HISTORY OF ART

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Art history is the study of all forms of art, architecture, and visual culture in their social and historical contexts. The History of Art major can serve either as a general program in the humanities or as the groundwork for more specialized training. Unless otherwise indicated, all courses in History of Art are open to all students in Yale College.

COURSE NUMBERING

100-level courses are broad introductory surveys that address basic art history from a number of regional and thematic perspectives. Prospective majors are encouraged to take the surveys as early in their course of study as possible. Under certain circumstances, students who have taken the Advanced Placement test in art history may earn acceleration credit and, in consultation with the director of undergraduate studies (DUS), may place out of one required 100-level course.

Intermediate and advanced courses, numbered above 200, encompass more specialized surveys and themes in art history.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

Twelve term courses are required to complete the major: two introductory courses at the 100 level; four intermediate and advanced courses at the 200 and 300 levels; two seminars at the 400 level; a methods seminar, HSAR 401; two electives; and the senior essay, HSAR 499.

The major requires that the six intermediate and advanced courses must satisfy both a geographical and a chronological distribution requirement. These courses must be chosen from four geographical areas and four time periods. The geographical requirement is divided into five areas: Africa and the Pacific; the Americas; Asia and the Near East; Europe; and transregional. The chronological requirement is similarly divided into five segments: earliest times to 800; 800–1500; 1500–1800; 1800 to the present; and transchronological. A single course can fulfill both a geographical and a chronological requirement. Only classes originating in the History of Art department can fulfill the distribution requirements.

Junior seminar The methods seminar HSAR 401, Critical Approaches to Art History, is a wide-ranging introduction to the practices of the art historian and the history of the discipline. It is to be taken during the fall or spring term of the junior year.

Credit/D/Fail courses Courses taken Credit/D/Fail may not be counted toward the requirements of the major.

Roadmap See the visual roadmap of the requirements.

SENIOR REQUIREMENT

The senior essay is a research paper written usually in one term in HSAR 499. Students choose their own topics, which may derive from research done in an earlier course. The essay is planned during the previous term in consultation with a qualified instructor and/or with the DUS. It is also possible to write a two-term senior essay; students wishing to do so must submit a petition to the DUS and the prospective adviser, normally by the first week after spring break of the junior year.

ADvising

Electives may include courses from other departments if they have direct relevance to the major program of study. Approval of the DUS is required.

Graduate courses Courses in the Graduate School are open to undergraduates with permission of the instructor and of the director of graduate studies. Course descriptions are available in the History of Art office in the Jeffrey H. Loria Center, 190 York St.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

Prerequisites None

Number of courses 12 term courses (incl senior req)

Specific courses required HSAR 401

Distribution of courses 2 courses at 100 level; 6 courses numbered above 200, 2 of which must be 400-level seminars, fulfilling distribution requirements in 4 geographical and 4 chronological categories; 2 electives

Substitution permitted With DUS permission, 2 electives from related depts

Senior requirement Senior essay (HSAR 499)

Art history is the study of all forms of art, architecture, and visual culture. The History of Art major can serve either as a general program in the humanities or as the groundwork for more specialized training.

Courses in the department are organized into three levels. Courses at the 100 level are broad introductory surveys that cover basic art history from a number of regional and thematic perspectives. Majors are required to take two survey courses and should consider taking
them as early as possible. Courses at the 100 level are normally not prerequisites for higher-level courses in the department. Intermediate courses are numbered 200–399. Advanced or 400-level courses are seminars with limited enrollment. Students with AP credit should consult the director of undergraduate studies (DUS).

