

THE BIRTH OF THE RENAISSANCE

01:082:309:01 Spring 2021
Monday & Thursday, 3rd period



Detail, Sandro Botticelli, *Birth of Venus*, c. 1484-1486

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course introduces students to the study of the visual culture of Renaissance Italy. We'll explore the development of Italian Renaissance art during the fifteenth century, an era of radical change in which were introduced new secular subjects like portraiture, contemporary events, birth scenes, and pagan mythology, and new artistic techniques like linear perspective and engraving (as a result of the invention of the printing press). At the same time, longstanding cultural and religious traditions continued to be honored in interpretations increasingly centered on the (idealized) human world. We'll examine diverse media, including painting, sculpture, architecture, decorative arts and works on paper. Using various art historical methods, as well as social, political and religious history, we'll discuss various issues, including: how antiquity inspired artists and patrons to redefine modes of representation, how competition and the public display of art fostered innovation, how the role of the artist was transformed in this period, and how mercantile connections with the Muslim world, the Americas, and Northern Europe influenced Italian artistic culture.

GOALS OF THE COURSE: By the end of the course you will have increased your abilities to analyze visual information so that you can read and interpret works of art and differentiate among them. You will also have become skilled in understanding how the visual language of painting, sculpture and architecture conveys religious, social, and political messages about the society in which it was created, and you will have learned how to decipher them. You will also have gained experience in expressing these perceptions in discussions and in papers.

REQUIREMENTS: There will be six one-page page essays on a choice of designated topics mostly during the first 8 weeks of the course, all due on Thursday of the following week, a 5-page research paper on the subject of your choice (developed from a revision and expansion of one of your essays), and a final. Grading will be based on these assignments and on contributions to class discussion (essays @ 5 points each, or 30% total; research paper outline and bibliography @ 10%, research paper @20%; class participation @ 20%, and final @20%). Attendance is required unless you are forced to take the class asynchronously, in which case, speak to me for special assignments. Without a valid excuse, late assignments will be lowered a grade for each day they are late.

Current Academic Integrity Policy: Any questions about cheating or plagiarism, which are strictly prohibited, are found here: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>

Disabilities: Full disability policies and procedures are at <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/> Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html>

TEXT: Loren Partridge, *Art of Renaissance Florence, 1400-1600*, Berkeley: U. of CA Press, 2009, paperback (ISBN 9780520257740) is available at the Rutgers University (Barnes and Noble) Bookstore, Ferren Mall, and at online sites like Amazon. Follow along in Partridge the material covered in each class.

The syllabus and assigned readings are on electronic reserve on the Canvas site. You are expected to read the assigned readings before each class and to come to class prepared to discuss them.

CANVAS SITE: An outline and illustrations of the works of art for every class, directions for all assignments, copies of the syllabus, and assigned readings and videos can be found on the class Canvas site.

FINAL EXAM: There will be two essay questions, worth 50 points each.

Study Tips

You will be able to understand and process the information better if you keep up with the schedule laid out in the syllabus. Do not hesitate to ask any questions that may help your study process.

Read the sections of the books and articles listed in advance of the pertinent class.

Grading Scale:

A = 90 - 100

B+ = 87-89

B = 80-86

C+ = 77-79

C = 70 - 76

D = 65 - 69

F= 64 and Below

Prof. Sarah Blake McHam, Distinguished Professor of Art History

Office Hours: Monday, 3:30-5; Wednesday, 9-10:30, and at mutual convenience. on Zoom or

Facetime. Email: mcham@arthist.rutgers.edu; tel.: 732-616-1709

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Note: you are expected to do the readings listed under each Module before the classes that week.

Module I, January 21: Setting the Stage – A Brief Introduction to the Course and History of 15th-century Italy, particularly Florence

Module II, January 25 and 28: Building Blocks – Innovations in Florentine Architecture

Readings:

Turner, Ch. 4 “In the Shadow of the Dome,” (pp. 69-89)

Questions on which to focus: Organization of artistic practice? How did patronage system work? Why important? What influences from the Roman and Muslim past played a role in the development of the new architecture? Write an essay of 500 words on one of these issues, due Feb. 4.

