

Syllabus Winter University 2025

An Introduction to Art History: Western Art

Andreas Pinczewski, MA

Looking at art makes you smart – recent research in neuroscience seems to confirm what artists and art historians alike have already suspected. Fact is, art history has always been one of the most transdisciplinary areas within the humanities, reaching out to other arts, like music and literature, historical sciences, linguistics, anthropology, psychology, social sciences, and sometimes even the natural and applied sciences, too. Art history, after all, strives to understand why a work of art looks the way it does and to find ways to translate visual experience into sensible language.

This course will provide a speed run through aspects of European art and architecture from the Middle Ages to modern and post-modern times. We will get to know a select number of styles, and enhance our understanding through regular visits to museums and heritage sites. Ways of seeing and ways to express these will be the main focus, with a strong context-based approach.

Methods: lectures, museum visits, writing and practical exercises in the museum and during class

Exam: Written exam (1.5 hours)

Grading is based on three parts:

- (1) oral participation in class and during excursions (17 %)
- (2) exercises during museum visits and in class, homework (short descriptive essays etc.) (17 %)
- (3) exam consisting of characterizations, multiple-choice questions, and comparisons (66 %)

Attendance of class is mandatory!

Total number of units: 45 (1 unit = 45 minutes)

Classes start at 13:30 h

A major part of the course will take place outside the class room, i.e., there won't be tables or surfaces for writing, placing laptops or tablets readily available. A sturdy writing pad and a sketch book (A5 format), and some pencils will therefore be required. Graphite pencils work best, as museums don't like ballpens or similarly messy writing implements for obvious reasons.

Also keep some small change ready for locker deposits and possible entrance fees.

Introductory reading:

Ernst H. Gombrich. *The Story of Art*. London: Phaidon Press, 1950 (various re-editions, it's a classic)

Daniel Arasse. *Take a Closer Look*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013 (Translation of: *On n'y voit rien*. Paris: Denoël, 2000)

John Berger. *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin, 1972

Schedule (subject to change)

WEEK 1 – The Scope (January 6 to January 9)

Tue, Jan 6: *(holiday; no class)*

Wed, Jan 7: *(no class)*

Thu, Jan 8: Ways of seeing and the art of describing (4 units, museum visit, Staatsgalerie)

Fri, Jan 9: Introduction: What is art history and what is its scope? (3 units, class)

7/45

WEEK 2 – The Middle Ages (January 12 to January 16)

Mon, Jan 12: *(no class)*

Tue, Jan 13: From connoisseurship to political iconology – the tools of the trade (2 units, class)

Wed, Jan 14: From Late Roman to Gothic Art – a prayer turned into stone? (4 units, class)

Thu, Jan 15: A medieval city (4 units, city visit, Esslingen or Schwäbisch Gmünd)

Fri, Jan 16: *(no class)*

17/45

WEEK 3 – Early Modern – The Renaissance (January 19 to January 23)

Mon, Jan 19: *(no class)*

Tue, Jan 20: From Eye to I – the birth of a new consciousness (2 units, class)

Wed, Jan 21: Born under Saturn – the emergence of the art world (2 units, class)

Thu, Jan 22: Analysing Old Masters (3 units, museum visit, Staatsgalerie)

Fri, Jan 23: *(no class)*

24/45

WEEK 4 – Early Modern – Baroque, Neo-Classicism, Romanticism (January 26 to January 30)

Mon, Jan 26: *(no class)*

Tue, Jan 27: Renaissance Gone Wild? – Baroque art (2 units, class)

Wed, Jan 28: Enlightenment and Frankenstein – From Neo-Classicism to Romanticism (2 units, class)

Thu, Jan 29: Passion, Beauty, and the Sublime (4 units, museum visit, Staatsgalerie)

Fri, Jan 30: *(no class)*

32/45

WEEK 5 – Modernism – The 19th and 20th Centuries (February 2 to February 6)

Mon, Feb 2: *(no class)*

Tue, Feb 3: Art for Art's Sake – The quest for a new era (2 units, class)

Wed, Feb 4: Out with the Old, in with the New (2 units, class)

Thu, Feb 5: From Impressionism to Abstract Art (4 units, museum visit, Staatsgalerie)

Fri, Feb 6: *(no class)*

40/45

WEEK 6 – Revision and Exam (February 9 to February 12)

Mon, Feb 9: Revision (3 units, class)

Tue, Feb 10: Exam (2 units, class)

Wed, Feb 11: Farewell party *(no class)*

45/45
