

Tutorials: History of art

OXFORD IS A VIBRANT CENTRE for the study of the history of art. The collection in the Ashmolean is particularly rich, ranging across many centuries and many cultures. There are in addition important collections at the Christ Church picture Gallery and the Bodleian and other libraries. The architecture of the city is also rich and membership of Wycliffe Hall allows SCIO students to see inside many distinguishing buildings not normally open to the public. Access to London galleries is easy, and field trips show students other cities of architectural note.

With the exception of a handful of courses, the descriptions below are copyright University of Oxford and cover tutorial courses offered by the University to matriculated undergraduates. SCIO students follow such courses as closely as is practicable, though there may be scope for minor variation to take into account students' previous experience. Students will not necessarily cover all the material cited in the description (especially when they take the course as a secondary tutorial). All tutorials involve in-depth study: where the title might suggest a survey course, the content of the tutorial will involve focused study on part of the syllabus.

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American Art

This course is a historical introduction to American visual arts from European colonization to the Cold War four centuries later. Focusing primarily on fine art painting, but also on sculpture, architecture, furniture, printmaking, and photography, the course tracks recurring themes and motifs across the generations as American artists used their skills to advance the interests of the social groups to which they belonged or wished to belong. These topics include: contact between civilizations; throwing off

colonial domination; exploring the wilderness; justifying or opposing slavery; evolving attitudes towards children, family, and domesticity; confronting the Darwinian threat; treating the self as an aesthetic object; embracing or rejecting capitalism; contending against inequality and injustice; fighting or resisting wars of expansion; and negotiating social and sexual difference. The relatively little-known earlier history of North American art is thus an important element in the

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course. On the other hand, there is a strong emphasis on the twentieth century.

Anglo-Saxon Archaeology c.600–750: Society and Economy in the Early Christian Period

In the year 600, the peoples who came to be known as ‘the Anglo-Saxons’ were ethnically diverse, politically fragmented, and largely pagan; by 750 they had emerged as one of the major cultures of post-Roman Europe, with towns, a complex economy, and a network of richly endowed churches. The fusion of Germanic, Celtic, and Mediterranean traditions produced a material culture of astonishing richness and originality, including such internationally famous works as the Sutton Hoo grave goods, the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses, and the Lindisfarne Gospels. This is currently one of the liveliest areas of medieval history, as old discoveries are reassessed, and new ones (especially in the areas of economy and settlement) overturn accepted views. This course will afford students the exciting opportunity to trace the remarkable growth of English society and culture in response to external stimuli. Archaeology is defined in the widest sense, to include illuminated manuscripts, precious objects, coins, sculpture, and buildings as well as sites and finds. With this subject the sites and artefacts themselves are ‘primary’, but to make them available in print inevitably involves a process of selection and interpretation; at the same time, ‘primary’ material (unavailable elsewhere) can be embedded in analytical and essentially secondary works. Thus the normal distinction between primary and secondary literature cannot be drawn so clearly, and the subject-matter covers a spectrum from the primary (e.g. photographs and excavation reports) to the secondary (e.g. interpretative books and articles). Mastering the art of using physical evidence, and of reading and criticizing excavation reports, involves some initial intellectual effort but is highly rewarding.

Approaches to the History of Art

This course will provide students with a sophisticated set of methodological tools and an explicit historiographical apparatus for analysing the texts, images, and objects encountered in art history. By considering carefully and critically texts by writers concerned with art history over the past century or so, as well as relevant works by archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, and literary critics,

students will gain an historiographical overview of the discipline of art history and will appreciate how methodological approaches from other disciplines have been incorporated into the field. Students will also be encouraged to consider how methodological and historiographical issues underpin their own research and writing as art historians.

This course will broaden and deepen students’ insights into the ways in which one can approach and analyse visual material produced by both past and present, Western and non-Western cultures. The aim is to introduce students to a wide range of approaches and world cultures, by showing how different kinds of societies and the availability of different kinds of evidence have elicited different responses from art historians both today and in the past. Students will visit museums, galleries, and libraries throughout Oxford and gain an insight into the astonishing range of collections found in the University and city

Art in China since 1911

This course, for which no prior experience of Chinese art or history is required, will provide an overview of developments in the visual arts of China from the end of the imperial period to the present, and will relate them to changes within the broader culture. How did the material forms and contexts of art, as well as the social roles of its makers and audiences, change over this period? Students will study a range of visual materials, from painting in ‘traditional’ and ‘Western’ formats, through graphics and photography, to the performance and installation art of more recent times. They will engage with the issues, central to the artists of this period, of how to make art that is both ‘modern’ and ‘Chinese’, and will look at the ways the turbulent politics of twentieth-century China have been expressed in visual terms, and have in turn inflected the visual images which have been produced.

