The Art of Florence in Context: Exploring Visual Culture

Instructor: Francesca Marini, Rita Comanducci

Credits: 3

Contact hrs/wk: 3

Prerequisite: A previous course in art history preferred

Course Description
During the Renaissance, roughly defined as the period extending from the middle of the 14th century until the end of the 16th century, the city of Florence was the site of some of the most remarkable artistic experiences in European history. Why, though, should one city have contributed so much to the course of the arts? Why should so many of the city’s works of art, monuments, and buildings have played a major role in the development of the visual arts? What set of circumstances and conditions made this possible? This course is designed to explore these questions through an examination of historical factors that made Florence the birthplace and point of reference for what we now call “Renaissance art.” We will examine the careers and the achievements of some great artists working in Florence, such as Giotto, Filippo Brunelleschi, Leon Battista Alberti, Donatello, Masaccio, Lorenzo Ghiberti, Fra Angelico, Fra Filippo Lippi, Sandro Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael.

Starting with the monumental site of the Duomo (the Cathedral of Florence), the first part of the course will focus on the development of sculpture and its architectural setting, emphasizing the circumstances of urban history that demanded public and monumental programs of architecture and sculpture. The first half of the course will end with an amplification of Filippo Brunelleschi’s achievement in the Pazzi Chapel, while introducing Giotto and fresco painting in Santa Croce. The second part of the semester will concentrate on the development of painting in the 15th century, and then move on to the Cinquecento (sixteenth century) with the achievements of Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael.

Emphasis will be placed on studying the art preserved and exhibited in Florentine museums and in those buildings that make up its original site; therefore, class meetings will alternate between lectures in the classroom at Palazzo Rucellai and study on site. This way students will have the opportunity – on a weekly basis – to experience original art rather than digital images. Finally, we will analyze art within a sequence of contexts, in order to understand the cultural, political, economic and religious factors that contributed to its production in Renaissance Florence.

Aim of the course
The fundamental goals of the course are to introduce students to the art and architecture of Florence in its historical context and -- in doing so -- to make them familiar with the origins, nature and development of the Renaissance in the visual arts. Mastery of basic concepts and terminology of art historical studies is another essential aspect of this course.

Texts
Students will study on a digital reader consisting of excerpts from the following books and articles:

- History of Italian Renaissance Art, Frederick Hartt and David G. Wilkins (New York, Abrams, ed. 2003)
Prescribed Readings not included in the course Texts will be distributed at the beginning of the course. Additional handouts may be distributed during the semester.

All the assigned readings must be studied **before** going to class.

For extra reading and written assignments, consult the following:
- Brenda Preyer, “Florentine Palaces and Memories of the Past” in *Art, Memory and the Family*, eds Giovanni Ciappelli and Patricia Lee Rubin (Cambridge, 2000), 176-94

**Class Format and Attendance Policy:**
Class meetings will be divided between classroom lectures/discussions at the school and study-visits on site. Attendance is required at all class meetings and site visits; absences and late arrival will be recorded and lower the final grade.

Absences: Students are allowed two unjustified absences. To be excused for any additional absence, they must show a doctor’s note (that is, not just a prescription or a form attesting that they went to see a doctor). Each unexcused absence after the previous two will diminish the final grade by one point (e.g., from A- to B+).

**Site visit attire:** Appropriate attire must be observed when visiting art galleries and exhibits: no bare shoulders or midriffs; no shorts, no minis.

Unless required by the teacher for learning activities, **students are not allowed to check their iPhones, Smartphones, cell phones, and laptops while in class.** The same applies to wearing ear buds or headsets of any sort. **Students who do not respect this rule will be considered absent from class without any reasonable justification.**
ASSESSMENTS
The course includes one test, two exams (Mid term and Final) and a research paper.

Test, Mid Term Exam and Final Exam: The Test, the Mid Term Exam and the Final Exam are written examinations and will consist of two sections: slide identifications and a longer essay question. You will be asked to identify, analyze, and compare paintings, sculptures, and buildings discussed in class and during the visits.

Paper: All students are expected to submit one essay (well argued) on the analysis of an artwork in relation to its architectural, social, economic, political and historic context. The research paper should be at least 1,500-1,700 words long (4-5 double-spaced pages) and should be emailed to the professor. The submission date is **Wednesday April, 22nd**. All academic work must be completed on time. No work will be accepted past the deadline or after the programs ends.

Your work should demonstrate:
- thorough knowledge of course material
- critical discussion of views expressed in the required readings and in the selected bibliography
- ability to develop your argument and present it in a structured form
- the capacity to answer exam questions concisely and to the point, with relevant information to back up your statements. Original insights, examples, and comparisons are also welcome.

Tests and Exams will not be rescheduled.

Optional Paper/s: Students who wish to improve their Mid-Term or Final Grade are encouraged to submit in due time a short paper (2 to 3 pages) on a topic to be defined with the instructor.

