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.

History of Art majors are urged to study foreign languages. Students considering graduate work should discuss with their advisers the appropriate language training for their field of interest.

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 courses include:

- HSAR 459, Contested Monuments
- HSAR 472, Black British Art and Culture

FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY OF ART

Professors Carol Armstrong, Tim Barringer, Edward S. Cooke, Jr., Milette Gaifman, Pamela Lee, Kobena Mercer, Kishwar Rizvi, Nicola Suthor, Mimi Yiengpruksawan

Associate Professors Marisa Bass, Craig Bradley, Molly Brunson (Slavic Languages and Literatures), Cecile Fromont, Jacqueline Jung, Jennifer Raab

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

Lecturer Margaret Olin (Religious Studies, Judaic Studies, Divinity)

View Courses

Courses

* HSAR 019a, Matters of Color / Color Matters  Staff

Color is a powerful element of visual representation. It can convey symbolic meaning, descriptive content, aesthetic values, and cultural connotations. This seminar seeks to explore practical, aesthetic, and conceptual facets of “color.” A series of weekly modules are structured around the strengths of the rich special collections at Yale libraries and museums. Students are introduced to Yale librarians, curators, and conservators whose expertise will be an invaluable resource throughout their undergraduate years. The course incorporates hands-on sessions in keeping with making as a learning tool. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program. HU

HSAR 110a / ARCG 110a, Introduction to the History of Art: Global Decorative Arts  Edward Cooke

Global history of the decorative arts from antiquity to the present. The materials and techniques of ceramics, textiles, metals, furniture, and glass. Consideration of forms, imagery, decoration, and workmanship. Themes linking geography and time, such as trade and exchange, simulation, identity, and symbolic value. HU

HSAR 150a / ARCH 272a / RLST 262a, Introduction to the History of Art: Art and Architecture of the Sacred  Jacqueline Jung

A wide-ranging, cross-temporal exploration of religious images, objects, and architecture in diverse cultures, from ancient Mesopotamia to modern Manhattan. Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and various polytheistic traditions are represented. Thematic threads include the human body; transformations of nature; death, memory, and afterlife; sacred kingship and other forms of political engagement; practices of concealment and revelation; images as embodiments of the divine; the framing and staging of ritual through architecture. HU

HSAR 219b / AMST 197b / ARCH 280b / URBN 280b, 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 times 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 221b / RUSS 220b, Russian and Soviet Art, 1757 to the Present  Molly Brunson

The history of Russian and Soviet art from the foundation of the Academy of the Arts in 1757 to the present. Nineteenth-century academicism, romanticism, and realism; the Russian avant-garde and early Soviet experimentation; socialist realism and late- and post-Soviet culture. Readings and discussion in English. HU TR
HSAR 285a, Italian Renaissance Art  Morgan Ng
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.  

HSAR 298a, Rembrandt  Nicola Suthor
Rembrandt’s art exerts strong impact on the beholder. How does this happen and how important are the materials used to produce the various works? Chronological study of the young to the late Rembrandt, with specific attention to the differences between his portrait, landscape, and historical works.  

HSAR 326a / 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 mediaeval 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.  

HSAR 375a, Arts of Japan I  Mimi Yiengpruksawan
Survey of major monuments in the visual arts of ancient and early medieval Japan with attention to the conditions and thought worlds of cultural production. Emphasis on the arts practices and philosophies of Buddhism and Shintō in juxtaposition with the courtly arts from narrative handscrolls to integrations of poetry and painting in landscape screens and picture albums.  

HSAR 374a / FREN 375a, 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 399a / HIST 280ja / HSHM 407a / HUMS 220a, Collecting Nature  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  Morgan Ng
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 402a, Rembrandt  Morgan Ng
This course examines the art and life of Rembrandt, with a focus on his oil paintings. The course begins with a study of Rembrandt’s early works, including portraits and landscapes, and then moves on to his mature period, focusing on his masterworks such as “The Night Watch” and “The Anatomy Lesson.” The course also includes a detailed examination of Rembrandt’s etchings and prints, as well as his use of color and light.  

* HSAR 410b / AMST 332b, Humbugs and Visionaries: American Artists and Writers Before the Civil War  Bryan Wolf
This course examines American literature and visual culture of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. We look in particular at outliers, prophets, and self-promoters, from the radical Puritan writer Anne Bradstreet to popular entertainers like P. T. Barnum. Topics include: visuality and the public sphere; landscape and politics; genre painting and hegemony; race and identity; managerial culture and disembodied vision.  Class trips to the Yale University Art Gallery and the Metropolitan Museum (New York).  