Art under the Roman Empire, AD 14–337

The long imperial Roman peace has left the densest and most varied record of artistic and visual representation of any period of Antiquity, and at the height of the empire more cities, communities, and individuals than ever before came to invest in the ‘classical’ culture of monumental representation. The course studies the art and visual culture of the Roman Empire in its physical, social, and historical contexts.

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The period saw the creation of a new imperial iconography – the good emperor portrayed in exemplary roles and activities at peace and war. These images were deployed in a wide range of media and contexts in Rome and around the empire, where the imperial image competed with a variety of other representations, from the public monuments of city aristocrats to the tombs of wealthy freed slaves. The course studies the way in which Roman images, self-representation, and art were moulded by their local contexts and functions and by the concerns and values of their target viewers and ‘user-groups’. Students learn about major monuments in Rome and Italy and other leading centres of the empire (such as Aphrodisias, Athens, Ephesus, and Lepcis Magna) and about the main strands and contexts of representation in the eastern and western provinces. They will become familiar with the main media and categories of surviving images – statues, portrait busts, historical reliefs, funerary monuments, cameos, wall paintings, mosaics, silverware, and coins – and learn how to analyse and interpret Roman art and images in well-documented contexts and how to assess the relation between written and visual evidence.

Students will develop knowledge of written evidence where relevant as well as of the main media and categories of surviving images – statues, portrait busts, historical reliefs, funerary monuments, cameos, wall paintings, mosaics, silverware, and coins.

Byzantine Art: The Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, 500–1100

This course introduces students to Byzantine art by surveying a representative selection of its monuments which together cover some major topics in the study of the formative period of Byzantine art, about AD 500 to AD 1100. The holdings of the Ashmolean Museum are a rich resource for students on this course. Topics include secular architecture and urbanism: the transformation of public space; church buildings: architecture and ritual; monumental church decoration: art and ritual; religious iconography: the life of Christ; secular iconography: imperial imagery; and Byzantine ‘minor’ art: the social life of things.

The Carolingian Renaissance

‘Carolingian Renaissance’ is a term used to describe the cultural, intellectual, and religious awakening of Western Europe in the eighth century which in due course found its natural centre in the court school

of Charlemagne and thence returned, in the ninth century and under fresh stimulus, to the churches and monasteries equipped to realize its implications. It thus gathers up what of Antiquity and Patristic learning had been preserved and hands it on, transmuted, to become the basis of European thinking about the aims of society until comparatively recent times. Its range is so great, and its implications so vast, that no set of prescribed texts could in practice cover it. The texts that have been chosen (in English translation) illustrate some of its principal themes and some of the ways in which those themes were modified in the course of a century’s experiment. The texts include a generous selection of the revealing correspondence of two scholars at the centre of affairs, Alcuin and Lupus of Ferrières; biography and narrative material; an educational manual; several Carolingian capitularies (the programmatic foundation of the Renaissance); some charters; a little theology and liturgical material; and a selection of poetry. Special attention is paid to the artistic and architectural aspects of the Renaissance.

Court Culture and Art in Early Modern Europe, 1580–1700

This course is intended for students who wish to combine an interest in the structures of courts and court culture with an introduction to some of the major issues and methodological challenges involved in studying the history of art in a courtly context. The study of courts as the focus of political, social, and cultural authority within the early modern state has been a dynamic and exciting area of historical enquiry in the last few decades. No less important has been the impact of both art-historical and historical scholarship in exploring the practical mechanisms of art patronage, the use of art by rulers and other elites to construct justifications for the legitimization of authority, and the respective role of artists, patrons, and scholars in the formulation of ideological programmes within a court context. The course will seek to bring these two areas together by focusing on a number of specific courts and on wider issues connected with court patronage of the arts, the resources and aims of patrons, and the reactions of both courtly and non-courtly elites to these initiatives. An introductory class will examine some of the historiographical and methodological problems involved in studying courts and in coming to grips with what will be for some students the unfamiliar context of art-historical scholarship. Subsequent classes will look at a range of European courts including the papal court in Rome, the

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English court from the reign of Elizabeth I to the Stuarts, the Habsburg court in Brussels, and Louis XIV's Versailles, while additional topics will include the role of female patrons, the place of collecting in court patronage, and courts' use of theatrical and musical performances, as well as entries.