Representative 100-level courses include:

- HSAR 110, Introduction to the History of Art: Global Decorative Arts
- HSAR 176, Introduction to the History of Art: The Politics of Representation

Representative 200- and 300-level courses include:

- HSAR 247, Art and Myth in Greek Antiquity
- HSAR 266, Introduction to Islamic Architecture
- HSAR 293, Baroque Rome: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture
- HSAR 347, Feminism and Contemporary Art

Representative 400-level course:

- HSAR 459, Contested Monuments

FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY OF ART

Professors Carol Armstrong, Tim Barringer, Marisa Bass, Edward S. Cooke, Jr., Cecile Fromont, Milette Gaifman, Jacqueline Jung, Pamela Lee, Kishwar Rizvi, Nicola Suthor, Mimi Yiengpruksawan

Associate Professors Craig Buckley, Molly Brunson (Slavic Languages and Literatures), Jennifer Raab

Assistant Professors Joanna Fiduccia, Subhashini Kaligotla, Morgan Ng, Quincy Ngan

View Courses

Courses

* HSAR 002a / AMST 007a, Furniture and American Life Edward Cooke
In-depth study and interpretation of American furniture from the past four centuries. Hands-on experience with furniture in the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery to explore such topics as materials, techniques, styles, use, and meaning. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program. WR, HU

HSAR 119a / EAST 119a, Introduction to the History of Art: Asian Art and Culture Staff
This introductory course explores the art of India, China, Japan, and Korea from prehistory to the present. We consider major works and monuments from all four regions. Themes include the representation of nature and the body, the intersection of art with spirituality and politics, and everything from elite to consumer culture. All students welcome, including those who have no previous experience with either art history or the study of Asian art. This class makes frequent visits to Yale University Art Gallery. HU o Course cr

HSAR 219a / AMST 197a / ARCH 280a / URBN 280a, American Architecture and Urbanism Elihu Rubin
Introduction to the study of buildings, architects, architectural styles, and urban landscapes, viewed in their economic, political, social, and cultural contexts, from precolonial to the present. Topics include: public and private investment in the built environment; the history of housing in America; the organization of architectural practice; race, gender, ethnicity and the right to the city; the social and political nature of city building; and the transnational nature of American architecture. HU

HSAR 223a / AFAM 122a, Art Collectives: Protest, Entrepreneurship, and Praxis Andrianna Campbell
A crowd formed at the Whitney Museum, as San Francisco artists occupied the institution to protest Laura Owens’s solo exhibition opening. The gathering was in successive date order to Patrick Bright’s protest of Dana Schultz’s Emmet Till painting. It came a few years after the HowDoYouSayYaminAfrican? (YAMs collective) protest of Joe Scalans Donelle Woolford performance artwork. The protest also foreshadowed the Black Women Artists for Black Lives Matter (BWABLM) series of protests across the country. From the Sackler family to Warren Kanders, those who peddle in rue and misfortune are now being asked to resign from art boards as multiple allegations force them out of planning positions, and remove their names from wings and museum buildings. Hive-like sit-ins and stand-ins are the actions of political organizers to make the democratic body heard in the public sphere. Today, these ethical shifts in art communities criticize and disrupt the planned temple-like meditative space of the museum. Between the cynical mole hill aims of a few of those San Franciscoan artists who capitulated after the Whitney offered them an exhibition, to the effective efforts of BWABLM, we explore where the art object functions in relation to political discourse and performative disruption as art practice. HU

* HSAR 224a / AFAM 271a, The Venice Biennale, Art Fairs, and Foundations Andrianna Campbell
Since the 1970s, there has been a proliferation of commercial art fairs and new small foundations dedicated to the arts—FIAC, JoBurg, 1-54, Miami Basel, Fondation Cartier, Louis Vuitton Foundation, and the Foundation Zinsou. These and their correlative museums such as the Long Museum in China evidence a collecting class untethered from the traditions of encyclopedic, modern, and contemporary museums. The stalwart of these temporary art exhibitionary spaces is the Venice Biennale (1895), which is organized by country and imbricated in late-nineteenth century and twentieth-century representations of nationhood. By the 1950s already struggling to stay current alongside the São Paulo Biennial (1951), Biennale curators have been pushed into constant reinvention and innovation.
The course examines Katharine Kuh's influence on a more gender diverse and racially inclusive Biennale in the 1950s, Sam Gilliam's 1970s installation, and current comparisons to Documenta, Berlin, Gwangju and Shanghai Biennales. Alongside these new institutions, the hybridized commercial art fairs pair some of the most historically relevant exhibitions alongside transient booths with works for sale. In an era of changing hierarchies of culture and status, the novelty of these exhibition spaces requires a constant flow of new artists, while they interrupt and silence criticality. The course examines their future impact on art historical scholarship, and their, at times, paradoxical and troubling grandiosity. HU

