



ARTH 310 The Italian Renaissance: Art, Invention, and Culture

Course Syllabus Fall Semester 2024

Instructor: Jennifer S. Griffiths, PhD

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisites: none

Class Meeting Days & Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:45am-12:15pm

Office Hours: by appointment, after my classes at 2pm or via Zoom (see Moodle site)

Course Type: Standard Course

Course Fee: USD\$140

Course Description

This course is conceived as a study of the lives and works of significant artists of Italian Renaissance painting, sculpture, and architecture covering the period 1200-1600 with a focus on central Italy. Emphasis will be placed on the urban centers of Siena, Florence, Rome, and Perugia. Artists to be studied include Duccio, Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Giotto, Filippo Brunelleschi, Donatello, Piero della Francesca, Plautilla Nelli, Botticelli, Luca Signorelli, Leonardo da Vinci, Sofonisba Anguissola, Pietro Perugino, Michelangelo, and Raphael. We will learn about the political, social, and cultural contexts in which works of art were produced and viewed. We will discuss aspects of function, materials, iconography, and style. Classes will combine lecture, discussion, in-class activities, and on-site visits. Student reading and participation is mandatory. There will be special focus placed on artists and artworks that can be viewed in person and on site. Some consideration will be given to the classical roots of the Italian Renaissance (Etruscan, Greek, and Roman) and to subsequent developments (Mannerism, Baroque) in so far as this provides a context for understanding the origins and legacy of the Renaissance. The goal of the course is to help students develop art appreciation, historical comprehension, and critical reasoning skills.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures

Below are the course's learning outcomes, followed by the methods that will be used to assess students' achievement for each learning outcome. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- *identify* elements of style and technique in Renaissance painting, sculpture, and architecture (quizzes, writing assignments, exams)
- *distinguish* different kinds of methodological approaches to art history and art historical analysis (readings, discussion, quizzes)
- *summarize* relationships between paintings, monuments, or objects and the religious, political, social, and/or economic circumstances of its production. (discussion, writing assignments, exams)
- *analyze* how visual images communicate complex religious, political, and cultural meanings (discussion, writing assignments, exams)

Course Materials

Readings

A course reader, including all the indicated readings, will be available. The course's Moodle site is the primary location for readings and assignments.

Assessment

Attendance 10%

Reading Quizzes	10%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	30%
Writing Portfolio	30%

Grading

Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to note the dates of exams and other assignments. No alternative exam dates will be offered and professors are not required to give partial credit for any late work (they do so at their discretion: the Institute's default policy is no extensions and a zero for any work turned in late). Students who book travel when they have an exam or other assessment will have to change their plans or accept a zero. Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

Letter Grade Range	Numerical Score Equivalent	Student Performance
A	93% - 100%	Exceptional
A-	90% - 92%	Excellent
B+	87% - 89%	Superior
B	83% - 86%	
B-	80% - 82%	
C+	77% - 79%	Satisfactory
C	73% - 76%	
C-	70% - 72%	
D+	67% - 69%	Low Pass
D	63% - 66%	
D-	60% - 62%	
F	59% or less	Fail (no credit)

Please note: Decimal and centesimal numerals between 1-4 are rounded down while 5-9 are rounded up: e.g., expect 89.4 to be 89.0 while 89.5 to round up to 90.

Course Requirements

Grades are based on the following criteria.

Attendance (10%)

Attendance is an essential part of this course. You are allowed 2 unexcused absences per course without penalty, per Institute policy. If you attend all the other meetings, you will receive 10% for this part of your grade. There are no make-ups offered for attendance.

Reading Quizzes (10%)

Each week there will be a short online quiz with *content questions* about the weekly reading assignment to help students zoom in on the most important ideas.

Exam 1: Midterm (20%)

The exam will consist of 10 image identifications and 2 comparative essay questions that ask students to analyze two images with references to pertinent weekly readings and class topics. See the full prompt in Moodle.

Exam 2: Final (30%)

The exam will consist of 10 image identifications and 2 comparative essay questions that ask students to analyze two images with references to pertinent weekly readings and class topics. See the full prompt in Moodle.

Writing Portfolio (30%)

Students will be asked to buy a **separate notebook** at the start of the semester, which will be used as a journal apart from notes. It will contain weekly writing assignments (reading summaries, ekphrastic descriptions, and reflection questions). It will be assessed twice in the semester, i.e. before the midterm exam (Week 6) and at the end of the course before the final exam (Week 12). Your grade will be determined by the final assessment and will be based on a) the completion of all assignments and b) the effort exhibited. See the full prompt on Moodle

for more information.