Module III, February 1 and 4: Speaking Statues

Readings:

Giorgio Vasari, Life of Donatello, translation of Italian 1568 edition);

<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/vasari/vasari6.asp>

Turner, Ch. 3 “Speaking Statues,” pp. 51-67

Welch, Ch. 2 “Materials and Methods,” pp. 37-77

Questions on which to focus: What are speaking statues? How does the artist make stone or bronze seem alive? What does Vasari, our most important primary source, emphasize in his biography of Donatello? Why is what Vasari wrote significant? Write an essay of 500 words on one of these issues, due Feb. 11.

Module IV, February 8 and 11: Window into the World: Innovations in Painting

Readings:

“Cardinal Dominici on Painters and Paintings” in *Gilbert, Italian Art, 1400-1500*, pp. 145-6

Baxandall, Michael, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, pp. 40-49

Welch, Ch. 2 “Materials and Methods,” pp. 37-77

Alberti, *On Painting*, Bks. 2 and 3

Eckstein, *Painted Glories, The Brancacci Chapel*, Ch. 3, pp. 109-49

Questions on which to focus: What is fresco? How would 15th-c. Florentines have understood the Brancacci Chapel cycle?

Whom is Alberti addressing in his treatise? Why? What are his goals? Write an essay of 500 words on one of these issues, due Feb. 18.

Module V, February 15 and 18 - Innovations Reworked in the Second Generation in Florentine Painting

Readings:

Hood, *Fra Angelico at San Marco*, 1990, ch. 10 (pp. 209-38)

Questions on which to focus: How did Fra Angelico tailor his program of paintings at San Marco to the different audiences who would see them there? Consider the different needs and motivations of the three parties involved in the renovation of San Marco: choose either 1. the Dominican friars who lived there, including Fra Angelico, painter of the *San Marco* altarpiece and the convent’s fresco decorations; or 2. Michelozzo (the architect), and or 3. Cosimo (the patron). What did each group want to accomplish in the project and how did their priorities differ? Write an essay of 500 words on one of these issues, due Feb. 25.

Module VI, February 22 and 25 - Innovations Reworked in the Second Generation in Florentine Sculpture

Readings:

Renaissance Portrait,

Irving Lavin, “On the Sources and Meaning of the Renaissance Portrait Bust,” in *Looking at Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, Sarah Blake McHam, ed., Cambridge, 1998, 60-78

Questions on which to focus: how did wealthy Renaissance Italians ensure their fame after death? Or Pick one choice and describe its perceived advantages. Write an essay of 500 words on one of these issues, due March 4.

Module VII, March 1 and 4: The Age of Cosimo de’ Medici, de facto ruler of Florence (1434-

64)

Readings:

“Leonardo Bruni’s Rejected Program” [for the Gates of Paradise]

Kent, Dale V. *Cosimo de’ Medici and the Florentine Renaissance: the patron’s oeuvre*, pp. 3-8Patricia Rubin, “Magnificence and the Medici” in *The Early Medici and their Artists*. ed. Francis Ames-Lewis, London, 1995, pp. 37-50

Questions on which to focus : how does the patron get his say? What was the patronage strategy of Cosimo de’ Medici? Write an essay of 500 words on one of these issues, due March 11.

Module VIII, March 8 and 11: The Age of Lorenzo (the Magnificent) de’ Medici (r. 1469-1492), Cosimo’s grandson and outright ruler of Florence who presided over a sophisticated court surrounded by philosophers, literary figures, and artists (Botticelli, Verrocchio, Leonardo, Pollaiuolo, Ghirlandaio, and Michelangelo)

Question on which to focus: how is a court culture different from one of a so-called republic such as Florence which Cosimo headed?