HSAR 240a, London Art Capital: Black Death to Brexit  Staff
Today London is a great art city – a cosmopolitan center for the making, display, and collecting of works of art. How did that come to be? This course answers the question through an intense engagement with the rich collections of the Yale Center for British Art, offering an introduction to British Art across six centuries and to the lively debates it generates. The course links the development of art and the art market with the origins and progression of capitalism. It traces London’s artistic and architectural development from medieval origins through the courtly spectacle of Tudor and Stuart eras to the emergence of a recognizably modern economy and society around 1750, the time of William Hogarth. After 1800, Londoners William Blake and JMW Turner, and their Victorian successors, vividly chronicled the transformation of the industrial and imperial city. From 1910 British art entered a complex relationship with European modernism epitomized in the work of sculptor Barbara Hepworth. London was shattered by bombing during the Blitz: from the ruins emerged Pop Art, followed by Op-Art, led by Bridget Riley. By the 1990s the prominence of artists of color such as Yinka Shonibare prefigured the dynamic and cosmopolitan art scene of the present day. After Brexit, after Covid, what is the future for British art and for London? HU o Course cr

HSAR 247a / ARGC 161a / CLCV 161a, Art and Myth in Greek Antiquity  Staff
Visual exploration of Greek mythology through the study of ancient Greek art and architecture. Greek gods, heroes, and mythological scenes foundational to Western culture; the complex nature of Greek mythology; how art and architecture rendered myths ever present in ancient Greek daily experience; ways in which visual representations can articulate stories. Use of collections in the Yale University Art Gallery. HU o Course cr

* HSAR 251a / FREN 366a, Writers and Artists in Paris, 1780–1914  Marie Girard
Ways in which the transformation of Paris shaped the representation of artists who lived and worked in the French capital from the end of the Old Regime until the eve of World War I. The emergence of Paris as a cultural marker; the role played by the image of the bohemian or the artiste maudit. Authors and artists include David, Balzac, Delacroix, Baudelaire, Manet, Mallarmé, impressionist painters, and Picasso. L5, HU

HSAR 273a, Art of Gothic Cathedrals  Jacqueline Jung
European Gothic churches (1140–1400) explored as multimedia architectural environments in which stained glass, sculpture, textiles, and liturgical furnishings are integral aspects of design and meaning. Buildings considered for their formal and material qualities and as sites of ritual performance and signs of political and social power. Recommended preparation: HSAR 112. HU

HSAR 275a / SAST 262a, The Body in Indian Art  Subhashini Kaligotla
How did artists in South Asia represent and view the body? And what do such representations reveal about the values of the time and place that produced them? This introductory lecture course explores these questions across time and through a range of figures that cut across gender and social group. We consider the representation of divine figures such as the Buddha, Hindu gods and goddesses, Jain saviors, and Muslim mystics; portraits of kings, queens, ministers, and courtly figures; and images of saints, yogis, ascetics, mendicants, and other renunciants. We also see how a range of non-human figures from birds and animals to powerful mythical beings such as demons, tree spirits, and snake demi-gods were depicted. Course materials include textual sources and visual media such as painting, sculpture, architecture, and more. Together they help us examine the imagination of their makers as well as the cultures, politics, and religions of the Indian subcontinent that gave rise to them. HU

HSAR 285a / ITAL 343a, Italian Renaissance Art  Staff
This course surveys the art of Renaissance Italy (c. 1420–1550) in its full breadth, including architecture, sculpture, and painting. Lectures situate artworks within broad cultural themes, while sections include the first-hand study of objects in the Yale University Art Gallery. Topics include the display of art in civic space; the influence of Roman antiquity on monumental architecture; the conception of nature in paintings and gardens; the representation of the human body in portraiture and heroic sculpture; the rise of women artists and patrons. The course scrutinizes acknowledged masterworks by Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and Raphael, in the artistic centers of Florence, Rome, and Venice. At the same time, it considers lesser known yet no less vibrant artistic sites, such as those in Southern Italy. It also draws map connections beyond Europe, revealing rich cultural exchanges with the Ottoman empire and the Americas. HU o Course cr

