**Early Renaissance Art**

ARTHS 3391 A, Section 1032/ARTHS 3391 A, Section 1539  
Department of Fine Arts and Drama, University of St. Thomas  
Spring 2015, Tuesday and Thursday, 2:10-3:25 pm, Cullen 204

Professor: Dr. Jessica Basciano  
Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 9:00-12:30, and by appointment  
Office: Art History Building, 1204 Colquitt Street, Room 203  
Phone: 713-525-3854  
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**Course Description**

The Renaissance, or rebirth of classical art and ideas, is a central concept of Western art history. This course examines Italian art of the late Gothic period and the early phase of the Renaissance, from the mid-thirteenth to the late fifteenth century. Students will investigate architecture, sculpture, painting, and printmaking, and will closely analyze important works by artists and architects such as Giotto, Brunelleschi, Donatello, Massaccio, Piero della Francesca, Botticelli, and Giovanni Bellini. Themes we will explore throughout the course include: artists’ attempts to capture the natural world, artists’ engagement with ancient Roman art and architecture, the growth of cities and their accumulation of wealth, and the functions of artworks and religious and civic monuments. We will discuss artists’ working conditions, their materials and techniques, and the status of art and artists during the period. In addition, the course will consider the history of the study of Renaissance art and problems surrounding the term “Renaissance”.

Class meetings will consist of lectures illustrated by PowerPoint presentations, as well as discussions. These will be supplemented by a special, required fieldtrip to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, during our regular class time on Thursday, April 9.

The goals of the course are:
1) to learn to recognize and identify well-known works of art produced in Italy from the mid-thirteenth to the late fifteenth century;
2) to learn to describe and evaluate the formal characteristics of works of art using specialized vocabulary;
3) to learn to analyze and interpret works of art in their historical contexts;
4) to gain familiarity with research tools in art history;
5) and to develop skills of critical reading and oral and written communication, particularly the ability to write a research essay that advances an original argument.

**Online Resources**
The Blackboard website will be an essential component of the course:  
[https://blackboard.stthom.edu/](https://blackboard.stthom.edu/)

I will use Blackboard to make accessible readings, PowerPoints, and other course documents. If you have any difficulty finding these resources on the site, please let me know right away. In addition, I will use your UST e-mail address to contact you outside of class time. Therefore, I ask that you check it regularly.

**Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work required</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Percentage of final grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Responses (3)</td>
<td>throughout the term</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(see schedule below)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>February 12</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>March 5</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Essay</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>May 12</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>throughout the term</td>
<td>10%</td>
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**Course Requirements**
The *textbook* for the course is:


It is available for purchase at the campus bookstore. The textbook provides a chronological narrative and illustrates many of the works we will study. Further *required readings*, chosen to stimulate class discussion, will be posted on Blackboard or placed on reserve at Doherty Library. Many of the required readings are primary sources that offer direct insight into the production and reception of works of art, others are secondary sources that complement the textbook.

Reading responses (1-1½ pages) are due three times during the semester. The class before a reading response is due, I will ask specific questions for you to answer in relation to the readings. Your response must be typed, double-spaced, and printed: I do not accept e-mailed work. Since the point of the responses is to prepare for class discussions, they must be done on time.
Note: Regardless of whether a reading response is assigned, students are expected to read all required readings by the due date and to come to class ready to discuss them. Please print out or photocopy all required readings apart from the textbook and bring them to class with you.

The research proposal (1½-2 pages, not including bibliography) will present your preliminary research on your essay topic. It will consist of a statement in paragraph form outlining your methodological approach, your argument, the problems inherent to the topic, and the direction of your research, complemented by a bibliography of at least ten scholarly sources, at least five of which must be printed only—not on the web. Online sources must be scholarly too, such as academic journals or e-books. **Graduate students must provide an annotated bibliography.**

You are free to choose your own topic, but it must concern Italian art of the period from 1200 to 1500. We will discuss topic ideas and the research and writing of essays in class. A good starting point is the Art History Resources at Doherty Library webpage: [http://campusguides.stthom.edu/arthistory](http://campusguides.stthom.edu/arthistory).

The final research essay (6-8 pages for undergraduates, 12-15 pages for graduates, not including illustrations) will develop the ideas explored in your proposal. The essay must be complete with footnotes, a bibliography, and illustrations, and must conform to a style guide such as the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Photocopies or scans of images must be included as illustrations at the end of the text, with figure references in the text. All illustrations must be numbered and identified with captions.

The midterm exam will consist of slide identifications with short-answer questions, a vocabulary section, and comparative essays.

The final exam will be composed of slide identifications with short-answer questions, comparative essays, and a comprehensive essay. Questions for the comprehensive essay will be distributed beforehand.

The fieldtrip to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston is scheduled during class time. It is required, because the examination of original art objects is fundamental to the teaching of art history.

**Research Essay Ideas**

1. A case study of an artwork or monument that has attracted considerable attention in art history. Compare and contrast several interpretations. Which is the most convincing? Why?

2. A case study of a single artist. Compare and contrast several works. What are their similarities and differences, and how can they be assessed in relation to the artist’s biography, especially his or her relationship with patrons?

