renaissance Florence. A sustained engagement with a number of principal monuments in Florentine painting, sculpture, and architecture provides the basis for a consideration of key values within the development of Renaissance art that also shape, more broadly, the thought, cultural practices, and everyday experiences of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Renaissance could arguably be characterized as a historical period in which the visual arts played the leading role in the culture as a whole. Thus, the focus on works of visual art, in a sustained dialogue with literary, philosophical, and political texts of the period, opens upon a consideration of broad, trans-disciplinary problems such as the emergence of new models of subjectivity and objectivity, the relationship between religious and secular experiences, the framing of early modern political thought, and the origins of the scientific method. The course is structured around four principal topics, each a defining value for the visual arts between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries that is also central to the development of Renaissance thought: self-reflexivity, perspective, harmony and grace, humanism. The direct experience, evaluation, and interpretation of individual works of art are a crucial part of the course and, with this in mind, there will be visits to Berlin museums – specifically, the Gemäldegalerie and the Bode Museum, with their extensive Renaissance collections – to encounter works of art firsthand.

Course Books

Required (you must have your own copy of the specific edition with this ISBN):

Course reader

Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron* (ISBN: 0140449302)

Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting* (ISBN: 0300000014)

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (ISBN: 978-0226500447)

Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (ISBN: 978-0393976069)

Suggested (already included in the reader, but the library has copies available for loan):

Leonardo da Vinci, *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, ed. I. Richter (ISBN: 0192838970)

Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists* (ISBN: 978-0192834102)

Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (ISBN: 978-0942299533)

Library and book purchase policies

The college book policy for 2020-2021 is that reserve stocks of books will be lent to students on the basis of need, or (thereafter) on a first come first served basis. Books not yet owned by the college will be purchased only to create a small library reserve collection, and for students receiving more than 70% financial aid. Otherwise, students must purchase all course books.

Visual Resources

- (1) Drive **lc60** on the Bard College Berlin network (accessible only from on-campus computers)
- (2) The Web Gallery of Art: <https://www.wga.hu>

Requirements

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Syllabi should note that, instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Attendance

For this class attendance is mandatory and active participation in discussions will be an essential part of the course. More than two absences (that is, absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course. Readings should be done in advance of the class for which they are assigned. Please refer to the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

Students who are unable to attend a particular class session because of technical problems, travel requirements, or other unavoidable issues raised by distance learning should discuss possibilities for making up the class with their seminar instructor.

Assessment

Participation

Students should arrive to each class on time and prepared. Being prepared means

- (1) having completed the assigned reading (in the specific editions indicated above),
- (2) bringing to class a non-electronic copy of the assigned reading, and
- (3) being ready to initiate and to contribute to discussion.

Engagement in class discussion should be regular as well as productive; quantity alone will not favorably affect the participation grade.

Writing Assignments

There will be two principal assignments over the course of the term: a midterm essay of 6-7 pages (2000-2300 words) and a final essay of 9-10 pages (3000-3300 words), due at the end of the term. Students will also have the option of giving a final presentation to accompany their final essay and as part of the final essay grade.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

From the Student Handbook on the submission of essays:

Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example).

Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grade Breakdown

Class participation: 30%

Midterm essay: 30%

Final essay: 40% **OR** Final presentation: 10% and Final essay: 30%

Schedule

I. SELF-REFLEXIVITY

Tuesday, September 1 Introduction to Florence, the Renaissance, and Art (plenary session)

Reading: Boccaccio, *The Decameron*: Prologue; First Day: Introduction

Thursday, September 3 Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, I

Reading: Boccaccio, *The Decameron*: First Day: 1, 2, 3, and Conclusion; Third Day: Introduction, 1, 10, and Conclusion

Tuesday, September 8 Donatello and the Della Robbia

Visual assignment: group presentations following individual visits to the Bode Museum

Reading: Boccaccio, *The Decameron*: Fourth Day: Introduction and 2; Sixth Day: Introduction and 5; Eighth Day: Introduction and 3

Thursday, September 10 Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, II (lecture: Laura Scuriatti)

Reading: Boccaccio, *The Decameron*: Fifth Day: 9; Ninth Day: Introduction and 2; Tenth Day: Introduction, 10, and Conclusion; Epilogue

II. PERSPECTIVE

Tuesday, September 15 Alberti and Perspective Theory (lecture: Geoff Lehman)