The prescribed texts and documents will introduce students to the details of art commissions, inventories of collections, and correspondence between and among artists and elite patrons. Contemporary writings about artists give insights into issues such as factional rivalries, political or familial strategies, perceptions of artistic merit, and the status of artists in court culture. There are no prescribed images for this course, although students will be encouraged to analyse particular works of art as case studies in understanding the workings of patronage, the politics of display, and the operations of court ritual and etiquette.

Culture and Society in Early Renaissance Italy, 1290–1348

This subject engages with Italian society in a period of extraordinary flux and creativity. As the city-communes came to the end of their period of dominance in Italian politics, several among them – including Florence, Siena, and Padua, studied here – produced the most elaborate manifestations of civic pride and republican identity. These took the form not simply of governmental and financial institutions, but of newly created piazzas and town halls, statues and frescoes, church building and the elaboration of civic ceremony. In addition, the writing of history and of political and religious polemic contributed to current debate about the character and purpose of life in the cities – a debate which was conducted against a background of conflict and often extreme violence. All of these aspects of urban culture are represented among the various texts and images prescribed for the course.

Linking many of these themes is the career and work of Dante, whose *Comedy* is both an extraordinary creative achievement and a sustained critique of contemporary society. The psychological realism introduced into literature by Dante's vast panorama finds a miniature successor in Petrarch's *The secret*, the witty self-analysis of a Christian man of classical letters. The transformation of the visual arts which also occurred at this time is represented by Giotto, Duccio, and their contemporaries, whose painting and sculpture is examined both with respect to its

style and technique, and in relation to its patrons, setting, and audience.

The textual sources are prescribed in translation. A rich secondary literature exists in English.

Egyptian Art and Architecture

This course surveys ancient Egyptian art from around 3000 BC to Graeco-Roman times, with examples and detailed material being drawn mainly from the second half of the period. The approach ranges from discussion of the position of art in Egyptian society to detailed study of individual artefacts and types. The Egyptian collections in the Ashmolean Museum are used for part of the course. Students study architecture – notably temples and tombs – within which works belonging to other genres were sited, to relief, painting, statuary, decorative and ephemeral arts, genres such as the stela and the sarcophagus, and the legacy of Egyptian art in the West. Issues raised by the material include the nature of artistic traditions, art and agency, representational forms, text and image, and approaches to iconography. Some of these are explored in lectures and in classes and tutorials.

European Cinema

The course provides an introduction to methods and issues of film criticism, and to the work of some of the most important European film-makers. Students will be encouraged to consider formal thematic and historical aspects of a range of European films. Topics covered include European art cinema from 1920 to the present, focusing on the great movements – Russian Formalism, German Expressionism, Italian Neo-Realism, French New Wave – presenting the main concepts of film form and introducing each of the chosen films in its historical context. Films are available in Oxford with subtitles, but knowledge of the languages of the films will be helpful.

The Experience of Modernity: Visual Culture, 1880–1925

The course will examine how European artists grappled with modernity between c.1880 (the moment of the 'Impressionist Crisis') and c.1924 (the year of Breton's *Surrealist manifesto*). During the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a range of social and ideological formations emerged that constitute the ground of what we now recognize as modernity. The period bore witness to the rapid growth and transformation of the great Western metropolises; increasing industrialization; the expansion of consumer and leisure culture; the final

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expansion of the European colonial empires; and the emergence of mass cultural and political formations, both reactionary and revolutionary. Concentrating primarily on Paris, but taking in also other centres of European artistic production (Berlin, London, Moscow, and so forth), we will examine how artists developed new pictorial forms and strategies capable of capturing their experience of the shifting cultural and political environments within which they worked.

Our approach throughout will be to consider the development of modernism in the context of the wider cultural and social history of the period. Themes will include the relation between modernism and politics; the impact of war and revolution on the arts; Modernist 'primitivism' and histories of colonialism; relations between art and mass culture; the rise of abstraction; and the anti-art rhetoric of post-Cubist artistic production.

Flanders and Italy in the Quattrocento, 1420–1480

This subject offers candidates the possibility of studying and comparing themes in cultural history which are often considered apart. Its aim is to examine aspects of the civilizations of both the 'Gothic' north and the 'Renaissance' south in fifteenth-century Europe. In the north, the Low Countries witnessed the emergence of an art of remarkable naturalism (represented by Jan van Eyck, Roger van der Weyden, and Hans Memling). Meanwhile, the Italian peninsula saw the development of a more idealized vision of the world, beginning with the works of Masaccio and drawing increasingly on Greek and Roman Antiquity for both subject-matter and inspiration. Beside these apparently divergent tendencies, some common ground existed between the two cultures: urban life, the rise of princely courts and households, mercantile and financial contacts, and important movements in devotional religion. One purpose of the subject is therefore to examine the relationship between the visual art of these regions and the societies from which it emerged.

