

HUM 202
MAJOR WORKS OF WESTERN ART

Schedule

Lectures (Live on Zoom)
Wednesdays 10:40 - 12:30
Discussions (Live on Zoom)
Thursdays 10:40-11:30, 12:40-1:30 or 2:40-3:30

Staff

Instructor
Dr Bratislav A. Pantelić

Assistants

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Contact and office hours

Students are encouraged to contact the instructor and/or the assistant if they have any questions about the course. Office hours are upon appointment.

Time-Conflict Policy

Time Conflict requests are not accepted for 200-coded HUM courses.

Course content

This course deals with groundbreaking achievements, milestones in the history of Western art. Each lecture focuses on one work that is paradigmatic of an epoch but includes comparisons with related works and discussions on the intellectual and aesthetic background in which they originated. The course is more comprehensive than art promotion and 'art appreciation' courses offered elsewhere. Students will consider the intricacies of human creativity and the complex factors in play in a work of art in an interactive way, through lectures and discussions and by visiting significant sites. The main themes explored in this course relate to the changing role of art within the general cultural context and its interaction with other fields of human creativity. Such an exhaustive exploration assists

students in developing criteria for their appraisal of the arts, encourages them to reconsider their systems of values and in even pursue their interests in the arts and humanities.

Course structure

TBA

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all lectures and discussions. Each missed class invariably entails a loss of 3 points. Failure to attend more than three classes in total will automatically mean a loss of 30 points and of the right to any bonus points.

Students are required to attend this course (lectures, discussions and real-time exams) logged in with their SU e-mail accounts.

Medical reports are accepted at the discretion of the instructor.

Class rules

Students are expected to attend all lectures and participate in discussions.

Attendance points are earned not just by being present but by taking notes, actively participating in the discussions, asking questions, making comments, etc.

Students are expected to take notes during the lecture and use these notes to come up with meaningful questions and/or comments in the discussion.

Students are required to attend the lectures and discussions with video enabled and with their names displayed.

Requirements

Students are required to take a midterm and a final examination. They are also required to write an essay on a given work of art, as well as to visit an online art institution and write a report on the visit.

As a bonus, students will be able to write a short review of a film which will be chosen from a list offered by the instructor. The submission deadlines of the essay, the report and the film review will be announced in due time. Students may also be given occasional pop-up quizzes (at the discretion of the instructor). These quizzes will not be graded but used by the instructor to assess the students' progress and attendance.

Makeup exams may be administered as oral exams (at the discretion of the instructor).

Midterm and final exam will be in-person, on campus. In case of non-compliance with this and other declared exam procedures, the exams will be declared void.

Readings

This is a visual based course and there are no required readings.

However, students are encouraged to read an art history survey such as E.H. Gombrich's, *The Story of Art*, London: Phaidon Press, Ltd., 1995. The parts of this book that are specially recommended by the instructor are listed in the document *Important Dates and Suggested Readings*.

Grading

Attendance and Participation: 30 points

Midterm Examination : 20 points

Virtual Museum Visit Report: 15 points

Final Essay Examination: 10 points

Final Exam: 25 points

Film Review (Bonus Points): 5 points

Disclaimer

Please note that because of this unprecedented situation some changes to the schedule and syllabus are possible.

Academic integrity and policy

Copying information from any sources, including students' own notes, during exams is plagiarism. This is an ethical and academic offense and will be dealt with accordingly. Plagiarized papers will be graded F and may entail failure of the class. The offense may also be referred to the University Ethics Committee.

Students with special needs

It is the policy of Sabancı University to accommodate students with special needs and disabilities. To determine accommodations and/or academic adjustments, please let us know and contact the Disabled Students Support Unit of CIAD (specialneeds@sabanciuniv.edu).

Anti-Discrimination Policy

Major Works classrooms are free from all discrimination based on, including but not limited to, race, ethnicity, creed, religion, language, disability, gender, and sexual orientation. Students are expected to maintain this environment.

SYLLABUS

The lectures and discussions are structured around the following themes:

I. The Role of Art. Vision and Visuality

II. Art as Ideal

III. Art and Religion

- IV. The Artist as an Individual
- V. Art, Politics, and Society
- VI. Art, Science, and Intellectual Diversity

WEEK 1

THEME I: THE ROLE OF ART. VISION AND VISUALITY

Major Works: Why, What and How?

The goal of this introductory lecture is to provide students with the basic tools for understanding and appreciating art. The lecture discusses the notion of a 'major work' and addresses significant issues by comparing examples of art from a variety of different cultures and time periods. These issues can be formulated as questions: Why? What? and How? 'Why?' refers to the purpose, or function, of art.

