



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

## Course Syllabus Fall Semester 2023

**Instructor:** Jennifer S. Griffiths, PhD

**Credits:** 3

**Contact Hours:** 45

**Prerequisites:** none

**Class Meeting Days & Time:** Tuesday and 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:** 130 USD

### 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 Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Giotto, Filippo Brunelleschi, 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 a painting, monument, or object 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 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. If you attend all the 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 questions, descriptions of art, reflection questions). It will be graded twice throughout the semester, i.e. before the mid-semester break (Week 7) and at the end of the course (Week 12). Each of these checks is worth 15% of your grade, for a total of 30%. 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 & Lateness Policy**

Attendance is expected and mandatory for classroom times and co-curricular activities. Regular attendance is a critical component of academic success and students are expected to attend all scheduled classes unless there is a legitimate reason for absence. Students are also expected to be on time for all classes and co-curricular activities. Each unexcused absence will affect the final grade by 1.5% up to a maximum of 10%. Each incident of tardiness (late arrivals to or early departures from class) is 0.5% off the final grade. Excessive unexcused absences (8 or more) 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 be considered the equivalent of two unexcused absences. As such, absence from the co-curricular field trip will lower students' final grade in that course by 3% (the equivalent of two unexcused absences).

Legitimate reasons for an excused absence or tardiness includes: death in immediate family, religious observances, illness or injury, local inclement weather, 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.

### **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 12-14

#### **Out of Antiquity**

Meeting 1 Greek and Roman Influences

Meeting 2 Byzantine and Islamic Influences

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 the impact that an ancient philosopher had on a young Greenblatt who discovered him as a student.
- b. What book or poem have you recently read that moved you, shocked you, made you learn something new or think something new?

### WEEK 2 SEPT 19-21

#### **Writing the Renaissance**

Meeting 1 The *Lives* and its Legacy

Meeting 2 Giotto, Masaccio, Brunelleschi, Donatello, Properzia de Rossi, and Michelangelo

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

#### Writing Portfolio Entry #2:

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? What does Jacobs argue is the problem with stories like this about women?
- b. How many artists can you list off the top of your head? How many are women? Why do you think it is that women artists have for a long time been written out of our histories and our classrooms?

### WEEK 3 SEPT 26-28

#### **Precursors, Purposes, and Patrons**

Meeting 1 Religious Iconography in tempera: Duccio, Cimabue, Giotto

Meeting 2: Political Iconography in fresco: Lorenzetti

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. What functional purpose does Christiansen explain that Duccio’s image of the *Maestà* served in the civic and religious life of Sienese citizens in 1311?
- 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?

## WEEK 4 OCT 3-6

### Architecture: Man as the Measure of All Things

Meeting 1 Brunelleschi, Ghiberti, and Donatello

Meeting 2: Alberti, Michelozzo, Palladio

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

Meeting 3: *Field Trip in Perugia Friday October 6: Introduction to Umbrian School*

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? Why does Isaacson argue that Leonardo's version became such a powerful symbol?*
- b. *Do we still shape our built environment around the human body? Do we still believe in the beauty, goodness, and nobility of human beings? How do you position yourself in relationship to the living and nonliving things on this planet?*

## FIELD TRIP TO PERUGIA

### WEEK 5 OCT 10-12

### Painting in Perspective

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

Meeting 2: Perugino Discussion and Activity

How did the concept of Alberti's Window revolutionize visual culture in Europe?

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. What was a bottega in the Renaissance? How was Perugino's workshop practice unique in the history of the Renaissance as far as we know as explained by Ferino?*
- b. *Today we mostly go to university to learn our trade or profession. What are the advantages or disadvantages of our system today? Are you finished learning when you leave high school? Do you know everything you need when you leave university?*

Writing Portfolio Entry #7:

*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 6 OCT 17-19

### Midterm

Meeting 1 Group Discussion 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**

**WEEK 7 OCT 31-Nov 3**

**Public Sculpture in Florence: Purpose and Power**

Meeting 1 Donatello Cellini and Michelangelo

Meeting 2 Discussion and Activity

Meeting 3 Friday Field Trip to Florence November 3

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 #8:

- a. *Who were Judith and David in the bible and what did they symbolize to Renaissance viewers? How did the Medici family use this symbolism for propagandistic purposes according to McHam?*
- b. *Can you think of a propagandistic public sculpture in your community? Is its message still current and accepted or does it have a contested meaning today?*

**FIELD TRIP TO FLORENCE**

**WEEK 8 Nov 7-9**

**Portraiture**

Meeting 1 Leonardo, Raphael, Sofonisba Anguissola, Titian,

Meeting 2 Discussion and Activity

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?

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 #9:

- a. *Why does Simons suggest that the profile format of portraiture continued to be used for the representation of women in Tuscany even after it went out of fashion for men?*
- b. *Have you ever used the phrases "I looked them straight in the eye" or "I couldn't stand to look at them." What do these expressions mean?*

**WEEK 9 Nov 14-16**

**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 #10:

- a. Summarize Rosand's argument. Summarize Even's argument. Why did Michelangelo make masculine women in the Last Judgment according to Even?
- b. Even if Wonder Woman was the second superhero to be invented in 1941 after only Superman, she didn't have the same television and film exposure. What makes a super woman different from a super man? Or at least what different expectations do you have?

**WEEK 10 Nov 21-23**

**The Venetian School**

Meeting 1 Bellini brothers, Giorgione, and the paragone debates

Meeting 2 Video and Activity

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 #11:

- a. What humanistic implications are in Bellini's signature according to McHam? What does the proliferation of the artist signature say about the status of the artist?
- b. If you were an art collector would you want your purchased works to be signed? What are the different reasons people buy art? What art would you like to buy to put on your wall?

**WEEK 11 Nov 28-30**

**The Papal Court**

Meeting 1 Pinturicchio, Raphael, Michelangelo

Meeting 2 Raphael's rivalry with Sebastiano del Piombo

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 #12:

- a. What role does Liebert say Sebastiano del Piombo played in the famous competition between Raphael and Michelangelo?
- b. Vasari tried to insist that artists were naturally good because art is a holy calling and calls only the good. Yet Michelangelo seems like he was a rather abusive person. This is certainly true of Picasso. Should we therefore remove their work from museums and take them out of art history books? To what extent should we hold artists to moral standards of goodness?

WEEK 12 DEC 5-7

**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 #13:

- a. *What role did sexuality play in Mannerism according to Talvacchia and Garrard?*
- b. *In light of this class and issue of humanism, what do you think is the meaning of the famous expression that "every painter paints himself." Is this truer now than it was 500 years ago?*

WEEK 13 DEC 12-14

**Final Exams and Special Academic Events Week**