RENAISSANCE ART AND THOUGHT:
RENAISSANCE FLORENCE

BA2 Core Course, Fall 2014
Seminar Leaders: Peter Hajnal, Geoff Lehman (coordinator)
Course Times: Tuesday, 9:30-11:00 and Thursday, 13:00-14:30
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Course Description
In this course we examine the visual and intellectual culture of Renaissance Florence. A sustained engagement with a number of principal monuments in Florentine painting, sculpture, and architecture provides the basis for a consideration of key values within the development of Renaissance art that also shape, more broadly, the thought, cultural practices, and everyday experiences of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Renaissance could arguably be characterized as a historical period in which the visual arts played the leading role in the culture as a whole. Thus the focus on works of visual art, in a sustained dialogue with literary, philosophical and political texts of the period, opens upon a consideration of broad, trans-disciplinary problems such as the emergence of new models of subjectivity and objectivity, the relationship between religious and secular experiences, the framing of early modern political thought and the origins of the scientific method. The course is structured around four principal topics, each a defining value for the visual arts between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries that is also central to the development of Renaissance thought: self-reflexivity; perspective; harmony and grace; humanism. The direct experience, evaluation, and interpretation of individual works of art are a crucial part of the course, and with this in mind there will be several visits to Berlin museums – specifically, the Gemäldegalerie and the Bode Museum, with their extensive Renaissance collections – to encounter works of art firsthand.

Requirements
Attendance at all classes is mandatory, and active participation in discussions will be an essential part of the course. More than two absences (that is, absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the grade for the course. Readings should be done in advance of the class for which they are assigned. There will be three principal assignments over the course of the term: a visual analysis essay 3 pages (1000 words) in length, a midterm essay of 5-6 pages (1800-2000 words), and a final presentation that will also require an accompanying essay of 8-10 pages (2700-3300 words), due at the end of the term. Please refer to the Student Handbook for the policy on late submission of essays.

Museum Visits
Five of our scheduled classes will be museum visits. Whenever possible these are planned to correspond with our regular class meeting time. The visual analysis essay assignment will also require you to spend time in one of the museums independently to study a work of art in person.

Grade Breakdown
Class participation: 30%
Visual analysis essay: 10%
Midterm essay: 20%
Final presentation and essay: 40% (presentation: 10%; essay: 30%)

Schedule

Week 1: Introduction
Tuesday, September 2   Visit to the Gemäldegalerie, I
Thursday, September 4   Visit to the Gemäldegalerie, II

I. SELF-REFLEXIVITY

Week 2: Boccaccio, I
Reading:
Boccaccio, *The Decameron*: Prologue; First Day: Introduction, 1, 2, 3 and Conclusion; Third Day: Introduction, 1, 3 and 10; Fourth Day: Introduction, 1 and 2; Fifth Day: Introduction and 9; Sixth Day: Introduction and 5
Tuesday, September 9   Introduction to Florence / Self-Reflexivity and Innocence (Peter)
Thursday, September 11  Seminars

Week 3: Boccaccio, II / Donatello
Visual assignment: group presentations
Reading:
Boccaccio, *The Decameron*: Eighth Day: Introduction and 3; Ninth Day: Introduction and 2; Tenth Day: Introduction and 10; Epilogue
Tuesday, September 16  Framed Narrative (Geoff)
Thursday, September 18  Seminars

Visual analysis essay due: 23:59 on Sunday, September 21

II. PERSPECTIVE

Week 4: Alberti, I
Reading:
Alberti, *On Painting*, books I and II
Suggested reading (for the Bode Museum visit):
Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, sections III and IV
Tuesday, September 23  Perspective (Geoff)
Thursday, September 25  Seminars
Sunday, September 28   Visit to the Bode Museum

Week 5: Alberti, II / Piero della Francesca
Visual assignment: group presentations
Reading:
Tuesday, September 30  Alberti and Piero (Peter)
Thursday, October 2  
Seminars

**Week 6: Leonardo, I**
Reading:

Tuesday, October 7  
Leonardo (Geoff)

Thursday, October 9  
Seminars

**Week 7: Leonardo, II**
Visual assignment: group presentations
Reading:

Tuesday, October 14  
Seminars

Thursday, October 16  
No class

**Midterm essay due: 23:59 on Saturday, October 18**

**FALL BREAK**

**Week 8: Machiavelli**
Reading:
- Machiavelli, *The Prince*, selections

Tuesday, October 28  
Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Peter)

Thursday, October 30  
Machiavelli and Bronzino (Peter)

**III. HARMONY AND GRACE**

**Week 9: Music and Architecture**
Visual assignment: group presentations
Reading:
- Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, VI.1-2 and X.5

Tuesday, November 4  
Music in Renaissance Florence (Guest lecturer: Matthias Lakits)

Thursday, November 6  
Seminars: Brunelleschi

**Week 10: Raphael, I / Castiglione**
Reading:
- Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, Book 1, selections

Tuesday, November 11  
Seminars: Castiglione

Thursday, November 13  
Raphael, *sprezzatura* and Mannerism (Geoff)

**Week 11: Raphael, II / Vasari**
Visual assignment: group presentations
Reading:
- Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, Prefaces to I, II and III; Life of Raphael, selections

Tuesday, November 18  
Seminars: Raphael

Thursday, November 20  
No class

**Saturday, November 22**  
Visit to the Gemäldegalerie, Dresden (optional excursion)
IV. HUMANISM

Week 12: Michelangelo, I
Reading:
Tuesday, November 25  Michelangelo (Guest lecturer: Lynn Catterson)
Thursday, November 27  Seminars
Sunday, November 30  Visit to the Bode Museum visit (Guest lecturer: Lynn Catterson)

Week 13: Michelangelo, II
Reading:
  Michelangelo, Poems 46, 62, 151, 152, 164, 239, 241 and 242 (trans. Saslow)
Tuesday, December 2  Michelangelo (Geoff)
Thursday, December 4  Seminars

Week 14: Student Presentations
Tuesday, December 9
Thursday, December 11

Final essay, based on presentation, due: 23:59 on Thursday, December 18