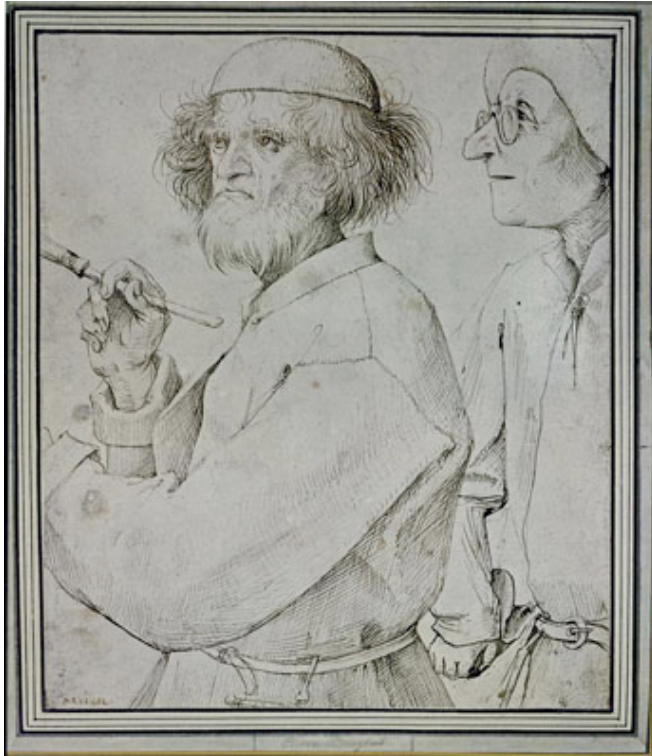


PRACTICING ART HISTORY



Nature of the course

This course is for art history majors and minors who plan to pursue careers in the visual arts. The course mixes theory and practice: you will study how art historians approach images and objects, and also practice some of those same methods of approach yourselves. You will also develop self-awareness within the discipline of art history, by discovering your own interests, posing your own questions, presenting your own conclusions, and exploring possible careers paths after college. In addition, the course will help you to read critically, and to learn the writing and presentation skills necessary to any career in the visual arts. The course is almost entirely based on discussion and participation by the entire group –

it is emphatically not a traditional lecture course. We will have guest presentations by practicing art historians, as well as field trips to local art institutions. Although the course is geared toward art history majors, the skills we will build can be practiced in a variety of professional settings.

Contact information:

Prof. Stephen C. Clancy

Office: 117 Gannett

Office hours: TuTh 2:30-4 PM, and by appointment

Phone: 274-1261 (leave a message if I'm not in!)

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THE COURSE GOALS

The course will pursue six interrelated goals:

(1) We will try to come to grips with **how to define our discipline and its subject matter**. Some questions: What is art history? What is art? How should our discipline approach works that seem to fall outside of traditional western definitions of "art"?

(2) We will study and practice some of the most **important methods of art history**. Some questions: What different approaches and methods do art historians use in an attempt to analyze and understand images and objects? Why do art historians choose one particular method and not another? What are the differences and similarities between one method of

approach and another?

(3) We will investigate the **economics of art history**, both as a discipline that grapples with the commodity that we call "art," and as a profession that can be pursued in many different ways. Some questions: What is money's biggest impact upon the discipline of art history? What kinds of things can art history let me do? What kinds of career paths lead from the study of art history? What kinds of steps might I need to take in order to pursue them?

(4) We will practice the **research and analytical skills** necessary to being a successful art history student or professional. Some questions: What kinds of issues do I want to explore? What kinds of questions or controversies do particular objects, images, or artists provoke? What kinds of tools might help me arrive at answers to my questions? How can I read *analytically* to identify an author's point of view, agenda, and method of approach (instead of simply hoping that an author can "answer" my questions for me!)?

(5) We will also practice the **written and oral presentation skills** necessary for success in any career path. Some of the questions we will ask ourselves: How can I develop succinct and compelling arguments? How can I present my arguments (in writing, or orally) as persuasively as possible? What should I *always* do, and what should I *never* do, in preparing and delivering an oral presentation?