Extension & Submitting Late Work

Work submitted after the deadline will receive a grade of zero, not partial credit. Each student is allowed one extension of 24 hours over the entire semester. This can be used for any assignment but the final project. Students need to email the instructor before the deadline and inform the instructor of their use of the extension. Any work submitted after the 24-hour extension will be marked zero. As for all policies, exceptions can be made by the Director for students with special accommodations or in case of medical emergencies, etc.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected and mandatory for classroom times and co-curricular activities. The first two absences per course due to illness will be considered excused “sick days” and do not require medical documentation. To receive additional excused absences due to illness, students are required to see a local physician or request a letter from an Institute-approved doctor documenting they should be excused from class for illness.

Unexcused absences will adversely affect a student’s academic performance and will result in a reduction of the student’s final course grade by 2% per absence up to a maximum of 10%. Excessive unexcused absences may result in a failing grade or disciplinary action. It is the student’s responsibility to be aware of the number of absences or late arrivals for each course, and to ask the instructor when in doubt.

If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. Any work missed in class because of an excused absence may be made up within one week of the return to the class. Any work missed that was a quiz or other test must be made up outside of class time and will, in the interest of intellectual honesty, be a slightly different test than the one given in class.

Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important. Missing a mandatory field trip for a course, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to Umbra staff in a timely manner, will lower the students’ grade by half a letter grade (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

Legitimate reasons for an excused absence or tardiness include death in the immediate family, religious observances, illness or injury, local inclement weather, and medical appointments that cannot be rescheduled.

Absences relating to illness may be excused by the Director, but only if a medical certification is provided.

Students who request an approved absence to observe a religious holiday must submit a formal request to the Institute’s Director within one week after the add/drop period when course schedules, including any field trips, are finalized. No exceptions will be made after this deadline.

Except in the case of medical emergencies, absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. Furthermore, scheduled times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, oral presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason. Even if more sections of the same class are activated, students may only take exams during the scheduled times and dates for the section they are enrolled in.

Tardiness Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes punctually. Any student arriving up to 15 minutes late or leaving up to 15 minutes earlier than the scheduled class end time will be marked as tardy. Each incident of tardiness (late arrivals to or early departures from class) is 0.5% off the final grade. However, should a student arrive more than 15 minutes late or depart more than 15 minutes before the conclusion of the class, it will be recorded as an absence.

Students are also expected to remain in class during the time of instruction except for a reasonable amount of time to use the restroom. Students who leave class and do not return during the class session will receive an unexcused absence or late penalty.

Academic Integrity

All forms of cheating (i.e., copying during exam either from a fellow student or making unauthorized use of notes) and plagiarism (i.e., presenting the ideas or words of another person for academic evaluation without acknowledging the source) will be handled according to the Institute Academic Policy, which can be found in the Umbra Institute Academic Policies and Conduct Guidelines.

Utilizing ChatGPT or other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the generation of content submitted by a student as their own as part of any assignment for academic credit at the Institute constitutes a form of plagiarism.

Should the Institute become aware of a student’s use of such platforms and services, the student will be subject to the same consequences and judicial proceedings as are in place for plagiarism (defined above).

Classroom Policy

Students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute and demonstrate the appropriate respect for the historical premises that the school occupies. Please note that cell phones must be turned off before the beginning of each class. Computers and other electronic devices cannot be used during class lectures and discussions.

Laptop/Smartphone Policy

An ever-increasing body of research shows that open laptops and telephones in the classroom create distraction (both visual and auditory) for those using them and those around them. You can type faster than you can write, and as a result you end up processing less when you're simply typing notes. For this reason, students are asked to keep computers and phones away and use a regular notebook. There are three exceptions: 1) if you have an accommodation; 2) if you make an office hours appointment with me to discuss the use of a computer; 3) if we have an in-class tutorial about online research tools.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1 SEPT 10-12

Out of Antiquity

Meeting 1 Greek and Roman Influences

Meeting 2 Byzantine and Islamic Influences and reading discussion

What is a “renaissance” versus what is the Italian Renaissance? What is humanism?

Readings for the week:

Stephen Greenblatt, “Preface” to *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011)

Writing Portfolio Entry #1:

- a. Summarize why an ancient philosopher and his poem had a big impact on the young Greenblatt in 3 sentences. (circa 50 words)
- b. Write about a book or poem you recently read that moved you, shocked you, made you learn something new or think something new? (minimum 300 words)

WEEK 2 SEPT 17-19

Writing the Renaissance

Meeting 1 The *Lives* and its Legacy

Meeting 2 Reading Discussion and what is ekphrasis?

How did Giorgio Vasari shape our modern understanding of the Renaissance?