Grading System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Site visit attire (IMPORTANT): You have to be “appropriately” dressed to visit churches: no bare shoulders or midriffs, no shorts, no minis. Please also no backpacks: these are not allowed into museums (you may leave them at the institute).

Course policy
All students are expected to follow the uniform policy of the Institute. They must develop the appropriate respect for the historical premises which the school occupies and they are not permitted to eat, drink or chew gum in class.

Course Schedule

**Week 1**
Monday 13 January
**Introduction to the course: Art History and Methodology**
Readings: Hartt, Italy and Italian Art-The Artist and the Guilds, pp. 35-45; The Design of the Campanile, pp. 114-115; Sculpture for the Baptistery, pp. 122-123.
Wednesday 15 January
**Museo dell’Opera del Duomo** [meet at 9am in front of the Museum, Piazza del Duomo, 9]
Week 2  
Monday 20 January  
**Giotto**  
Reading: Hartt, Florentine Art of the Early Trecento, pp. 93-113; Florentine Painters after Giotto, pp.118-121  
Wednesday 22 January  
**Santa Croce and Pazzi Chapel [meet at 9:30am in front of Santa Croce, main entrance facing the square]**  
Reading: *The book of the art of Cennino Cennini: a contemporary practical treatise on quattrocento painting*, ed. by Christian Jane Powell Herringham, London, 1922, pp.3-11; *The Colour ConText database*. Collections of artisanal recipes are considered to be key primary sources in the historical study of artistic practices and materials. Content by Dr. S. Neven (Université de Liège), Prof. Dr. S. Dupré (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science), click on underlined titles to access web contents.

Week 3  
Monday 27 January  
**Filippo Brunelleschi, Lorenzo Ghiberti**  
Gothic and Renaissance in Tuscan Sculpture, pp. 199-217.  
Wednesday 29 January  
**The Bargello [meet at 9am in front of The Bargello, Via del Proconsolo n. 4]**  

Week 4  
Monday 3 February  
**ATTENTION! Test**  
**Donatello and Or San Michele**  
Reading: Hartt, Crisis and Crosscurrents; Donatello after 1453, pp. 329-342.  
Wednesday 5 February  
**Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria del Carmine [meet at 10am in front of Santa Maria del Carmine church, main entrance facing the square]**  

Week 5  
Monday 10 February  
**Masaccio, Masolino**  
Reading: Hartt, Masolino and Masaccio, pp. 227-243.  
Wednesday 12 February  
**Gli Uffizi [meet at 9am in front of the Uffizi – Reservation entrance]**

Week 6  
Monday 17 February  
**Alberti**  
Wednesday 19 February  
**Santa Maria Novella church; Palazzo Rucellai [meet at 9am in front of Palazzo Rucellai, main entrance]**  
Week 7
Mid Term Exam (date to be announced)

Week 8 (February 28 – March 8)
Mid Term Break

Week 9
Monday 9 March
**Fra’ Beato Angelico, Filippo Lippi**
Readings: Hartt, The Heritage of Masaccio, pp. 245-263.
Wednesday 11 March
**San Marco Museum [meet at 11am in front of the museum, Piazza San Marco, 3]**

Week 10
Monday 16 March
**Andrea del Verrocchio, Sandro Botticelli**
Wednesday 18 March
**San Lorenzo church [meet at 9:30am in front of San Lorenzo church]**

Week 11
Monday 23 March
**Palazzo Medici Riccardi [meet at 9am in front of San Lorenzo church]**
Wednesday 25 March
**Leonardo da Vinci**
Further readings: *Leonardo da Vinci and His Treatise on Painting*, ©2012 Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia; by prof. F. Fiorani. (click on the title to have access to the web content).

Week 12
Monday 30 March
**Michelangelo**
Reading: Hartt, Michelangelo to 1505, pp. 501-511, 525-554.
Wednesday 1 April
**Galleria dell’Accademia [meet at 9am in front of the Accademia Gallery, Via Ricasoli 58-60]**

Week 13
Monday 6 April
**Michelangelo II**
Reading: Hartt, High Renaissance and Mannerism, pp. 581-604.
Wednesday 8 April
**Medici Chapels [meet at 9am in front of the Medici chapels, main entrance]**
Week 14
Monday 13 April
Holiday – Institute Closed
Wednesday 15 April
**Palazzo Pitti, Galleria Palatina** [meet at 9am in front of Palazzo Pitti, main entrance facing the square]


Week 15
Monday 20 April
St.Spirito church; St. Felicita church (Capponi Chapel) [meet at 9am in front of Palazzo Rucellai, main entrance]


Wednesday 22 April **Research Paper due by midnight (submit the paper electronically)**

**Raphael**

**Reading:** Hartt, Raphael in Perugia and Florence, pp.511-515, 554-579.

**Final Exam** (date to be announced).