The prescribed texts and documents introduce the student to the theoretical literature of the arts as well as to the study of patronage and purchase: humanist treatises, contracts, inventories, and correspondence between patrons and artists. Devotional trends are illustrated by saints' lives and by texts emanating from the *Devotio Moderna* of the age. Intermediaries between north and south

such as diplomatic envoys, the agents of the Medici bank, and foreign observers are also represented. A selection of photographs of works of art, chosen to illustrate both differences and affinities, forms an important part of the source material. By studying visual and documentary evidence together, a reappraisal of the comparisons and contrasts between Netherlandish and Italian culture can be undertaken. In the process, material from cities other than Florence (e.g. Milan, Ferrara, Mantua, and Urbino) is studied, and the role of princes as patrons emphasized.

The prescribed texts (with one exception) are available in English translation.

German Expressionism in Literature and the Visual Arts

This course explores Expressionism (1910–22), which ranges across literature, the visual arts, and architecture, and is a major German avant-garde movement of the so called 'Modernist' period (1885–1933). Students will need to be able to read the relevant texts in German.

Gothic Art through Medieval Eyes

This course focuses upon the question of how medieval people looked at medieval art. The emphasis is upon gaining a detailed knowledge of a small number of artworks in diverse media, produced between c.1150 and c.1300. Consideration will be given to questions of material and technique. However, to complement close study of these buildings, sculptures, and paintings, students will also review evidence for the contemporary understanding of vision. How did the medieval viewer see these things? And how – whether the image in question was a major church or a portable holy picture – did contemporaries 'read' such images? The course engages with the historiography of approaches to medieval art since the nineteenth century; it also critically reviews current theoretical arguments, within the context of the wider discipline of the history of art.

Greek Art and Archaeology, c.500–300 BC

The images and monuments of the fifth century BC made a decisive break with the visual modes of the archaic aristocracy and established the influential idea that images should try to look like what and whom they represent. This subject involves the study of the buildings and architecture of classical Greek cities and sanctuaries as well as the images and artefacts that were displayed in them, and one of its

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major themes is the swift emergence and consolidation of this revolutionary way of seeing and representing that we know as ‘classical art’. The images and objects are best studied in their archaeological and broader historical contexts, and typical questions to ask about them would include: What were they used for? Who paid for them, made them, and looked at them? What ideas and priorities did they express in their local settings?

This course studies the full range of ancient artefacts, from bronze statues and marble temples to painted pots and clay figurines. The Ashmolean Museum has a fine collection of relevant objects, especially of painted pottery, and the Cast Gallery houses plaster copies of many of the key sculptured monuments of the period, from the Delphi Charioteer and the Olympia sculptures to portrait statues of Demosthenes and Alexander the Great.

Students will learn about the architecture, sculpture, and other representational arts of the classical Greek city. Areas of emphasis will include the city of Athens and the historical context and significance of the art and monuments of the period. Students will consider themes of architecture, buildings, and urbanism; statues, reliefs, temple sculptures; and painting, painted pottery, and other figured artefacts.

Hellenistic Art and Archaeology, 330–30 BC

The Macedonian conquest of Asia brought a forced expansion of the Greek imagination and environment that has left an abundant and varied trace in the visual and material culture of the period. The course studies major themes, contexts, and media of Hellenistic art, set against the dense archaeology of the best-preserved cities and sites of the period – from Macedonia to Bactria, from the Aegean to central Italy. The material includes distinctive categories of object, such as bronzeware, clay seals, gems, glassware, grave stelai, jewellery, mosaics, silverware, statues in bronze, statues in marble, terracottas, and wall paintings. Major subjects include: (1) the art and cities of the kings at the height of their power in the late fourth and third centuries BC, (2) the visual remains of Greek-local interaction in Egypt and Iran, (3) the monuments of the old city states that flourished within and between the Macedonian kingdoms, and (4) the complex process of acculturation by which the apparatus and technology of Hellenistic art and material culture were adopted in Italy.

