

ARTH 220: Renaissance Art and the Birth of Modernity

Class # 51555 ▪ Fall 2025 ▪ Tuesday 1:40-4:30, In-person ▪ Klapper 403
Prof. Heather Horton ▪ heather.horton@qc.cuny.edu ▪ Office Hours by appointment

Course Description

In this course, students will become familiar with the profound innovations in painting, sculpture, and architecture created in Europe from about 1300 to 1700, which set the course and standards for much of western visual culture down to the past century. From Giotto to Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and Rembrandt, we will examine what is meant by the term Renaissance in the visual arts and European society at large, including its contacts and exchanges with global cultures outside the West. **Note that ARTH 220 is a Pathways, Creative Expression, course.

Learning Objectives

- To become familiar with a wide range of painting, sculpture, architecture, and decorative arts made between 1400 and 1750 throughout Europe.
- To acquire knowledge of new materials and techniques from the era, such as oil paint, new printing methods, and single-point perspective.
- To interrogate key social, historiographic, and stylistic concepts such as genius, regional and religious identity, and the roles of artists and patrons in society.
- To engage with modern scholarship alongside historical texts to develop critical thinking abilities and writing skills.

In addition, as a Pathways course, this course meets Creative Expression Learning Outcomes:

- Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring creative expression, including, but not limited to, arts, communications, creative writing, media arts, music, and theater.
- Analyze how arts from diverse cultures of the past serve as a foundation for those of the present, and describe the significance of works of art in the societies that created them.
- Articulate how meaning is created in the arts or communications and how experience is interpreted and conveyed.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the skills involved in the creative process.

Course Resources

There is no required textbook for this course. If you are feeling unmoored and would like a textbook for reference, I will be happy to recommend one.

Your Class Notes are your single most important resource for this class. They will be essential for the Midterm and Final. We will discuss how to take notes effectively and I will give you regular cues in lectures (“this should be in your notes”).

Brightspace: You will find modules for each study unit, including a PDF of class images and links to review class material. Think of these modules as a online textbook for the course. Brightspace will be used to record grades and to submit the museum assignment.

Email: In case of a change in class plans (snow days, Covid closure, etc.), I must have a working email address to reach you. I rely on CUNYFirst addresses. Please check your address and update it, if necessary.

Course Requirements

Grade Breakdown:

Participation = 5%
In-Class Quiz = 5%
Met Assignment = 20%
Online Exhibition Project = 20%

Midterm = 25%
Final= 25%

Attendance and Participation: Attendance is essential. Attendance is not a separate part of the grade, but semester after semester, I have seen that attendance corresponds to the final grade.

Electronics: You are encouraged to use laptops, tablets, and other devices for engaging with the material in class. Many students find it useful to open the weekly PDF from Brightspace and follow the material there. Occasionally, I will ask you to participate in an online activity during class.

Met Assignment: You will visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art independently and complete a 3-4 page assignment in response to the works.

Online Exhibition Project: In the last part of the semester, you will devise a “dream” exhibition of Renaissance art that highlights major works from the period. You will choose an engaging title, describe 5 works, and compose a 2-3 page explanation of your exhibit.

Midterm and Final Exams: There will be a Midterm and a Final Exam. The Final will *not* be cumulative. In other words, it will test only the images and material covered since the Midterm. The exams will consist of multiple-choice questions and short essays. The exams are OPEN-NOTE, but you cannot use electronics. Make a plan, early on, to print your notes for the exams. Makeup exams are given only in cases of documented emergencies. An unexcused absence from an exam will result in a grade of F for the test.

Please communicate with me if you are struggling in this class. If you know that a particular deadline will be a problem, if you can't hear or see from where you are sitting, if you want more feedback to improve...talk to me – as soon as possible -- and we will find a solution.

***See the Habits of Work Section below for more guidance on grading.

Class Schedule

8/26 Intro
9/2 Early Renaissance in Italy, 1300-1400
9/9 Early Renaissance in Italy, 1300-1400
9/16 Northern Europe, 1400-1500
****In-Class Quiz**
9/23 No Class
9/30 Northern Europe, 1400-1500
10/7 Italy 1400-1500
10/14 No Class, QC operates on a Monday schedule
10/21 **Midterm Exam**
10/28 Italy, 1400-1500
11/4 High Renaissance in Italy, Leonardo
11/11 No Class, Independent Museum Visit
11/18 High Renaissance in Italy, Michelangelo and Raphael
****Met Assignment Due**
11/25 Venice and Mannerism
12/2 Northern Europe, 1500-1600
****Online Exhibition Project Due**
12/9 Northern Europe, 1500-1600
12/16 **Final Exam, 1:45-3:45**

Course Policies

Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The Office of Special Services (SPSV) is committed to supporting students with qualifying disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by providing reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access. If you have previously received accommodations due to a disability, believe you may have a disability, or have a temporary disability, please visit the office's website (<https://www.qc.cuny.edu/sp/>) for further information on the assistance they can offer you. Accommodations are not retroactive, so you are encouraged to get registered sooner rather than later. You may also contact their office at qc.spsv@qc.cuny.edu or call 718-997-5870 during office hours for assistance as well.

