

Moments of Light: Art, Worldview, and Society in Global History

Fall 2017

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Office Hours: Wednesday 1-3; Thursday 1-3 and by appointment

Course Description:

Images came before written words, and buildings before books. A survey of art and architecture serves as an excellent vehicle for a comparative study of world cultural history. In this course, students will examine works of art and architecture from a variety of civilizations and cultures, from antiquity to the end of the 19th century. They will analyze the visual elements of these works, and place them in the context of the societies that produced them. The heart of the course involves extensive reading of primary sources that culturally correspond to the visual material. By combining visual and textual sources material, students will trace the complex connections between art, ideas, and social or political institutions. They will also do extensive cultural comparison. In addition to its role as a survey of world intellectual and cultural history, the course will help students develop their ability to understand and analyze visual subject matter, a skill of great relevance in an increasingly visual world.

Texts and Materials:

Extensive Visual Sources (see individual units below)

Negative Confessions

Instruction of Ptah-Hotep

Hymn to the Nile

Battle of Kadesh

Epic of Gilgamesh

Homer, *Iliad*

Sophocles, *Antigone*

Euripides, *Lysistrata*

Thucydides, *Funeral Oration of Pericles*

Ramayana (selections)

Upanishads (selections)

Bhagavad Gita

Last Sermon of Muhammad

Sunnah (selections)

St Benedict, *Rule* (selections)

Gregory, *Pastoral Care* (selections)

Confucius, *Analects* (selections)

Laozi, *Dao Dejing* (selections)

Zhu Xi, *Commentary on the Four Books* (selections)

John of Salisbury, *Policratus* (selections)

Dante, *De Monarchia* (selections)
Dante, *Paradise* (selections)
Petrarch, *Ascent of Mt Ventoux*
Christine de Pisan, *Book of the City of Ladies* (selections)
Florentine documents (14th and 15th century)
Castiglione, *The Courtier* (selections)
Discussion in the Hall of Worship
Dara Shikoh, *The Mystic Path* (selections)
Hooke, *Micrographia* (selections)
Voltaire; *Candide*
Coleridge; *Kubla Khan*
Marx, *Communist Manifesto*
Nietzsche; *Beyond Good and Evil* (selections)

Assessment Practices:

The History Department places special emphasis on the development of analytical writing skills, so the majority of assessments will support this goal. Each of the two halves of the course will include two short formative papers in which students confront source material on their own, before class discussion. Such papers give students the opportunity to make their own conclusions about the subject matter and to practice writing and the construction of arguments. A longer summative paper, dealing with more substantial issues, will conclude each quarter. Finally, in-class work will contribute to student accountability.

Medium length papers: 40%
Short papers: 40%
Class discussion and in-class assessments: 20%

Topics, Themes, Works:

Note: Because of the volume of material, selections from longer works will be used.

Topic #1 -- Ancient Egypt in the New Kingdom

Iconic work: Illuminations from the *Book of the Dead*
Texts: *Instruction of Ptah-Hotep*, *Hymn to the Nile*, *Battle of Kadesh*
Supporting works: Narmer's Palette, Pyramid of Khufu, Bust of Nefertiti, Amarna Paintings, Throne of Tutankhamen, Triumph of Rameses

Focusing Questions:

How does Egyptian art depict notions of royal power and legitimacy? How does that compare to texts?
What is the Egyptian view of death? What role does it play in society?

Topic #2 -- Divinity and Nature

Babylonian Empire - *Stele of Hammurabi* / Minoan Crete - *Minoan Snake Goddess*

Texts: *Epic of Gilgamesh*, *Myth of Theseus*

Task: Compare views of divinity, nature, and gender in ancient Mesopotamia and ancient Crete.

First Short Paper

Topic # 3 -- Classical Greece

Iconic Work: *PanAthenaic Amphora*

Texts: Homer, *Iliad*; Sophocles, *Antigone*; Euripides, *Lysistrata*; Thucydides, *Funeral Oration of Pericles*

Supporting Works: *Kouroi*, *Bronze Poseidon*, *Parthenon*, *Elgin Marbles*, *Red and Black Figure Pottery*

Focusing Questions:

How do the Greeks define gender roles? How does this relate to their view of nature?

What is the relationship between beauty, power, and order in Greek culture?

How do the gods relate to humanity in the Greek world?

What is the relationship between religion and political order in Athens?