Intellect and Culture in Victorian Britain

This course aims to study the ideas and culture of the Victorians with some reference to their analytical content and social context. The topics covered range from progress and faith, through natural and social science, to fine art and gender. There are many common themes running through the texts, such as the tension between materialism and idealism, and between historical and positivist modes of thought. The set texts are grouped under headings which suggest the major issues to be explored.

Historical writings introduce the concept of ‘Whig’ history and the interaction between religious beliefs and the claims made for the value of the study of the past.

Social and economic thought examines the attempt to advance beyond the apparently well-established principles of political economy towards a ‘general science of society’ or sociology.

The religious texts embrace the spectrum from Catholicism and natural religion to agnosticism and secularism.

The section on art and society assesses the enormous influence of ‘cultural critics’, Carlyle, Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, and William Morris, whose perspectives were distinct from those of churchmen and sociologists. We are particularly fortunate in having a grand Ruskinian project – the University Museum – in Parks Road, and Ruskin’s own collection of drawings and watercolours, used in his teaching, in the Ashmolean Museum.

Education is important in raising directly the question of the role of women in Victorian culture, and shows how many of the intellectual developments of the period were reflected in the reform of the universities and public schools, and in the professionalization of study.

The scientific texts focus on Darwin and the impact of evolutionary thinking.

Literature and the Visual Arts in France

The course offers students the opportunity to explore the different relations between literature and the visual arts from medieval times to the nineteenth century, focusing on a wide range of writers, artists, and movements. Among the topics

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explored will be the way(s) language conveys images, and images tell stories; the uses of realism and fantasy in literature and art; and the links between word, picture, and 'message' (including book illustration in manuscripts and early printed editions). Writers and artists examined include Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, Guillaume de Machaut, the Limbourg brothers, Poussin, Lebrun, Watteau, Marivaux, Diderot, Greuze, David, Baudelaire, Manet, Zola, and Courbet. Students should be able to read the relevant texts in French.

Northern European Portraiture, 1400–1800

This course offers students the possibility of studying the changing function and meaning of the pictorial genre of portraiture in early modern Europe. During the early modern period the function and meaning of portraiture were constantly in flux. This course focuses on the ways in which the portrait's strategic and rhetorical potential have been realized during this period. The overall aim of the course is to study the dualism of the portrayed body by comparing developments in portrait-making in various parts of Northern Europe. The concentration on a loosely defined geographic and chronological span is intended to facilitate close examination of various themes and topics key to the history of the portrait. The course is structured around four main topics:

1. Self-fashioning, which deals with the slow rise in the fifteenth and sixteenth century towards the booming business in portrait-making in the following two centuries. We will compare the developments from the Dutch seventeenth century, in particular in its relation to the increasing self-awareness of a rapidly growing merchant class, to the expansion in eighteenth-century England. The role of the body's dualism is significant here for the shifting understanding of an exteriority containing a deeper, interior self, and how that relates to notions of subjectivity and agency.
2. The monarch's two bodies and the role of gender, in which we compare storytelling, myth-making, and politics in the strategic portraits of Elizabeth I and Louis XIV.
3. The invention of the self-portrait by Albrecht Dürer around 1500, and the

impact on his successors like Rembrandt who turned the self-portrait into a theatrical spectacle.

4. Performativity and the differences between public, private, and intimate portraits, in which we compare oil portraits with other types of portraiture in drawing, pastel, silhouette, miniature, and wax to examine the relation of medium to (exclusive versus general) audience.

Though the main focus is on pictures from Northern Europe, we will explore the portrait's historical connections with Italy (regarding the portrait as publication of an anecdote or biographical fragment) and the Ottoman Empire (regarding the notion of the (ir)relevance of likeness). Visits to galleries and other collections in Oxford and London are warmly encouraged.

Textual sources are studies in translation.

Understanding Museums and Collections

This course provides an introduction to the study of museums and collections, with particular reference to approaches drawn from archaeology, anthropology, history of art, history of science, and science and technology studies (STS). Students will be introduced to four main areas in the study of museums and collections: the history of museums; museums and time; museums, culture, and nature; and collections as practices. These areas will be explored through examples drawn from the earliest archaeological evidence for collecting (including hoarding and deposition), through the first museums in the ancient world, to medieval, early modern, modern, and contemporary collections and museums. The development of nineteenth- and twentieth-century ideas of preservation and heritage will also be introduced.

The course will provide students with the opportunity to explore aspects of particular museums and collections through a series of themes, including the history of ideas of assemblage and collection; art and aesthetics; science and the natural world; objectivity and knowledge production; curiosity, performance and colonialism; identity, politics and cultural repatriation; material, digital, and virtual museums; and preservation and heritage.