CUNY Policy On Academic Integrity

Academic Dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion as provided at [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

Statement on student wellness

As a student, you may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may diminish your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. QC student wellness services are available free of charge. You can learn more about confidential mental health services available on campus at: [Counseling Services Department](#).

Use of Student Work

All programs in New York State undergo periodic reviews by accreditation agencies. For these purposes, samples of student work are occasionally made available to those professionals conducting the review. Anonymity is assured under these circumstances. If you do not wish to have your work made available for these purposes, please let the professor know before the start of the second class. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Course Evaluations

During the final four weeks of the semester, you will be asked to complete an evaluation for this course by filling out an online questionnaire. Please participate in these course evaluations. Your comments are highly valued, and these evaluations are an important service to fellow students and to the institution since your responses will be pooled with those of other students and made available online. Please note that all responses are completely anonymous; no identifying information is retained once the evaluation has been submitted.

Tutoring or Other Support Services

QC offers different academic support services. The [QC Learning Commons](#) provides peer tutoring, study spaces and other services. The [Writing Center](#) is a multilingual academic and intellectual support space where Queens College students work in collaboration with peer tutors to improve their writing.

Technical Support

Students who need help with their Queens College accounts (email, CUNY portal, Brightspace, and CUNYfirst) can call the ITS help desk at 718-997-4444 Monday to Friday from 9 am to 5 pm or email Support@qc.cuny.edu. For more information, visit [Information Technology Services](#)

Students can use desktop computers in the [Powdermaker Hall 210 computer lab](#) or in the library, as well borrow loaner laptops: [Computers & Printing – Queens College Library](#)).

Habits of Work Determine Your Grade

Exams do not simply assess whether you ‘know the material.’ They also assess your habits of work including attendance, attention, note-taking, after class review, and organization.

A students tend to

- Attend every class and frequently participate. Show curiosity.
- Arrive on time for the ‘first 15 review’ (dedicated 15 minutes at the beginning of each class for review and exam practice).
- Take detailed notes highlighting major cultures, styles, artworks, and terms.
- Regularly review class notes outside of class using Brightspace materials (videos, explanations, etc.), fill in gaps, and explore further resources.
- Be prepared for exams with organized notes that the student ‘knows like the back of their hand’.
- Practice writing unknown essays and review them with the professor.
- Submit all parts of the written assignments, on time. Their answers are thorough, thoughtful, and carefully edited.
- Demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the course content.

B students tend to

- Attend most classes (2-3 absences) and participate occasionally.
- Arrive on time most days but miss the review 2-3 times.
- Take notes but miss materials from absent days.
- Occasionally review notes afterclass and fill in gaps with Brightspace materials.
- Be prepared for exams with organized notes that you have ‘looked over a few times.’
- Submit all parts of the written assignments, on time.
- Demonstrate an overall knowledge of the course content, with a few gaps.

C students tend to

- Attend class sometimes (3 or more absences) and seldom participate.
- Arrive late regularly.
- Be occasionally distracted in class...by phones, sports updates, sleep...
- Take notes but miss material from absent days.
- Seldom look at class material outside of class.
- Arrive at exams with incomplete notes.
- Miss components of written assignments (only answer 3 of 4 questions) or submit them late.
- Demonstrate a partial knowledge of the course content.

D students tend to

- Seldom attend class. Arrive late; leave early.
- Sleep or focus on other things during class.
- Have incomplete notes or notes borrowed from a friend.
- Seldom look at class material outside of class.
- Arrive late to exams or forget their notes.
- Miss major components of written assignments or submit them late.
- Fail to demonstrate an understanding of the course content in 1 or more major class component.

F students tend to

- Seldom attend class. Arrive late; leave early.
- Sleep or focus on other things during class.

- Have incomplete notes or notes borrowed from a friend.
- Seldom or never look at class material outside of class.
- Miss exams or arrive late with incomplete notes.
- Fail to turn in major assignments.
- Fail to demonstrate an understanding of the course content in 1 or more major class component.