Writing Portfolio Entry #2 (in class):

We will practice writing ekphrasis by looking closely and describing Giotto’s *Ognissanti Madonna* (1310)

Readings for the week:

Fredrika H. Jacobs, “The Construction of a life: Madonna Properzia De Rossi ‘Schultrice’ Bolognese” in *Word & Image* 9:2 (1993), 122-132.

Writing Portfolio Entry #3:

- a. What legend about Properzia de Rossi did Vasari write into history as fact? Summarize the argument Jacobs makes about the problem with stories like this. (circa 50 words)
- b. List as many women artists as you know in your notebook. Why do you think women artists have been written out of our histories and our classrooms? (minimum 300 words not including your list)

WEEK 3 SEPT 24-26

Precursors, Purposes, and Patrons

Meeting 1 Iconographies: Duccio, Cimabue, Giotto, Lorenzetti

Meeting 2: Reading Discussion

What are the technical differences between tempera and buon fresco? What was the primary function of images in Italian society at the start of the Renaissance?

Readings for the week:

Keith Christiansen, “Duccio and the Origins of Western Painting,” *MET Bulletin* (2008), Read pages pp. 1-19 only and examine images closely.

Writing Portfolio Entry #4:

- a. Summarize Christiansen’s argument about the function of Duccio’s *Maestà* in the lives of Sienese citizens in 1311? (circa 50 words)
- b. Compare and contrast Duccio’s *Maestà* with Giotto’s *Ognissanti Madonna*. What are the similarities or differences? How do those formal similarities or differences change the meaning or viewing experience?(minimum 300 words)

WEEK 4 OCT 1-3

Architecture: Man as the Measure of All Things

Meeting 1 Theory and practice in Florence, Venice, and Rome

Meeting 2: Reading Discussion

Why was Filippo Brunelleschi's spanning of Santa Maria del Fiore such a meaningful moment in history? How did Renaissance architecture reflect humanist concerns?

Readings for the week:

Walter Isaacson, Excerpt from Ch. 8. "Vitruvian Man" in *Leonardo da Vinci* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2017), 148-157.

Writing Portfolio Entry #5:

- a. *What important ancient source inspired Leonardo's Vitruvian Man? Summarize Isaacson's argument about why Leonardo's version became such a powerful symbol. (circa 50 words)*
- b. *Do we still place human beings at the center of all things and at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of life? Do you believe that people are innately good or evil? (minimum 300 words)*

WEEK 5 OCT 8-10

Painting in Perspective

Meeting 1 Masaccio, Paolo Uccello, Piero della Francesca, Fra Angelico, Mantegna

Meeting 2: Reading Discussion

How did the concept of Alberti's Window revolutionize visual culture in Europe? What were the remarkable innovations of Pietro Perugino?

Readings for the week:

Sylvia Ferino, "A Master-painter and his Pupils: Pietro Perugino and his Umbrian Workshop," *Oxford Art Journal* 2:3 (October 1979), 9-14

Writing Portfolio Entry #6:

- a. *Summarize Ferino's article in three sentences. (circa 50 words)*
- b. *What was a bottega in the Renaissance? Where do people learn their professions and trades today? What are the advantages or disadvantages of our current educational system today? (minimum 300 words)*

WEEK 6 OCT 15-17

Midterm

Meeting 1 Exam and Portfolio Review

Meeting 2 Midterm Exam

Readings for the week:

No new readings. Review and study readings and images from Weeks 1-5 for exam.

Semester Break OCT 21-27

WEEK 7 OCT 29-31

Public Sculpture in Florence: Purpose and Power

Meeting 1 Donatello Cellini and Michelangelo

Meeting 2 Reading Discussion

Meeting 3 *Friday Field Trip to Florence*

Who were the Medici family and how do they illustrate the relationship between art and political power?

Readings for the week:

Sarah Blake McHam, "Donatello's Bronze "David" and "Judith" as Metaphors of Medici Rule in Florence" in *The Art Bulletin* 83:1 (2001), 32-47.

Writing Portfolio Entry #7:

- Summarize McHam's argument about the functional uses of the Judith and David in three sentences or less. (circa 50 words)
- Describe a propagandistic public sculpture that you have seen. Is its message still current and accepted or does it have a contested meaning today? (minimum 300 words)
- Choose a work of Renaissance art in the Uffizi and write an ekphrastic description or poem.

FIELD TRIP TO FLORENCE

WEEK 8 NOV 5-7

Portraiture

Meeting 1 Leonardo, Raphael, Sofonisba Anguissola, Titian

Meeting 2 Reading Discussion and "Ways of Seeing" Video

What was the function and meaning of a portrait for artist, patron, and viewer in early modern visual culture?