(6) We will also touch upon some of the most important **current news events and controversies** involving art history. Some questions: What are the best sources of information about "art history in the news"? What larger issues do these stories raise for the discipline? for society as a whole?

HOW THE COURSE WILL OPERATE

How I will determine your final grade:

Given excellent attendance and meaningful class participation (see below), here is how I will determine your final grade:

Group projects, reading responses, and professionalism: 30%

Short writing assignments, including self-assessments, career exploration, and a review essay: 30%

Research project:

- annotated bibliography: 10%
- in-class oral presentation: 10%
- paper adopting a particular methodological approach: 20%

Required readings:

I will usually make readings available *online*, through the course website. Some I may make available as "hard copy," either as library reserves, or as handouts. I will announce assigned readings in advance via weekly topic outlines (see below). I will expect you to read *all* assigned readings *carefully*; a 5-minute glance just before class will not do! Always bring your copy of the assigned readings to class, along with the notes you have taken on that reading.

Required events:

One reason the course is scheduled TuTh at 1:10 is to allow us take advantage of periodic department events that will be scheduled during the Tuesday or

Thursday noon hours, and discuss them after the events are over. Some of these are already noted in the syllabus; others will be announced well in advance.

Professionalism

This class is about the profession of art history and, as such, also about acting "professionally," both as students and as practitioners of art history.

"Professional" conduct includes showing up, being on time, turning in projects on time, and responding to emails in a timely fashion. Professionals also speak to their colleagues with respect, and take themselves and their tasks seriously. All of these qualities will impact the impression you make here at Ithaca College, off campus (during our field trips), and after college, in whatever professional setting you find yourself.

Some particular aspects of these "professional expectations":

- **Attendance** is essential and required. This is not a traditional lecture class, in which you passively consume what the professor has to offer. Instead, we will function as an art-historical community, and I will expect you to be active and informed "citizens" of that community. This will require that you *engage* with the readings and other material, *participate* in class activities and discussions inside and outside of the classroom, and *contribute* productively to the knowledge and understanding we build as a group during the semester. If you are not in class, then you are also not participating in the class, and not involving yourself in the subject matter of the class. Thus I expect students to attend every class and to participate meaningfully in every class. If an emergency arises, and you absolutely must miss a class, then you must let me know in advance via email or phone message. (Also, see the course catalog for the policy on absences due to religious beliefs.) ***Unexcused absences will lower your grade, and excessive absences will result in your being dropped from the course.***
- **Submitting your work:** do it, and do it on time! In order to pass the course, you must submit all of the required work. And this includes any quizzes I might give, since I reserve the right to give quizzes if the readings are not getting the attention they deserve. Quizzes will not necessarily be announced in advance, so make sure you don't miss class.
- **Academic honesty:** A number of projects will require that you consult sources (books, articles, websites, etc.). The professional and academic standards of art history require that you cite any source not only from which you quote, but also from which you paraphrase words or borrow ideas. Do not use another person's words *or* ideas, and pass them off as your own, even if unintentionally. If you have any questions about documentation, ask me before you hand in the paper, and always err on the side of over- rather than under-citation.

Academic Support Services

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodation will be provided to students with documented disabilities on a case-by-case basis. Students must register with the Office of Academic Support Services and provide appropriate documentation to the college before any academic adjustment will be provided.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Rather than pursuing the course goals in a strict sequence, we will move back and forth each week between theory and practice, exploring the intersections between one topic and another. What follows is a *tentative* outline of the topics and issues we will discuss, and the possible sequence in which we will discuss them. Each week I will give you an outline of the specific readings and discussion topics for the next week or two, and also post these outlines online. In addition, at the beginning of most of our classes, we will spend a short time chatting about current events involving art and art history – we will all be responsible for bringing these stories to the attention of the entire class (I will supply details at our opening meeting).