HSAR 286a / ARCH 260a, History of Architecture to 1750  Kyle Dugdale
Introduction to the history of architecture from antiquity to the dawn of the Enlightenment, focusing on narratives that continue to inform the present. The course begins in Africa and Mesopotamia, follows routes from the Mediterranean into Asia and back to Rome, Byzantium, and the Middle East, and then circulates back to medieval Europe, before juxtaposing the indigenous structures of Africa and America with the increasingly global fabrications of the Renaissance and Baroque. Emphasis on challenging preconceptions, developing visual intelligence, and learning to read architecture as a story that can both register and transcend place and time, embodying ideas within material structures that survive across the centuries in often unexpected ways. HU o Course cr
HSAR 374b / FREN 375b, Icons in French Art  Marie Girard

The purpose of the course is to focus on the emergence of some of the visual myths, which the large diffusion of pictures through all kind of media (prints, lithographs, photographs, ads) along the 19th century made possible. Based on a selection of works painted between Renaissance and 20th century, which have long been part of the French collections and belong for the most of them to the Musée du Louvre and the Musée d’Orsay, the course focuses on both the genesis of these pictures and the emotional, social, and political response they gained form the public audience when they appeared. Putting them in context and reading some of the main critical texts by Gautier, Baudelaire, Zola and Foucault among others, helps to understand what made Delacroix’s Liberté or Millet’s Angelus survive as emblems of the period and keys to French culture. That illuminates how artists shaped French history and sensibility through emblematic works which are still at the center of the visual culture today and how collective myths can grow. Prerequisite: French L5. L5, HU

* HSAR 399b / HIST 289Jb / HSHM 407b / HUMS 220b, Collecting Before the Museum  Paola Bertucci

A history of museums before the emergence of the modern museum. Focus on: cabinets of curiosities and Wunderkammern, anatomical theaters and apothecaries’ shops, alchemical workshops and theaters of machines, collections of monsters, rarities, and exotic specimens. WR, HU

* HSAR 401a, Critical Approaches to Art History  Carol Armstrong

A wide-ranging introduction to the methods of the art historian and the history of the discipline. Themes include connoisseurship, iconography, formalism, and selected methodologies informed by contemporary theory. WR, HU

* HSAR 405a / FILM 393a / HSHM 472a / HUMS 246a, Early Modern Media  Marisa Bass and John Peters

How did ideas move in the early modern world across time and place, between people and things? Looking beyond art history’s traditional understanding of “medium” as referring to what a work of art is made from, this seminar explores the broader range of “media” that were central to discourse and debates about faith, politics, and the natural world during a period of great technological innovation and global expansion, as well as violence, upheaval, and uncertainty. Focusing on Dutch art, science, and thought during the long seventeenth century—a context in which experiments with media at home and encounters with media from abroad were especially charged, our discussions range from optics to navigation, theology to mathematics, landscape to microscope, clocks to cannons, and shells to flowers. Readings both historical and theoretical complement several visits to study works firsthand in nearby collections. HU

* HSAR 407a / ARCG 406a / HUMS 386, In, Out, and Back: African Art Collection, Exhibition, and Restitution  Cecile Fromont

This seminar investigates the role and place of material and immaterial objects of African expressive culture in their original contexts of production and display on the continent, the circumstances of their displacement to the European galleries and museum where they have featured since the early modern period, and the accelerating restitution movement aiming to bring them back to African communities and states. Collection visits, guest speakers, readings, and student research address topics such as the scientific and artistic project of early modern cabinets of curiosities; the birth of ethnology and the advent of the museum; art, race, violence; the entanglements between collection, commerce, and colonialism; and contemporary trends in museum decolonization and restitution. HU, SO