Research Paper Preparation: Annotated Bibliography of 8 items, of which 4 must be recent books, articles, or essays, and a content-rich outline of your paper are due on March 11

Module IX, March 22 and 25: The Age of Lorenzo (the Magnificent) de’ Medici (cont.) (Botticelli, Verrocchio, Leonardo, Pollaiuolo, Ghirlandaio, and Michelangelo)

Readings:

Hughes, *Michelangelo*, chs. 1 and 2, pp. 4-6

Questions on which to focus: was Michelangelo’s training unconventional? What influences from northern Europe and the exploratory voyages to the Americas affected Italian art?

Module X, March 29; April 1: Rome and the Courts of Italy: Ferrara and Rimini

Readings:

Partridge, *The Art of Renaissance Rome*, pp. 9-25; 79-85; 109-20Cole, *Virtue and Magnificence*, “Introduction,” pp. 7-14; Ch. 5: Este Ferrara

Question on which to focus: how did the Renaissance popes negotiate between this world and the next in terms of art?

Module XI, April 5 and 8: The Courts of Northern Italy, Urbino and Mantua

Readings:

Cole, *Virtue and Magnificence*, “Ch. 3: Urbino under Federico da Montefeltro” (pp. 7-14; 67-90); Ch. 6: Mantua and the Gonzaga”
 Dana Katz, “Contours of Tolerance: Jews and the Corpus Domini Altarpiece, Urbino,” *Art Bulletin*, vol. 85 (December 2003), pp. 646-61

Question on which to focus: how were Jews regarded in Renaissance Italy?

Module XII, April 12 and 15: Naples (and its ties to Spain and the Muslim world) and Sforza Milan (Leonardo da Vinci)

Readings:

Cole, *Virtue and Magnificence*, “Ch. 2: Piety and Propaganda: Naples under Arnolfo of Aragon,” pp. 45-65
 Cole, *Virtue and Magnificence*, “Ch. 4: Milan and Pavia under Ludovico ‘il Moro’,” pp. 93-116
 Zöllner, *Leonardo da Vinci*, pp. 120-39

Questions on which to focus: Why did Leonardo prefer to live in Milan rather than his native Florence? What was it like to be a court artist?

Module XIII, April 19 and 22: Sforza Milan and its Ties to France, The Republic of Venice

Readings:

“Mantegna’s Field Trip to Collect Classical Inscriptions”
 Brown, *Art and Life in Renaissance Venice*, Ch. 1

Module XIV, April 26 and 29: Venice’s Maritime Empire as a conduit to/from the Byzantine and Muslim World

Readings:

Howard, *Venice and the East*, pp. xi-12

Question on which to focus: How was Venice different from other Italian states?

Research Paper due on April 29

Module XV, Review, May 3

Exam Directions:

The exam will consist of a choice of 2/5 essays based on the text, readings and class lectures and discussions throughout the semester. A list of 5 possible questions will be passed out on April 26. I will make the choice just prior to the exam. The exam will begin in the time slot allotted by RU. You can choose any three hours to answer it in the following 27 hours. It will be due at the

end of the allotted time slot the following day.

<p><u>Student-Wellness Services:</u></p> <p><u>Just In Case Web App</u> http://codu.co/cee05e Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.</p> <p><u>Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)</u> (848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/ CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.</p> <p><u>Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)</u> (848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / www.vpva.rutgers.edu/ The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.</p> <p><u>Disability Services</u> (848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / https://ods.rutgers.edu/ The Office of Disability Services works with students with a documented disability to determine the eligibility of reasonable accommodations, facilitates and coordinates those accommodations when applicable, and lastly engages with the Rutgers community at large to provide and connect students to appropriate resources.</p> <p><u>Scarlet Listeners</u> (732) 247-5555 / http://www.scarletlisteners.com/ Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.</p>	<p><u>RUSA</u> – The Rutgers University Student Assembly urges that this information be included at the end of every syllabus.</p>
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