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History of Art

* 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 441b / ENGL 329b / FILM 380 / HUMS 371b / LITR 402b, The Picturebook: Euro-American and Japanese Traditions  Katie Trumpener
Examines the form, history, and preoccupations of the picturebook form from the eighteenth century to the present, juxtaposing Euro-American with Japanese picturebook traditions.  HU

* HSAR 457a, Japanese Gardens  Mimi Yiengpruksawan
Arts and theory of the Japanese garden with emphasis on the role of the anthropogenic landscape from aesthetics to environmental precarity, including the concept of refugium. Case studies of influential Kyoto gardens from the 11th through 15th centuries, and their significance as cultural productions with ecological implications.  HU

* 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.  WR, HU

* 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 475a, Art and the Senses in Europe, 500-1700  Kristina Potuckova
How do we experience a work of art? Art history has long privileged vision as the primary sense for experiencing works of art but increasingly embraced art's engagement with touch, smell, sound, and even taste. This seminar explores historically grounded ways of thinking about sensory experience of art objects and material culture in premodern and early modern Europe (ca. 500 – 1700 CE). We meet in Yale collections, including Yale University Art Gallery (YUAG), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, the Print Study Room of YUAG, and Cushing/Whitney Medical Library. We look closely at works of art across different media, from small luxury objects to architectural monuments, and in a variety of materials, from stone to wax. We also examine a wide range of primary sources, such as scientific writings, courtly ceremonies, and accounts of religious experiences. Topics include: cultural history of the senses; senses and human cognition; pleasure and the bodily senses; multisensory aesthetics; function of various senses in art and ritual; sensory worlds of cultural encounters. We primarily focus on art and material culture of Europe, but our readings range more broadly.  HU

* HSAR 480a / WGSS 481a, Woman/Artist  Carol Armstrong
This seminar focuses on women artists of the 19th and 20th centuries in Western Europe and the United States, while also looking back to the Renaissance through the 18th centuries and forward to our own "global" moment. Beginning with the advent of feminist art history, it moves chronologically, intertwining the history of women artists with such questions as: What are the pros and cons of singling out women artists? What were the institutional restraints on women's entering the the canon of "great" art? How did conceptions of "femininity," female agency, and the "male gaze" intersect with the history of art by women? How did women's roles as artist's patrons or models inflect their own or others' activities as artists? How did the political revolutions of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries change things for women artists? How did the public and private spheres of modernity shape the role of women in the story of "modernism"? How did the first, second, and third waves of feminism address the problem of the women artist? How did/do matters of sex and gender intersect with those of race and class in the identity politics of contemporary world art? What is feminist art? This class is offered in tandem with the YUAG exhibition "On the Basis of Art: 150 Years of Women at Yale," and culminates in a conference addressed to the two key terms of "Woman/Artist."  HU

* HSAR 487a / ER&M 384a, Art in the Anthropocene  Staff
There is widespread consensus that we are living in a state of emergency and ecological collapse. This seminar explores how contemporary artists are responding to the Anthropocene, a geological epoch defined by the impacts of human activity on the natural world. The converging crises of our present have revealed how structural inequality has created an uneven distribution of environmental risk along the lines of class, ethnicity, gender, and race. Engaging critical issues in the environmental humanities and focusing on the intersections of environmental and social justice, the course focuses on contemporary art from the 1970s to the present, with attention to how the legacies of colonization, empire, and the transatlantic slave trade shape the present. We consider how art bears witness to ecological crisis while exploring how arts worldmaking potential might help us imagine more just futures. Through a survey of contemporary art in the Anthropocene, we critically examine the interface between art, activism, and knowledge production. The course includes object-based study at the Yale Center for British Art, the Yale University Gallery, the Medical Historical Library and the Beinecke Library (dependent on Covid-19 policies).  HU

* HSAR 489a / CLCV 305a / GMAN 489a, Pathos-Figures: Affection-Images in the Visual Arts  Nicola Author
Images with high pathos inform our perception of human life and define our stance in the world. The seminar wants to foster a critical awareness of the formative power that pathos figures exert on our moral beliefs concerning human behavior. The course covers the
timespan from Antiquity to Modernity in Western culture and deals with historical moments that reflect different attempts to cultivate and temper strong emotions. We discuss the transfer of pathos and how the dissemination of eminent pathos figures of antiquity have shaped the imagery of the Western canon; we tackle with one of the most far-reaching concepts of art history, Aby Warburg’s Pathos formula that encourages us to draw in broad strokes connecting lines of affection over centuries and different cultures; we look into the discourse on human suffering in Medieval times and how it has defined the Christian doctrine of the affective image; we have a close look at treatises of the 17th century that worked on theorizing human passions and discuss the Enlightenment perspective that aimed at interiorizing pathos by dint of the discourse of beauty; we discuss the Modern “close-up” and how it unfolds the moment of pure bodily presence as highly affective entity. We ask if we are in need of new pathos images that reflect our current emotional stakes, and how they might look.

* 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. HU

* HSAR 493a / AMST 484a / ER&M 405a / FILM 402a / WGSS 462a, Visual Kinship, Families, and Photography  Laura Wexler
Exploration of the history and practice of family photography from an interdisciplinary perspective. Study of family photographs from the analog to the digital era, from snapshots to portraits, and from instrumental images to art exhibitions. Particular attention to the ways in which family photographs have helped establish gendered and racial hierarchies and examination of recent ways of reconceiving these images. HU

* 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.