* HSAR 427a / EAST 427a, Chinese Skin Problems  Quincy Ngan

This seminar uses artwork as a means of understanding the various skin problems faced by contemporary Chinese people. Divided into four modules, this seminar first traces how the “ideal skin” as a complex trope of desire, superficiality, and deception has evolved over time through the ghost story, Painted Skin (Huapi), and its countless spin-offs. Second, the course explores how artists have overcome a variety of social distances and barriers through touch; we look at artworks that highlight the healing power and erotic associations of cleansing, massaging, and moisturizing the skin. Third, we explore the relationship between feminism and gender stereotypes through artworks and performances that involve skin care, makeup and plastic surgery. Fourth, the course investigates the dynamics between “Chineseness,” colorism, and racial tensions through the artworks produced by Chinese-American and diasporic artists. Each module is comprised of one meeting focusing on theoretical frameworks and two meetings focusing on individual artists and close analysis of artworks. Readings include Cathy Park Hong’s Minor Feelings, Nikki Khanna’s Whiter, and Leta Hong Fincher’s Leftover Women. HU

* HSAR 437a / ARCH 380a / MMES 382a, The Global Museum  Kishwar Rizvi

When the Carters (Jay-Z and Beyonce) chose the Louvre Paris as the backdrop to their 2018 hit single, they were tapping into the cultural capital of the museum. Like its counterparts across the world, the Louvre has evolved from a princely collection to a national symbol and, today, to a global brand, with a franchise in Abu Dhabi which opened in 2017. This seminar analyzes how museums are utilized for a variety purposes, from the local to the transnational, and the relationship between their architectural design and their economic, social and urban impact. The class meets with curators and designers and takes a field trip to the Smithsonian museums in Washington, DC. WR, HU

* HSAR 440a, Issues in Nineteenth-Century Sculpture  Christina Ferando

Survey of nineteenth-century European and American sculpture using concrete visual examples from Italy, France, England, and the United States to examine the formal structure of sculpture and contextualize the social and political circumstances of its production and reception. Focus on representation of the human figure and examination of issues of idealism and naturalism, as well controversies surrounding the use of color and gender/class signifiers. Use of collections in the Yale University Art Gallery and the Yale Center for British Art. Some familiarity with art history is helpful. HU

* HSAR 448a, The Long 1960s: Art, Revolution, Politics  Pamela Lee

Consideration of the art and visual culture of the “Long 1960s,” treating the art of this pivotal decade against the backdrop of the global Cold War. We consider the most significant art movements of the period (Pop, minimal art, conceptual art etc.) alongside debates on the relationship between art, revolution, and politics both within the United States and abroad. Topics include the rise of media
culture and its impact on art; the global reception of Pop; Black Power and the Black Arts Movement; art and activism of the New Left; the counterculture and new media; the aesthetics of Third Worldism and the anti-war movement; 1968 and the Society of the Spectacle; and gay liberation at Stonewall. Mandatory weekend field trip to Washington DC. Some art history recommended, but not required. Enrollment is restricted and by application. Contact instructor for details.  

* HSAR 449A / EAST 449A, Nanban Art: Japan's Artistic Encounter with Early Modern Europe  
Mimi Yieungpruksawun  
Exploratory and investigative in nature, this seminar is conceived as a baseline engagement with the intersections of art, religion, science, commerce, war, and diplomacy at Kyoto and Nagasaki in the age of Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, and English political and mercantile interaction in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It addresses a set of themes whose point of entry is the entangled character of visual production and reception in Japan at a tipping point in the emergence of global modernity, when what were called the Nanbans—“Southern Barbarians,” i.e. Europeans—began to arrive in Japan. The question of whether or not much-theorized nomenclatures such as baroque, rococo, mestizo, and even global modernity are pertinent to analysis from the Japanese and Asian perspective constitutes the backbone of the course and its primary objective in the study of a corpus of visual materials spanning the European and Asian cultural spheres. As such the seminar is not only about Japan, per se, or about Japanese objects, or the shogunal eye. It is equally about how Japan and Japanese objects and materials, along with objects and materials from other places, figured in a greater community of exchange, friction, confrontation, conquest, and adaptation in times when Portuguese marauders, Jesuit missionaries, Muslim traders, and Japanese pirates found themselves in the same waters, on ships laden with goods, making landfall in the domains of Japan’s great military hegemons.  