Second Short Paper (3 pages)

Topic #4 -- Early Hinduism

Iconic Work: *Bronze Shiva and Parvati*

Texts: *Ramayana*, *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad Gita*

Supporting Works: *Bridaheeswarar Temple*, *Kanchipuram Temples*

Focusing Questions:

How does Hindu iconography relate to the central ideas of Hindu religion?

How does Hindu art reveal the relationship of Hindu gods to the Hindu absolute?

What is the link between Hindu belief, religious architecture, and the structure of Dravidian Society?

Third Short Paper (3 pages)

Topic #5 -- Revelation

Arab Empire - *Umayyad Mosque of Damasus* / Early Medieval Europe - *Monastery of Cluny*
10th Century Q'ran *Lindisfarne Gospels*

Texts: *Last Sermon of Muhammad*; *Sunnah*; St Benedict, *Rule*; Gregory, *Pastoral Care*

Task: Compare early Muslim approaches to divine revelation to early Medieval Christian approaches.

Topic #6 -- Song China

Iconic Work: Guo Xi, *Early Spring*

Texts: Confucius, *Analects*; Laozi, *Dao Dejing*; Zhu Xi, *Commentary on the Four Books*

Supporting Works: *Shan Shui* paintings, Song Calligraphy, Song ceramics

Focusing Questions:

How does Song art incorporate Confucian views of propriety and convention?

How are Daoist ideals expressed in Chinese depictions of the natural world? In pottery?

How do Guo Xi and Zhu Xi combine Chinese schools of thought in their work?

First Major Paper (6-8 pages)

Topic #7-- Order

Maya in the Golden Age - *El Castillo* / High Medieval Europe - *Chartres Cathedral*

Texts: *Dresden Codex*; John of Salisbury, *Policratus*; Dante, *De Monarchia*; Dante, *Paradise*

Task: Compare the notion of a Mayan pyramid as an expression of cosmic order with the notion of a Gothic cathedral as an expression of divinely constituted order.

Topic #8 -- Italian Renaissance

Iconic Works: Michaelangelo, *David*; Titian, *Venus of Urbino*

Texts: Petrarch, *Ascent of Mt Ventoux*; Christine de Pisan, *Book of the City of Ladies*; Florentine documents; Castiglione, *The Courtier*

Supporting Works: Andrea di Firenze, *Spanish Chapel*; Giotto, *Resurrection*; Brunelleschi, *Pazzi Chapel*; Ghiberti, *Gates of Paradise*; Piero della Francesca, *Ideal City*; Donatello, *David*; Botticelli, *Birth of Venus*

Focusing Questions:

How does Renaissance art reflect the social and political atmosphere of the Italian city states of the Renaissance period?

What role does patronage play in the cultural life of Italy in the 14th and 15th centuries?

How does Renaissance art reflect humanist ideals of optimism and reverence for classical values?

How does Renaissance humanism affect the depiction of the male and female body?

Fourth Short Paper (3 pages)

Topic #9 – Mughal India

Iconic Work: *Taj Mahal*

Texts: *Discussion in the Hall of Worship*; Dara Shikoh, *The Mystic Path*; *Against Rulers Misled*; *Duties of a True King*

Supporting Works: *Soltaniyeh Dome*; *Gur e-Amir*, *Jama Masjid*

Focusing Questions:

What is the relationship between Hinduism and Islam in the Mughal period? How does it change?
How do Persian cultural elements influence the art of India during the Mughal period?
How does the Taj Mahal express the status and particular role of the Mughal Emperor?

Topic #10 – European Painting in the Modern Period (to 1900)

Iconic Works: Vermeer, *Young Woman with Water Pitcher*; David, *Death of Marat*; Goya, *Third of May*; Courbet, *Fox in the Snow*; Manet, *Olympia*; Monet, *Impression, Sunrise*; Van Gogh, *Starry Night*; Gauguin, *Where do we Come From*

Texts: Hooke, *Micrographia*; Voltaire, *Candide*; Coleridge, *Kubla Khan*; Marx, *Communist Manifesto*; Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

Supporting Works: Many and Varied

Focusing Questions:

How does European art interact with European ideology during the Modern period?
How do artists alter the depiction of the world over time? What might inspire them to do so?
Does European painting in the modern period demonstrate an increase in cultural confidence over time?
How do European artists comment on the nature of knowledge? On the nature of morals? On the nature of beauty?

Second Major Paper (6-8 pages)