

Introduction to Art History: Western Art

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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 fine 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 strongly 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 (10 %)
- (2) exercises during museum visits and in class (short descriptive essays, group work etc.) (40 %)
- (3) exam consisting of characterizations, multiple-choice questions, and comparisons (50 %)

Attendance of class is mandatory!

Total number of units: 45

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, a sketch book, and some pencils will therefore come in handy. 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