HISTORY OF ART 2001

WESTERN ART I: THE ANCIENT & MEDIEVAL WORLDS

Professor Emily Neumeier

This course examines the history of Western Art (architecture, painting and sculpture) from the third millennium BCE through the fifteenth century CE. Rather than a complete survey of that period, the course will concentrate on a select group of representative objects and monuments. We will examine not only the monuments themselves, but also the historical context in which they were produced. There will be a strong emphasis on visual analysis and understanding how visual forms convey meaning and relate to the viewer. Our goal is to impart not only a body of knowledge but also a set of critical tools, which you should be able to apply even to artworks and buildings not specifically covered in this course.

SPRING 2018
Class # 14931 (+ RECITATION)
MON & WEDS 9:10-10:05
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This course examines the art of the United States and Europe from about 1500 to the present, with an emphasis on painting. It will concentrate on a select group of representative works that shaped—and were shaped by—developments in western social, political, and intellectual history and that participated in individual and community identity formation. There will be a strong emphasis on questions of analysis and interpretation, as the goal is to impart not only a body of knowledge but also a set of critical tools that you should be able to apply to a wide range of material not specifically covered in the course.
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This course offers an introduction to the visual arts in East Asia, from the Neolithic through today. The course examines in particular the relationship between cultural production and changing notions of authority in East Asia in a comparative historical perspective. Case studies will be drawn from China, Japan, and neighboring regions. Issues examined include: religion and early state formation; courtly culture and monumentality; the development of urban popular culture; the age of empire; art and modernization.
This course will introduce students to the principal films, directors, and movements of World Cinema from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present day. Emphasis will be on helping students acquire and develop the requisite skills for analyzing the formal and stylistic aspects of specific films, and on helping students understand those films in their social and historical contexts.
This course will introduce students to the history of film as an artistic medium and a global art form. We will track technological, aesthetic, and formal developments in its evolution from photographic and proto-cinematic technologies to digital cinema (roughly 1827-2001) by studying particular masterpieces, and focusing on the role of the director or auteur. We will pay close attention to the medium’s complex relationship to time, its changing materiality (and “medium specificity”), and its fraught relationship to truth and reality. Students will engage in a historical and formal study of international cinema through a chronological survey of its major forms, techniques, and its relationship to the broader history of art, as well as social and political history. We will sample its major and “minor” forms, from Hollywood productions to art gallery experiments and cinema from the developing world. Students will be introduced to the grammar of film through a historical account of its formal evolution and the stylistic analysis of the visual and narrative structures of individual films.
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This course is intended as an introduction to the varied forms and functions of Christian images and spaces from the origin of Christianity until about 1700. We will explore how objects (e.g. paintings, sculptures, prints, reliquaries) give expression to particular beliefs, facilitate worship, and structure the beholder’s experience. Sites of communal worship (e.g. churches and their cult objects, altarpieces and other liturgical furniture) will figure prominently in this exploration and particular attention will be paid to how these spaces and their contents are configured and experienced by the believer. Issues of individual and communal identity also will be examined in the context of objects that engage the individual in private devotions (e.g. illustrated books and manuscripts, portable altars, and domestic painting), that give form to both the individual’s hopes for salvation and place within the community (e.g. tombs, epitaphs, donor portraits), and that are employed to assert institutional (both ecclesiastical and temporal) power and authority.
This course explores the intersecting ideologies of gender and representation in Western art, particularly in Europe from the 12th-17th centuries. Throughout this period, both the status of art and the definitions of gender and sexuality were in a state of transition, and we will consider ways in which we as historians can understand the intermingling contexts of pictorial practice and gender construction. Topics to be explored include the ways in which historians can study and understand gender construction, the gendered contexts of artistic production, the gendered viewer and gaze, the changing status of female artists and patrons, and queer artists and artworks. Particularly, we will consider new manners of depicting men and, especially, women, to understand how pictorial imagery both describes and shapes cultural attitudes towards gender. In this context we will look at the depiction of the nude body, portraits of both ordinary and powerful men and women, art made by and for women, and images of sexual violence. In studying these historical contexts, as well as some modern works, it is hoped that we will also uncover the extent to which many of the same ideologies continue to operate within the methods and objects of both contemporary art historical study and contemporary global visual culture.
Despite its common usage “world cinema” lacks a proper, positive definition. It tends to be defined negatively as “non-Hollywood cinema,” which Lúcia Nagib observes, “unwittingly sanctions the American way of looking at the world, according to which Hollywood is the center and all other cinemas are the periphery.” This course provides an introduction to world cinema that attends carefully to questions of definition. The emergence of global art cinema is often mapped as a succession of “new waves”: Italian neorealism, the French nouvelle vague, the Danish Dogma movement and New Iranian Cinema. We will look at how the aesthetics of realism, concerned above all with the texture and temporality of everyday life, set these film movements (and other parallel developments in African, Latin American, Asian cinema) apart from films shaped by the codes of genre and commercialism. We will consider how recent world cinema departs from realism to depict experiences characterized by transnationalism, post-colonialism, and migration. Placing these films into the broader historical and (multi-) cultural contexts of their production, we will examine how world cinema today not only engages life in the present, but also calls up occluded fragments of the past.