Everyone now takes selfies. Are there different genres of selfie that have developed? Modes of self-presentation?

Meeting 3 (Friday, November 8) *Day Trip to Florence*

Readings for the week:

Patricia Simons, "Women in Frames: The Gaze, the Eye, the Profile in Renaissance Portraiture," *History Workshop* 25 (Spring, 1988): 4-30.

Writing Portfolio Entry #8:

- Summarize the argument Simons makes in 3 sentences or less. (circa 50 words)
- Draw a self-portrait of yourself in your notebook. It doesn't have to be naturalistic or realistic like Perugino's. It can be wildly abstract. Surround or decorate the portrait with descriptive words creating an ekphrastic poem about yourself that someone could read 500 years from now to know something about who you were.

WEEK 9 NOV 12-14

The Nude

Meeting 1 Donatello, Cellini, Michelangelo, and the Male Nude

Meeting 2 Botticelli, Titian, and the Female Nude

What different symbolic meanings did Renaissance Italian artists attribute to the male and female nude?

Readings for the week:

David Rosand, "So-and-so Reclining on Her Couch" in *Studies in the History of Art* 45 (1993): 100-119. Only read to top of page 111.

Yael Even, "The Heroine as Hero in Michelangelo's Art," *Woman's Art Journal* 11:1 (Spring-Summer 1990): 29-33.

Writing Portfolio Entry #9:

- Summarize Rosand's argument in three sentences or less (circa 50 words). Summarize Even's argument in three sentences or less (circa 50 words).
- Wonder Woman was the second superhero to be invented in 1941 (second only to Superman), but she had to wait until 2017 for her own feature film. What are the expectations for a superman versus a super woman? (minimum 300 words)

WEEK 10 NOV 19-21

The Venetian School

Meeting 1 Bellini brothers, Giorgione, and the paragone debates

Meeting 2 Reading Discussion

What was the paragone debate? Discuss a work of art that reveals the importance of these debates.

Readings for the week:

Sarah Blake McHam, "Reflections of Pliny in Giovanni Bellini's Woman with a Mirror" *Artibus et Historiae* 29:58 (2008): 157-171.

Writing Portfolio Entry #10:

- a. Summarize McHam's argument in three sentences or less. What does a signature say about the status of the artist? (circa 50 words)
- b. Imagine yourself as a wealthy art collector. What works would you buy and why? Would you want signed works? What would be the significance of a signature for you? (minimum 300 words)

WEEK 11 NOV 26-28

The Papal Court

Meeting 1 Raphael and Michelangelo

Meeting 2 Thanksgiving - No Class

Why were Tuscan and Venetian artists drawn to the papal court at the close of the 15th and beginning of the 16th centuries?

Readings for the week:

Robert Liebert, "Raphael, Michelangelo, Sebastiano: High Renaissance Rivalry," *Notes in the History of Art* 3:2 (Winter 1984): 60-68.

Art Curious Podcast Episode 33 "Rivals: Raphael vs. Michelangelo" (32 mins.)

<https://www.artcuriouspodcast.com/artcuriouspodcast/33>

Writing Portfolio Entry #11:

- a. Summarize Liebert's account of the role that Sebastiano del Piombo played in the rivalry between Raphael and Michelangelo in three sentences or less (circa 50 words).
- b. Vasari tried to insist that artists were naturally good because art is a holy calling. Yet Michelangelo seems like he was a rather abusive person. To what extent do you think we should judge the moral character of actors, writers, and artists? Should we celebrate only good people? (minimum 300 words)

WEEK 12 DEC 3-5

The Late Renaissance or Mannerism

Meeting 1 Rosso Fiorentino, Pontormo, and Bronzino

Meeting 2 The Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reform

Why is Mannerism called the stylish style? How and why did the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter Reformation put an end to Mannerism and initiate the Baroque?

Readings for the week:

Bette Talvacchia, "Bronzino's *Del pennello* and the Pleasures of Art," *Frame* 24:2 (November 2011): 21-35.

Mary Garrard, "Early Mannerism as Camp" excerpt from *Brunelleschi's Egg* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 254-266.

Writing Portfolio Entry #12:

- a. Summarize Talvacchia's essay in three sentences or less (circa 50 words). Summarize Garrard's arguments in circa 50 words.
- b. The excerpt and article this week discuss sexuality in Mannerist art. Such themes eventually drew religious criticism and censure. How do you feel about censorship in the arts? Should there be limits on what artists can do and say? (minimum 300 words)

WEEK 13 DEC 10-12

Final Classes, Final Exams, & Special Academic Events Week

Meeting 1 (Tuesday, Dec. 10th): Final Exam in class (60 minutes)