Week 1 (8/26)

Introduction: Opening issues and questions

- Introduction to the course and its aims
- Art-historical citizenship: student responsibility
- Beginning to tackle the nature and scope of art and architectural history

Week 2 (8/31 & 9/2)

Basic questions: What is "art history"? What do art historians study?

- What is "art"? The invention of "art" as a concept
- What is "art history"? An in-class debate
- Are art history and the humanities facing a "crisis"?
- Art History and Visual Culture: Images ≠ art, art = image

Week 3 (9/7 & 9/9)

Careers that grow out of art history: Taking first steps

- Self-assessment, and thinking about the future

Structuring the discipline, past and present: Art history and "the Canon"

- The "canon" and the evolutionary model of art history
- How is a work's "canonicity" determined? Political implications

Week 4 (9/14 & 9/16)

Methods in theory and practice I: Formalism and connoisseurship

- "Formal elements" and concepts of "style"
- The role of "aesthetics" and "beauty"
- Connoisseurship, collecting, and the "eye"
- Attribution, authenticity, and fakes

Week 5 (9/21 & 9/23)

Reading and Writing Art History

- History as persuasive storytelling: uncovering an author's argument

Art criticism

- What do art critics do, and why?
- The relationship between art history and art criticism

Art as Object and Commodity I

- Galleries and auction houses
- Value vs. valuation: an in-class debate

Economic roles played by art historians

Week 6 (9/28 & 9/30)

Methods in theory and practice II: Iconography and Iconology

Finding meaning in subject matter

Degrees of analysis and levels of meaning: iconography to iconology

Is iconography at a crossroads?

Week 7 (10/5 & 10/7)

NOON HOUR MEETING: Tuesday Roundtable discussion on "Careers in Art History"

Careers II: Networking, and the art of writing

Preparing to interview

The "paramedic method"

Museums and Galleries in Theory and Practice I

What should a museum building be?

Evaluating the Handwerker Gallery as a museum space

The stories museums tell: neutral or politically charged spaces?

Week 8 (10/12 & 10/14)

Museums and Galleries in Theory and Practice II

Field Trip to the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art (Cornell University) (Tuesday, 10/12)

Thursday, 10/14: NO CLASS (Fall Break)

Week 9 (10/19 & 10/21)

Methods in theory and practice III: Biography and psychoanalysis

Film: "O'Keeffe: Portrait of an Artist"

A general discussion of psychoanalysis and Freud

Trying to understand the image by understanding the artist

Who to believe: the artist? the critic? the image?

Week 10 (10/26 & 10/28)

Methods in theory and practice IV: The social history of art and Marxism

The nature of "social art history"

The relationship between imagery and socio-economic class systems, in theory and practice

Socialist approaches and the teaching of art history today

Week 11 (11/2 & 11/4)

NOON HOUR MEETING: Tuesday Roundtable discussion

Methods in theory and practice V: Post-colonial theory

Debates about cultural patrimony: Nefertiti, the gold of Troy, and the "Elgin Marbles"

Orientalism, the Other, and the legacy of imperialism

Week 12 (11/9 & 11/11)

Methods in theory and practice VI: The Social History of Art and Feminism

Gender-based issues in the study of images

The concept of the "gaze"

Defining a "feminist art history": brief oral presentations

Week 13 (11/16 & 11/18)

Issues in art conservation and restoration

Film: "Saving the Sistine Ceiling"

Science meets connoisseurship: is it "objectivity" vs. "subjectivity"?

The Sistine Ceiling restoration controversy: and in-class discussion and debate

Reading, writing, researching, and presenting Art History III

Planning and developing an oral presentation

Constructing a presentation vs. constructing a paper

Choosing and using images

11/23 & 11/25: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break)

Week 14 (11/30 & 12/2)

Art history, academia, and the "real world"

Professional organizations and conferences

Art history and the humanities in the 21st century

The politics of professional discourses

Oral presentations

Week 15 (12/7 & 12/9)

Oral presentations

Final meeting: Wed., Dec. 15, 4:30PM (during finals week)

Any remaining oral presentations; wrap-up