* HSAR 460A / ENGL 419A / HUMS 185A, Writing about Contemporary Figurative Art  
Margaret Spillane  
A workshop on journalistic strategies for looking at and writing about contemporary paintings of the human figure. Practitioners and theorists of figurative painting; controversies, partisans, and opponents. Includes field trips to museums and galleries in New York City. Formerly ENGL 247.  

* HSAR 462A / AMST 446A, Sculpture and the Human in the 20th Century  
Joanna Fiduccia  
This course explores how sculpture responded to radical changes in the definition of the human in the 20th century. Our focus is the decades between 1914 and 1989, an interval when competing ideas about the nature of humanity emerged from global warfare, feminist activism and theory, postcolonial nationalisms, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Non-Aligned Movement—ideas that challenged a modern vision of the human forged by the forces of whiteness, capitalism, and patriarchy. What role did sculpture play in developing this vision, and can it serve to re-imagine or dismantle it? What perspective can sculpture’s intimate relation to the body lend to a fuller understanding of the human, its problems and potentials? We explore a range of art historical, literary, and philosophical frameworks to consider works by artists including Meta Warrick Fuller, Barbara Hepworth, Louise Bourgeois, Melvin Edwards, Paul Thek, Senga Nengudi, and Atsuko Tanaka. These works act as our lens to see more clearly an interconnected set of political contests to transform humanism from an Enlightenment-era worldview built on notions of innate human nature and universal values into a flexible, evolving understanding of human difference, struggle, and solidarity. We ask what it might look like to understand a history of sculpture shaped by Aimé Césaire’s “humanism made to the measure of the world” — one that remains alive to what sculpture might tell us about being human in relation to the non-human, less than human, and natural world. This course includes visits to university art collections and archives, as well as close engagement with the international conference, “Surrogates: Embodied Histories of Sculpture in the Short 20th-Century,” which will be held at Yale during the fall semester.  

* HSAR 466A, The Technical Examination of Art  
Irma Passeri and Anne Gunnison  
Introduction to methods used in the technical examination of works of art, including critical assessment of the information such methods provide. What technical examination can reveal about the materials and techniques used in a particular work’s creation and about its subsequent history.  

* HSAR 490B / FILM 320B, Close Analysis of Film  
Oksana Chefranova  
Close study of a range of major films from a variety of periods and places. Apart from developing tools for the close analysis of film, we consider such topics as genre and mode; the role of sound; cinema as a structure of gazes; remakes and adaptations; approaches to realism; narration and resistance to narration; film in relation to other moving image media; and the relationship of close analysis to historical contextualization and interpretation more generally. Prerequisite: FILM 150.  

* HSAR 499A, The Senior Essay  
Jacqueline Jung  
Preparation of a research paper (25-30 pages in length) on a topic of the student’s choice, under the direction of a qualified instructor, to be written in the fall or spring term of the senior year. In order to enroll in HSAR 499, the student must submit a project statement on the date that their course schedule is finalized during the term that they plan to undertake the essay. The statement, which should include the essay title and a brief description of the subject to be treated, must be signed by the student’s adviser and submitted to the DUS. All subsequent deadlines are also strict, including for the project outline and bibliography, complete essay draft, and the final essay itself. Failure to comply with any deadline will be penalized by a lower final grade, and no late essay will be considered for a prize in the department. Senior essay workshops meet periodically throughout the term and are also mandatory. Permission may be given to write a two-term essay after consultation with the student’s adviser and the DUS. Only those who have begun to do advanced work in a given area and whose project is considered to be of exceptional promise are eligible. The requirements for the one-term senior essay apply to the two-term essay, except that the essay should be 50-60 pages in length.