To answer the question why art is made the class discusses issues of patronage using examples from prehistory, antiquity and the Middle Ages. 'What?' discusses subject-matter, or what is represented in art by examining typical themes and the importance of subject-matter in a work of art.

'How?' discusses how things are represented, or the style. Analyses of different modes of representation are based on examples from ancient Egypt, the Middle Ages and modern art.

WEEK 2

THEME II: ART AS IDEAL

This part of the course will discuss Classical Antiquity which consists of the ancient Greek civilization and that of the Roman Empire. In these cultures the visual arts and architecture were used to express grand principles: ideals of harmony in Greece and ideals of empire in Rome.

Classical Antiquity: The Art of Ancient Greece

The ancient Greeks abandoned the strict and hieratic art of the Egyptians and focused their interest on humanity. The paramount achievement of the Classical age of Greek art was the Acropolis, the sacred mount of Athens. This complex, constructed under the legendary Phidias, embodies the Classical style and its ideals of perfection. Dominating its center is the Parthenon, a magnificent temple dedicated to the goddess Athena, and the supreme example of classical ideals: symmetry, proportion and unity of all parts. This canon remained uncontested throughout the Classical period. In sculpture it finds its most complete expression in the Discobolus by Myron. This is one of the great achievements of the age and a true epitome of Classical aesthetics: to achieve perfection through a

perfect harmony of form and content. And this perfection was achieved through a realism that in content looked far beyond the realistic and set as a rule to depict only the ideal.

Discussion topics:

- art as perfection
- the classical canon
- classical realism of form and idealism of content
- pathos and emotion

WEEK 3

Classical Antiquity: The Art of the Roman Empire

The ancient Romans sought different ideals than the Greeks. Unlike the Greeks, the Romans created a private and official art that embodied beside the Classical idealism also a new brand of realism that seems to embody life as it really is. This naturalism was used in private as well as in imperial portraits. Roman culture is best exemplified by its architecture and engineering. Among its principal achievements was the arch and the vault, engineering breakthroughs that allowed for the construction of technological wonders across the vast realm: amphitheaters, bridges, aqueducts, cisterns. Rome's architectural achievement is epitomized by the Pantheon, a temple dedicated to the principal gods of the Empire. This magnificent building bears witness to the glory and splendor of ancient Rome. Its interior, finished in splendid marble revetment and crowned by an awe-inspiring dome, is the best preserved of all surviving Roman structures. Its revolutionary design left a powerful imprint on the future as one of the most influential buildings in the history of architecture. It stood at the beginning of a long line of domed structures that were to characterize the architecture of the Mediterranean in the following centuries. A further development of Roman domed structures took place in Constantinople, capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, where it reached its high point at Emperor Justinian's great church of Saint Sophia.

Discussion topics:

- classical idealism continued
- realism and naturalism in portraits

WEEK 4

THEME III: ART AND RELIGION

This part of the course deals with a new epoch that emerged after the disappearance of the ancient world. Divided into the Byzantine, Islamic and Western European cultural areas, a new world emerged from the ruins of the pax romana, a world of spirituality that initiated an age of faith that was to dominate culture of the western hemisphere in the following centuries.

Medieval Art: East and West

Unparalleled in scale and grandeur, Saint Sophia was a masterpiece of engineering and a daring exploration into the very limits of the conceivable. This monumental building stands as a symbol of the eastern Roman Empire, or Byzantium - a culture whose espousal of Christianity signified an increasing immersion into the spiritual. Despite its abandonment of Classical form, Byzantium was the sole inheritor of the ideals of Classical Antiquity and its custodian during the Middle Ages until it was passed on to the Renaissance. A more extraordinary break with the Classical tradition occurred in Western Europe where an entirely new formal and decorative system emerged from the abstract and stylized designs of the Germanic tribes. Medieval culture reached its peak in the Gothic age. Unlike the strict and austere lines of classical Greek and Roman architecture, Gothic churches were profusely strewn with ornamental details: the elaborate stonework and extensive sculpted programs, symbolic and narrative in content. The Gothic is best known for the immense cathedrals that defined the skylines of medieval Europe. Chartres is the most notable of all the great Gothic cathedrals.