Reading: Alberti, *On Painting*, Prologue and Book I

Thursday, September 17 Masaccio and Uccello

Reading: Alberti, *On Painting*, Book II

Tuesday, September 22 Botticelli

Reading: Alberti, *On Painting*, Book III

Thursday, September 24 Color Theory (lecture: Ian Lawson)
Reading: Cennino Cennini, *The Book of the Art*, Chapters 1-10, 70-71, 75-85, and 96

Tuesday, September 29 Panofsky and the History of Perspective
Visual assignment: group presentations following individual visits to the Bode Museum
Reading: Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, Section III

Thursday, October 1 Piero della Francesca
Reading: Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, Section IV

Tuesday, October 6 Leonardo, I (lecture: Geoff Lehman)
Reading: Leonardo da Vinci, *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, edited by I. Richter:
I. True Science: I. Experience, II. Reason and Nature's Laws
II. The Universe: I. The Four Elements: 1. Water, 5. Microcosm and Macrocosm
III. Flight: I. Movement through Wind and Water
IV. The Arts: I. The Artist's Course of Study: 1.b. The Eye (nos. 4-9), 1.c. Perspective, 3.a. Proportion (nos. 92-96), 3.b. The Anatomy and Movement of the Body (no. 103), 3.c. Physiology
V. Tales and Allegories: VI. Imaginative Descriptions of Nature: 1. The Whale

Thursday, October 8 Leonardo, II
Reading: Leonardo da Vinci, *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, edited by I. Richter:
IV. The Arts: I. The Artist's Course of Study: 3.i. Botany, 5. Composition (including: Description of the Deluge)

Tuesday, October 13 Leonardo, III
Reading: Leonardo da Vinci, *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, edited by I. Richter:
IV. The Arts: I. The Artist's Course of Study: 2.a. The Geometric Foundation, 2.b. Light and Shade and Color (nos. 46-54 and 78-90), II. Comparison of the Arts: 1. Painting, Music, and Poetry, 4. Painting and Sculpture
VI. Reflections on Life: I. Life Passes (nos. 20-22), II. Life of the Body (no. 23)

Thursday, October 15 Film: *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* (Céline Sciamma, 2019)
No reading assignment

Midterm essay due: 23:59 on Saturday, October 17

FALL BREAK (October 19-25)

Tuesday, October 27 Machiavelli, *The Prince*
Reading: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Dedicatory Letter, I, V-IX, XIII, and XV-XVIII

Thursday, October 29 Machiavelli and Portraiture
Visual assignment: group presentations following individual visits to the Gemäldegalerie
Reading: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, XXI-XXVI

III. HARMONY AND GRACE

Tuesday, November 3 Brunelleschi

Reading: Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, VI.1-3 and IX.5

Thursday, November 5 Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (lecture: Katalin Makkai)

Reading: Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, Dedicatory Letter and Book I, sections 1-28 (pp. 3-35)

Tuesday, November 10 Raphael, I

Reading: Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, Book I, sections 29-31, 37, and 47-56 (pp. 35-38, 44-46, and 55-63)

Thursday, November 12 Raphael, II

Reading: Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, Prefaces to Books I, II, and III

Tuesday, November 17 Painting after Raphael: Poussin, Rembrandt, Tiepolo

Visual assignment: group presentations following individual visits to the Gemäldegalerie

Reading: Tasso, *Jerusalem Delivered*, Canto XIV, 50-79; Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, Life of Raphael, pp. 330(bottom)-338 and Life of Titian, pp. 500-504

IV. HUMANISM

Thursday, November 19 Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*

Reading: Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*

Tuesday, November 24 Michelangelo, I

Reading: Michelangelo, Poems nos. 46, 61-62, 151-152, 164-167, and 239-43; Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, Life of Michelangelo, pp. 414-415

Thursday, November 26 Michelangelo, II (lecture: Geoff Lehman)

Reading: Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, Book IV, sections 49-73 (pp. 242-260)

Tuesday, December 1 Michelangelo and Modern Times (guest lecture: Lynn

Catterson)

No reading assignment

Thursday, December 3 Vittoria Colonna and Michelangelo

Reading: Vittoria Colonna, *Poems for Michelangelo*, nos. 1, 3, 9, 21, 30, 42, 45, 60, 72, 98, 102, and 103

FINAL PRESENTATIONS

Tuesday, December 8

Thursday, December 10

Final essay due: 23:59 on Friday, December 18