This course will teach art history majors how to write about art in a clear and compelling manner. Students will also improve their ability to critically engage with texts and do in-depth visual analysis. Through our readings, discussion, and careful looking at images, students will consider the ways the state has been represented, reacted against, and questioned in Asian and North American art. How did events such as the Pacific War impact the art world and how did representation in turn inform competing ideologies of nationhood and gender? How has globalization affected artistic practice? While addressing these issues we will examine various works of modern and contemporary art, including film, installation, photography, painting, and performance art. This course is an excellent opportunity to learn more about the exciting world of avant-garde art in Asia.
HA4010 provides an overview of the history of art history, paying particularly close attention to the writings of major figures who have contributed to the methodological and theoretical development of the discipline. This course, which is required of all History of Art majors, is reading-intensive. Discussion of key essays by prominent philosophers, art historians, critics, and critical theorists will provide the focus of each class meeting.
This course offers an introduction to architecture from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present, emphasizing the large-scale forces—philosophical, political, social, and economic—that shaped architectural theory and practice in an extraordinarily tumultuous period of world history. Unlike a traditional survey, this class focuses on the historical contexts of architectural form, starting with the urban context—i.e. the bourgeois metropolis, which had only just attained its definitive shape in the final decades of the nineteenth century. Tracking the avant-garde’s struggle to define a social role for itself against the conventions of bourgeois privacy and domesticity, we will take stock of the many, often contradictory ways architects and theorists proposed to bridge the chasm—it would ultimately prove impossibly wide—between the base unit of architectural form (building, home, monument, tower, etc.) and the form of the city at large. We will also explore the radical critiques of modernist architecture and urbanism that proliferated alongside the urban revolts of the 1960s, as voiced by a host of countercultural intellectuals: Henri Lefebvre, Guy Debord, Manfredo Tafuri, Michel Foucault, and others. Finally, we will seek to come to terms with the waning of the modernist project in the 1980s and after, as the discipline of architecture has become ever increasingly the adjunct of the global real-estate sector, heralding a return to the spatial conditions of bourgeois privacy, albeit on a massively expanded scale.
The distinct and influential visual culture of China reflects the dynamic periods in China’s history. This course examines the art and history of China thematically and chronologically exploring the culture’s artistic practice in religious, ritual, political, and courtly contexts. Beginning with early pottery-making and jade-carving cultures and proceeding into the twenty-first century, students will analyze the main artistic trends over time and wrestle with the related issues of power, authenticity, and politics.
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How is the past remade in the present? What strategies and techniques have been developed by academic historians (in disciplines ranging from History to Anthropology and Archaeology to Art History) to imagine different pasts? How do these approaches overlap with the alternative histories created by filmmakers, novelists, musicians, and artists? Above all, how do historians both within and beyond the university deal with non-alphabetic traces of the past—sources that are visual, material, or sonic? How can “histories” be produced without alphabetic writing? In this course, we will explore these issues by reading and viewing a wide range of materials: paintings, tapestries, documentaries, museum exhibits, websites, musical recordings, steampunk novels, Mesoamerican hieroglyphs, and of course academic essays and books.
This course offers a survey of major developments in European art, with an emphasis on French painting, from the 1848 Revolution until the last Impressionist exhibition of 1886. Artists whose works will be considered in detail include Gustave Courbet, François Millet, the English Pre-Raphaelites, Edouard Manet, Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Frédéric Bazille, Berthe Morisot, Gustave Caillebotte, and Paul Cézanne (early works). *NOT OPEN STUDENTS WHO HAVE COMPLETED HA3611.
This course proposes to delineate postmodernism as it has manifested in art, design, architecture, fashion, and theoretical models. However, the more one attempts to pin down postmodernity, the less a clear picture emerges: Is it merely a temporal issue? A style? A critical statement? A political stance? And why do so few artists associated with postmodernism want to own up to it? Rather than seeing this fuzziness as an obstacle, we’ll use the lack of clarity as an opportunity to explore a wide range of objects and their critical and artistic positions, including the art of appropriation and sampling culture; New Urbanism and architectural contextualism; shoulder pads and pleated pants; music videos and the artists who participated in them; and radical typography and the introduction of computer-aided design. We’ll also ask the question, what do things look like after the “post” has passed?
This course will examine the major trends in Chinese painting under the Mongol, Ming, and Manchu dynasties of China, a time of major developments domestically, including the critical ascendance of literati painting, and waves of significant international engagement, including art associated with the Mongol empire, the maritime explorations of Ming fleets, and the robust relationships between art-loving 17th and 18th century emperors and peoples of both China’s border areas and across the seas.
Many historically significant films identified as “visionary,” “personal,” “experimental,” “political,” and “modernist” have been produced in surprisingly close proximity to the film industry. This course traces the complex and shifting relationship between what film historian David E. James designates as “major” (commercial, Hollywood) cinema and the “minor” cinemas of the avant-garde produced by artists, amateurs, agitators, and the like. Completed with limited financial resources, this work has often been distributed through alternative, self-organized channels of exhibition. Looking closely at narratives of stylistic evolution in avant-garde cinema, we will focus on points of contact between the history of art and cinema in both its major and minor modes. At the same time, we will remain attentive to questions that this approach risks leaving unanswered. How, for example, has the history of inventive, non-commercial cinema been shaped in unexpected ways by geography, (sub)culture, and politics? What kinds of communities and institutions have formed to support precarious modes of filmmaking in different moments and places? Where do the histories of individual filmmakers intersect with the often-conflicted social worlds their films address? With these questions in mind, we will look closely at a wide range of films made to surprise, unnerve, and provoke viewers since the early 1920s.