

Vesalius College

Course description

Course title: Introduction to the History of Art

Course code: ART 101E

Teacher responsible: Frederik Leen

Course description:

“Genuine works of art carry their own aesthetic theory implicit within them and suggest the standards according to which they are to be judged.” Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1808.

In this course, we shall deal primarily with painting, sculpture & architecture in Europe and the Near & Middle East. The course will suit students who are interested in the historical and aesthetic evidence that shaped their cultural environment and aesthetic judgement. Among the many works we will study are the stele of Naram-Sin, the paintings of the Villa at Boscoreale, the Abbey Church of Maria Laach and Las Meninas by Diego Velasquez. The chronological survey starts in the third millennium in Mesopotamia and Egypt, the first known civilisations with structured state patterns, each involving a highly formalised socio-economic organisation. It ends in France in 1793 with the opening of the Louvre, the first state-organised museum open to all citizens, allowing thus for the administrative management of art and opening the path for art to engage in self-referential activity. The course contains a *selection* of topics with which art history has been mainly concerned over the past two centuries. Some attention will be given to methodological and ideological issues, such as gender, multiculturalism, sociology, psychology.

The course requires that students learn:

- to recognise, identify, analyse formal qualities of paintings, sculptures and buildings;
- to recognise and analyse formal schemes and comment on their development and historical influences;
- to understand art in its historical and cultural context;
- to identify selected masterpieces;
- to discuss the historicity of art and of aesthetic rules;
- to consider meaning in the visual arts as related to the concepts of class, gender, religion, politics

Course objectives:

Grade weighting scheme:

75 % Tests and attendance




- 25 % mid-term exam; **written**
- 25 % final exam; **oral**
- 10 % quizzes
- 15 % participation in class

20 % Papers

- 10 % short paper (formal description paper)
- 10 % final paper (term paper; max. 10 pages; 30 lines, 60 characters / page)

5 % Five-minute in-class synopsis of final paper over the last two weeks of class

Used course material (handbooks, readers, readings, newspapers, magazines) and references:

- Reading: Make the most of the lectures by preparing for them properly in reading the appropriate chapter in the textbook, except of course for lecture 1. This *required* reading is indicated as  Gombrich, Stokstad or Janson pp. # - #. Go beyond the requested reading assignment and read related chapters in the Gombrich, Stokstad or Janson textbook that will not be dealt with in the lectures. Introduce your findings in class to your fellow students.
- Starting with lecture 10, regular 15 / 30 minutes classroom discussions will be based on a selection of texts from Moshe Barasch, *Theories of Art from Plato to Winckelmann*, New York, New York University Press, 1985; Vernon Hyde Minor, *Art History's History*, Englewood Cliffs (N.J.), Prentice Hall, 1994; H.W. Janson and Anthony F. Janson, *History of Art*, New York, Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1995; Anthony Blunt, *Artistic Theory 1450 - 1600*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994 (1962), Eric Fernie (Ed.), *Art History & Its Methods. A Critical Anthology*, London, Phaidon, 1995. These texts provide a basic introduction to artistic theory in different ages and to the methods of art history. To prepare each discussion all students are expected to read the basic text carefully. One or two students may be asked to summarise the text and prepare questions to introduce classroom discussion.
- Required reading will be indicated in the syllabus as   Barasch {Minor, Janson, Blunt} pp. # - #

Required textbook

Ernst GOMBRICH, *The Story of Art*, London, Phaidon Press, 1995 (16th ed.)

or

H.W. JANSON and Anthony F. JANSON, *History of Art*, New York, Harry N. Abrams Inc., 2004

or

Marilyn STOKSTAD, *Art History*, New York, Harry N. Abrams Inc, 2004

Useful Internet Resources

<http://witcombe.bcpw.sbc.edu/ARTHLinks.html>