

History of Art 2

Last Updated: Wed, 10/22/2025

Course prefix: ID

Course number: 2242

Section: 1

CRN (you may add up to five):
89230

Instructor First Name: Iain

Instructor Last Name: MacKay

Semester: Fall

Academic year: 2025

Course description:

History of Art 2: European Art from Renaissance to Contemporary introduces the fundamental concepts of the discipline of art history through the examination and analysis of monuments of art and architecture across Europe from roughly 1400 C.E. to the present day.

Course learning outcomes:

In this course, you will gain an understanding of the visual and architectural arts that shaped and were shaped by Western Europe from roughly 1400 C.E. to the present day. By the end of the course, having mastered the following foundational practices, you will be able to:

1. **Describe** art by using specific, concrete language to translate the visual, incorporeal, and sometimes ephemeral components of art into words.
2. **Analyze** art by looking at and thinking about works in a thorough and systematic way. Analyzing art involves mentally deconstructing an object or site to discover how its formal properties combine to achieve a particular effect.
3. **Contextualize** art by placing a work in its unique cultural moment. To contextualize an object or building is to consider the circumstances of its creation (i.e., its socio-political, religious, and economic contexts) as a means of achieving a fuller appreciation of its intended function and cultural meaning.
4. **Compare** art by understanding works of art in relation to each other. Recognizing the similarities and differences between objects or buildings produced in various cultures, time periods, or geographic regions helps us infer relationships of style, technique, function, and meaning, which enhances our understanding of each work

independently.

5. **Interpret** art by constructing a persuasive argument supported by visual, textual, and historical evidence. While a work of art can never possess a single correct “meaning”, we can use the tools of art history to help ourselves and others grasp its specific significances.
6. **Appreciate** art by finding wonder in experiencing it. We can enjoy works of art and architecture without knowing anything of their history, but true insight comes only with the application of knowledge and the exercise of critical thought and perception. Developing an appreciation of art is a lifelong, and life-enhancing, pursuit.

Required course materials:

n/a

Grading policy:

Papers: You will write three short papers for this course: an *ekphrasis* (description) of a work of art; a comparison of two works; and a scholarly analysis of an argumentative art historical article. All work should be submitted via Canvas.

In addition, a summative reflection essay, prepared in advance of the final exam, will be submitted as part of the final assignment. In it, you will be asked to integrate and analyze information relevant to the various periods and countries we have explored, drawing on your reflection posts (see below).

Exams: This class includes two exams: a low-stakes midterm and a longer final exam. The midterm will consist primarily of multiple-choice questions and will be completed during our class period. The cumulative final exam will be held at the end of the course and may feature multiple-choice questions, short answer questions, and essay questions. Both exams will require you to identify works of art, or aspects of them, apply your knowledge to works you have not encountered before (“unknowns”), and to synthesize and evaluate course content.

Reflection posts: For the first five weeks of the course, you will be expected to complete a discussion board homework assignment each week by midnight on Saturday. These assignments will vary but will ask you to briefly (ca. 150-250 words) reflect on your experiences and the readings, art, and ideas we encountered in the previous week.

Attendance policy:

Attendance at all lectures and site visits is expected for this course. Due to the limited number of lecture sessions, more than two unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your final grade for the course by 10% (one letter grade) for each additional unexcused absence. If you must miss class, please let me know ahead of time. Additionally, this course

requires your active presence in our discussions. Your final attendance and participation grade will depend not only on your presence in class, but also on your preparedness and active participation in discussing the readings.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Academic Honor Code: All students are expected to read and familiarize themselves with the [Academic Honor Code](#), which prohibits any form of academic misconduct, including plagiarizing, cheating, and lying to an instructor. The consequences of a violation are severe and may include failure of the course, a mark on the record, suspension, and expulsion. Please take precautions to ensure that your work and actions are consistent with the Honor Code. Please also note that in this course, every element of class assignments must be fully prepared by the student. The use of generative or interpretive AI tools for any part of your work will be treated as plagiarism.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Humanities area and provides three hours of course credit.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question: How do I interpret the human experience through creative, linguistic, and philosophical works?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome: Students will effectively analyze and interpret the meaning, cultural significance, and ethical implications of literary/philosophical texts or of works in the visual/performing arts.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies: Ethical Reasoning, Information Literacy, Intercultural Competence.