3. A case study of an artwork or monument that exists only in fragmentary form. How have art historians tried to reconstruct the work in words and images? On what documentary or archaeological evidence have they relied?

4. A comparison of two artworks with similar subjects that were made in different places or times. What are the similarities and differences between the works, and what is the significance
of these similarities and differences? Why do the works differ? The essay could deal with works that you examine in person, at the MFAH, for example.

5. A comparison of two buildings with similar functions that were made in different places or times. What are the similarities and differences between the buildings, and what is the significance of these similarities and differences? Why do the buildings differ?

Course Policies

Attendance: Students are expected to attend every class meeting. The only acceptable reasons for missing class are: religious observance, illness, family emergency, and co-curricular activities such as intercollegiate athletics. In the case of absence for religious reasons, please let me know in advance. In the case of a medical or family emergency, provide a note from a doctor or counselor. In the case of co-curricular activities, a coach or other leader must submit an excused absence form. Students who miss more than one class without permission will have their participation grade lowered by one point (out of ten) for each absence. Students who arrive late will likewise have their participation grade lowered.

Food: Please do not eat in class.

Laptops and Cellphones: Please turn off and put away your laptops and phones.

Late Work: Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the specified date. Reading responses will not be accepted late. If you fail to submit a response on time, your grade for the work will be zero. Essays submitted later on the day they are due will be considered one day late. A student will lose a grade step for each day an essay is late. (An example of a grade step is the difference between a B and a B-.)

Academic Integrity: The UST Student Handbook states that “every offense against academic honesty seriously undermines the teaching-learning process for which the University exists”. In keeping with this view, students are expected to be honest when taking their exams, to cite sources in their essays, and to submit their own work. Students may not submit work for one course that has already been used for another course. Cheating, plagiarizing, or any other form of academic dishonesty will lead either to a mark of zero for the work in question or to the grade of “F” for the course, and to a formal University procedure.

You must cite all sources used, whether printed or online. If you are unsure about what to cite or how to cite it, please see me during my office hours. You can also find links to citation style guides on the Doherty Library Research Guide webpage: http://campusguides.stthom.edu/cat.php?cid=866.

Disability Services: Students with a suspected or documented disability may be eligible to receive academic accommodations. Faculty must be notified that exam accommodations have been approved well before the exam. For more information, see the Disability Services FAQ on the UST website or contact the Coordinator, Tiffany Devereux. She may be reached by e-mail at deveret@stthom.edu or by phone at 713-525-2169 or 6953.
Schedule of Classes and Assignments (Subject to Revision)

1. **January 13.** Introduction. Explanation of course requirements and goals.

2. **January 15.** Visual analysis. Discussion of the terms “Gothic” and “Renaissance”.
   **Reading**
   Hartt. Chap. 1, “Prelude: Italy and Italian Art.”

3. **January 20.** Italian Gothic Architecture 1: Mendicant Churches in Assisi and Florence
   **Reading**

4. **January 22.** Italian Gothic Architecture 2: Civic Cathedrals in Siena, Orvieto, and Florence
   **Reading**

5. **January 27.** Gothic Sculpture 1: Nicola and Giovanni Pisano
   **Reading**

6. **January 29.** Gothic Sculpture 2: Arnolfio di Cambio and Lorenzo Maitani
   **Reading**

7. **February 3.** Gothic Painting 1: Berlinghieri and Cimabue
   **Reading**

8. **February 5.** Gothic Painting 2: Giotto
   **Reading**
   Giorgio Vasari. “Giotto.” vol. 1. pp. 57-81. (Blackboard.)

*Reading Response 1 Due*
   Reading  

10. February 12.  Gothic Painting 4: Secular Works and Late Gothic Painting in Tuscany
   *Research Proposal Due*
   Reading  

11. February 17.  Early Renaissance Architecture: Brunelleschi
   Reading  

   Reading  

   Reading  
   *Reading Response 2 Due*

   Reading  

15. March 3.  MIDTERM EXAM REVIEW

16. March 5.  MIDTERM EXAM.

*No class March 9 and 11: SPRING BREAK.*

17. March 17.  Early Renaissance Painting in Florence 1: Gentile da Fabriano and Early Works by Masolino and Massaccio
   Reading  
18. March 19. Early Renaissance Painting in Florence 2: The Brancacci Chapel and Masaccio’s *Trinity*

Reading


Reading


*Reading Response 3 Due*


Reading
Hartt. Chap. 11, “Florentine Painting at Mid-Century.”


Reading

*No class April 2: EASTER BREAK.*

22. April 7. Art and Architecture in the Italian Courts 2: Ferrara and Urbino

Reading


Reading

*Research Essay Due*
25. **April 16.** Botticelli in Florence  
*Reading*  

26. **April 21.** Ghirlandaio in Florence and the Sistine Chapel before Michelangelo  
*Reading*  

27. **April 23.** Early Renaissance Painting in Venice: Antonello da Messina  
*Reading*  

28. **April 28.** Early Renaissance Painting in Venice: the Bellini

29. **April 30.** **FINAL EXAM REVIEW**

* The exam will be at 3:00 pm on Tuesday, May 12, 2015.*