Discussion topics:

- *rejection of classical aesthetics (idealism and realism)*
- *stylization and abstraction*
- *ornamental and decorative*
- *spiritual instead of realistic*

WEEK 5

THEME IV: THE ARTIST AS AN INDIVIDUAL

A break with medieval tradition occurred with the advent of the Renaissance and ideals of humanism. Ideals of man as center of the universe ruptured the solid foundation of medieval patterns of thought, while exploration and discoveries in all areas of human knowledge prompted revolutionary ideas. This part of the course will deal with two periods of this post-medieval age, the Renaissance and the Baroque, which laid the foundation for the modern era.

Renaissance Art: Italy

Masaccio, Brunelleschi, Donatello and others set the stage for this great cultural revival in the fourteenth century that remains one of the high points of the European civilization. This revival of Classical Antiquity after almost a thousand years reached its peak one century later, in the heroic age of the High Renaissance marked by such figures as Leonardo and Michelangelo Buonarroti.

Michelangelo's extensive and complex visual rendition of the Book of Genesis which unfolds across the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel remains his most notable work and a paradigm of the Renaissance itself. Of imposing philosophical erudition and immense inner vision, this enlightened and highly individualistic artist produced an elaborate reinterpretation of the history of humanity. The Renaissance painting established the notion of the framed image, a 'window onto the world', through which we view a perfect world idealized in the Classical manner. The principles established by Renaissance artists and theorists on the basis of their reinterpretation of the Classical canon, although challenged by modern art in the twentieth century, remain firmly entrenched in how we see and think about art.

Discussion topics:

- *classical realism of form and idealism of content*
- *'a window onto the world'*
- *closed form*
- *classical restraint*
- *pathos instead of passion*

WEEK 6

Renaissance Art: Northern Europe

In the two centuries approximately corresponding to the Italian Renaissance some truly extraordinary works of art were produced across the Alps, in the Netherlands, France, Germany and England. This Northern Renaissance started with the fascinating altarpieces of early Netherlandish art distinguished by their sophisticated symbolism and extreme realism of detail. These altarpieces reflect the specific social and cultural setting that emerged as medieval feudalism gave way to a mercantile economy based on trading and banking. The Mérode Altarpiece is one work that fully discloses the specific taste of the new bourgeois patrons and their artists - love of detail and a desire to describe physical reality by careful observation of the visible world. In many ways this art was unlike the Italian Renaissance, for the northern artists showed no fascination for classical antiquity as the Italians nor did they endeavor, as Leonardo, to discover the forces of nature and the subtleties of the soul. Their desire was simply to describe the visible world through exquisite details and subtle nuances of color and shade. A similar tendency toward minute and meticulously executed realistic images characterized the work of artists who worked in the German lands, Burgundy, Flanders, France and England.

Discussion topics:

- *realism of detail and setting*
- *symbolism*
- *expressionism*

WEEK 7

Baroque Art

A major force in the creation of the Baroque that spread rapidly over Europe after the Renaissance was the unusual and seemingly contradictory union of religious zeal and radical ideas that enabled an outburst of passion and drama, heightened by theatrical effects of light and shadow, spectacular illusion and extravagant invention. One of the most enlightened exponents of Baroque was Gianlorenzo Bernini. His masterpiece, the Ecstasy of Saint Theresa, exhibits the foremost traits of the new art: as if imbued with a heavenly force, the two marble figures seem to interact with highly charged emotions. Oscillating between naturalism and idealization, Baroque sculptors and painters imbued the dignified and somewhat detached art of the Renaissance with powerful emotions and intense drama. On the opposite side of this flamboyant art is the somber Caravaggio whose highly charged naturalism brought down the divine message from the idealized heights of a spiritual domain to the ordinary people and their everyday lives in a less than perfect world. Both aspects of the Baroque grew out from the Renaissance but at the same time rejecting one of its fundamental principles – the framed closed form is opened up in Baroque painting and sculpture, taking the viewer beyond the depicted reality.

Discussion topics:

- drama and passion
- open form instead of closed form
- emotion instead of pathos
- exuberance instead of restraint

WEEK 9

THEME V: ART, POLITICS AND SOCIETY

The age of political and cultural revolutions outlined the modern world. Concerns for social and human issues replaced abstract notions of ideals and religious concepts. Art became involved in cultural and political life as never before. This part of the course deals with the dramatic changes that took place with the revolutionary Neoclassical art and the art of the Romantic age.

