RENAISSANCE ART AND THOUGHT:
RENAISSANCE FLORENCE

BA2 Core Course, Fall 2015
Seminar Leaders: Peter Hajnal, Geoff Lehman
Course Times: Tuesday, 11:00-12:30 and Thursday, 9:00-10:30
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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
For this class attendance 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. Absences can only be excused if a medical note is submitted to the registrar’s office. Readings should be done in advance of the class for which they are assigned. There will be two principal assignments over the course of the term: a midterm essay of 6-7 pages (2000-2300 words) and a final presentation that will also require an accompanying essay of 9-10 pages (3000-3300 words), due at the end of the term. Please refer to the Student Handbook for the policy on late submission of essays.

Museum Visits
Six of our scheduled classes will be museum visits. Since it is not possible to go to a museum during our scheduled class time, each museum class will be on a weekend and will replace a regular Tuesday or Thursday class (usually from the preceding or following week).
Grade Breakdown

Class participation: 30%
Midterm essay: 25%
Final presentation and essay: 45% (presentation: 15%; essay: 30%)

Schedule

I. SELF-REFLEXIVITY

Tuesday, September 1
No class

Thursday, September 3
Introduction to Florence
Reading:
Boccaccio, *The Decameron*: Prologue; First Day: Introduction and 1

Saturday, September 5, 13:30
Visit to the Gemäldegalerie, I
Visual assignment: group presentations
Reading:
Boccaccio, *The Decameron*: First Day: 2, 3, and Conclusion; Sixth Day: Introduction and 5

Tuesday, September 8
Boccaccio, *The Decameron*
Reading:
Boccaccio, *The Decameron*: Third Day: Introduction, 1, and 10; Fourth Day: Introduction and 2

Thursday, September 10
Donatello and Framed Narrative
Visual assignment: group presentations
Reading:
Boccaccio, *The Decameron*: Eighth Day: Introduction and 3; Tenth Day: Introduction and 10; Epilogue

II. PERSPECTIVE

Tuesday, September 15
Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*
Reading:
Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, sections III and IV

Thursday, September 17
No class

Sunday, September 20, 15:00
The Origins of Perspective: Visit to the Bode Museum

Tuesday, September 22
Alberti, I / Perspective
Reading:
Thursday, September 24  
**Alberti, II / Masaccio**

Visual assignment: group presentations

Reading:
- Alberti, *On Painting*, Book II

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Sunday, September 27, 14:00  
**Visit to the Gemäldegalerie, II**

Visual assignment: group presentations

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Tuesday, September 29  
No class

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Wednesday, September 30, 17:00  
**Alberti, III / Piero della Francesca**

Reading:

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Thursday, October 1  
No class

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Tuesday, October 6  
**Cusanus and Renaissance Painting**

Reading:
- Nicholas Cusanus, *Of Learned Ignorance*, I, 1-9; II, 1-5, 11-12

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Thursday, October 8  
**Leonardo, I**

Reading:

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Tuesday, October 13  
**Leonardo, II**

Visual assignment: group presentations

Reading:

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Thursday, October 15  
**Leonardo, III**

Reading:

**Midterm essay due: 23:59 on Saturday, October 17**

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FALL BREAK (October 19-23)
Tuesday, October 27
Machiavelli, The Prince
Reading:

Thursday, October 29
No class

Saturday, October 31, 14:00
The Prince and Portraiture: Visit to the Gemäldegalerie
Reading:
Machiavelli, The Prince, XXI-XXIII and XV-XVI

III. HARMONY AND GRACE

Tuesday, November 3
Brunelleschi
Visual assignment: group presentations
Reading:
Alberti, On the Art of Building, VI.1-2 and IX.5

Thursday, November 5
Castiglione, The Book of The Courtier
Reading:
Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, Dedicatory Letter and Book I, sections 1-28

Tuesday, November 10
Raphael, I
Reading:
Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, Dedicatory Letter and Book I, sections 29-31, 37, and 47-56

Thursday, November 12
Raphael, II
Visual assignment: group presentations
Reading:
Vasari, Lives of the Artists, Prefaces to I, II and III

Saturday, November 14
Raphael, III: Visit to the Gemäldegalerie, Dresden
Reading:
Vasari, Lives of the Artists, Selections from the Lives of Raphael, Giorgione, and Correggio

IV. HUMANISM

Tuesday, November 17
Humanism and Renaissance Art, I
Visual assignment: group presentations
Reading:
Ovid, Metamorphoses, selections or TBA

Thursday, November 19
Humanism and Renaissance Art, II
Reading:
  Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, selections
  or
  TBA

**Tuesday, November 24**  
No class

**Thursday, November 26**  
*Michelangelo, I*
Visual assignment: group presentations
Reading:
  Michelangelo, Poems 46, 62, 151, 152, 164, 239, 241, and 242

**Saturday, November 28, 14:00**  
*Michelangelo, II: Visit to the Bode Museum*
Reading:

**Tuesday, December 1**  
*Michelangelo, III*
Reading:
  Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, Book IV, sections 49-73

**STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**
  
**Thursday, December 3**
**Tuesday, December 8**
**Thursday, December 10**

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