Neoclassical Art

Rarely in the history of Western art did a single work embody the principal ideas of an age as the paintings of Jacques-Louis David. Firmly delineated forms, frugal coloring, and the ascetic setting of his Death of Socrates convey a sense of austerity that reflected the Spartan ideals of the Revolution

of 1789. Reverting to the ideals of republican Rome, David and his neoclassicist followers celebrated such qualities as courage, patriotism, honesty, and temperance. This was a new art for a new society that renounced the gaudy and overly ornamented art of the late Baroque (Rococo) as it rejected the decadence of the ancien régime. David's political and artistic involvement in the French Revolution has suggested the terms of debate about the relation between visual art and politics ever since. In terms of style Neoclassical art and rejecting the overflowing forms of the Baroque and returned to the Classicist principles of the Renaissance.

Discussion topics:

- *line (reason) instead of color (emotion)*
- *the return of classical idealism and 'closed form'*
- *the return of classical pathos instead of passion*

WEEK 10

Romantic Art

Equally paramount as David's paintings were to the ideals of revolution were the paintings of Géricault and Delacroix to a heroic rebellion of the spirit called Romanticism. The Romantics, as the poet and critic Baudelaire described Delacroix, were 'passionately in love with passion' and opposed the cold rationality of the Neoclassical artists. Géricault's Raft of the Medusa is a true successor to the great history paintings of past times and a paradigm of the new heroic age. Rather than of great figures from history or ancient gods, this is a story of common people and their destinies: death and suffering are not elevated to the universal as in Neoclassical art but expressions of individual tragedy. The intense emotions and powerful drama in this painting have captured the spirit of Romanticism perhaps more so than any other painting of the age. The rehabilitation of emotions after their proscription by the somewhat harsh principles of Neoclassicism was a return to some of the principles of the Baroque. To this we should add also sketchiness practiced by some Romantics as a way of saying that the power of art is not in the superficial effects of minute realism and that fast brush strokes that convey a sense of immediacy can express feelings that often lay hidden underneath the polished surface of Neoclassical art. Art is not about just telling the narrative but about conveying the emotions involved.

Discussion topics:

- *return of color (emotion) instead of line (reason)*
- *painterly vs. linear*

WEEK 11

THEME VI: ART, SCIENCE AND INTELLECTUAL DIVERSITY

Revolutionary changes in society were accompanied by revolutionary changes in culture. Art was not anymore restricted to interpreting or reflecting cultural values. Questioning traditional values opened up an unprecedented variety of possibilities for individual visions and explorations. This part of the course deals with some of the groundbreaking movements of modern art, focusing on Realism, Impressionism and Cubism.

The Modern Age: Realist and Impressionist Art

Édouard Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* was a visual manifesto of artistic freedom; one that follows the laws of the art of painting without adhering to traditional conventions and showing disdain for expressive values, narrative, and symbolic content, mixing up the trivial with the important, sketchiness with finish and vision with desire. Manet's vision of 'pure painting' was founded on the belief that brushstrokes and color patches themselves constitute the art and not the subject-matter.

This painting inaugurated the principle of 'Art for Art's Sake' that dominated art theory in the following decades. Manet's work was the foundation of modern attitudes toward art. It was particularly important for the emerging style of Impressionism whose protagonists such as Claude Monet focused exclusively on the two-dimensional surface of the painting. This marked the end of the Renaissance concept of art as an imitation of reality. At the same time that Manet was denying a social role to art, artists such as Courbet and Daumier became commentators and critics of society.

The Realists were influenced by photography which was inaugurated as the medium of an increasingly fast and changing world. These artists saw themselves, in Baudelaire's words, as 'painters of modern life'.

Discussion topics:

- *rejection of subject matter and the autonomy of the painting*
- *realism and the changing point of view*

WEEKS 12 and 13

The 20th century: Modern Art

Starting from the end of Impressionism and the appearance of Post-Impressionism, the art scene became more varied than ever before: artists exploring new creative possibilities brought about the final dissolution of the Renaissance concept of the image as 'a window onto a world'. The major art movements of Modernism, from Cubism to Surrealism and Abstract art, are examined with a focus on Pablo Picasso, the true great 'classic' of Modernism whose *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* broke

with established conventions and formed the groundwork from which subsequent modern art movements developed. The narrative was not seen anymore as crucial in art and form came to be seen as self sufficient and the main force of artistic creativity. This was the culmination of the trend started by Manet one century earlier. Coinciding with these developments was the emergence of film as an art form, which if not fully competing with the traditional arts certainly had a profound influence on them. Some of the great works of film are discussed and presented within the context of the development of modern art in the two final weeks of the course.

Discussion topics:

- *the end of the narrative*
- *the victory of 'art for art's sake'*