

# BLHS 106: The Renaissance

## Renaissance Humanism and Renaissance Art

### Professors

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### Schedule

Tuesdays 4:50-7:55. Room: C214 Hybrid format. Class sessions include traditional classroom meetings, individual and group online work, and online meetings of the whole class. Two Saturday Museum visits, October 29 and November 19, 10:00-12:20.

### Course Content

Deriving in part from a rediscovery of ancient writings and arts, and in part from a new interpretation of the human spirit, Renaissance humanism expressed itself in great works of literature and art. This course emphasizes key humanist writings that reassess the human condition. It also focuses on the glorious works of painting, sculpture, and architecture that express this new understanding of the human spirit.

#### *Humanism*

Leon Battista Alberti's reformulation of the pre-Socratic assertion that "a man can do all things if he will" is a keynote of Renaissance humanism. It exudes the fundamental mood of the age: confidence. Over time that initial confidence is modified and qualified, as humanists turn a secular and analytical eye on the unique practices and policies of their time and place. We will consider many facets of humanistic thought, from Petrarch's antiquarian enthusiasms to Pico's idealism to More's skepticism.

#### *Art*

The arts of the European Renaissance are one of the crowning glories of human achievement. We will consider the factors that made such an achievement possible. The lasting images and structures of this era speak to the eternal question of what it means to be human, and suggest myriad possibilities for the individual spirit, and for the eternal verities of existence. We will analyze the transformation of medieval art into the humanist style in Italy, and see how northern Europe evolved its own visual language. We will also consider how art conventions and materials influence the individual artist's creative vision.

### Learning Goals and Outcomes

After completing this course a student should be able to:

1. Recognize and state the importance of the most important historical developments in medieval Italy
2. Distinguish among Classical humanism, Christian humanism, and Renaissance humanism
3. Identify the humanistic principles in the assigned readings for the class
4. Analyze and evaluate the principal arguments in literary and philosophical prose of the Renaissance era
5. Explain the influences of Renaissance humanism on European culture
6. Recognize and define the specific ideas and values of important Renaissance humanists

7. Recognize, define, and compare the styles and major works of Renaissance artists
8. Compare and contrast the arts of the Italian Renaissance, the Northern Renaissance, and Mannerism
9. Understand and analyze the structural and decorative characteristics of Renaissance architecture
10. Recognize and define the basic media of painting, prints, and sculpture in the Renaissance
11. Define and apply the social contexts of the arts in the Renaissance, including patronage, audience, religion, and business
12. Write well-constructed short argument essays containing thesis, evidence, and reasoning
13. Write cogent Discussion Board postings and deliver constructive peer critiques
14. Demonstrate familiarity with assigned reading in clear, constructive, on-topic classroom dialogue
15. Work cooperatively with a small group of peers
16. Prepare and effectively deliver in-class reports
17. Work effectively and independently to complete hybrid online assignments

**Assessment** of student learning will be achieved through consideration of a number of components, as follows:

- *Classroom Participation:* Students must read the course material carefully, take notes, and participate fully in class discussion. I welcome questions as well as critical commentaries.
- *Attendance:* See full discussion below.
- *Discussion Board Postings:* For the five sessions that are labeled “Individual online work,” students must post critical analyses (500 words minimum) based on a selection of topics, as well as replies to two postings by other class members (200 words minimum). Postings will receive an “F” grade if they are less than minimum length. Detailed topics are found on Blackboard Discussion Board.
- *Essays:* Three essays requiring critical analysis (minimum 750 words) are assigned. Topics, based on interpretation of assigned reading and artwork, are found on Blackboard Assignments. All essays are due by 5 minutes after class begins on the assigned due date. Students must use MLA citation style for all sources.
- *Group Work:* The class will be divided into study groups. Each group will present a report on the week’s assigned reading once during the semester. All groups will present during the last class meeting of the semester. Topics and criteria are given on Blackboard Assignments.

#### **Evaluation and Grade Computation**

Class attendance and participation, 20%

Postings on the course Discussion Board, 30%

Three essays, 30%

Group presentations, 20%.

Essays are assigned numerical grades according to the Grading Rubric (See Blackboard, Course Documents folder). Postings and other graded assignments are assigned letter grades. All grades are entered in Blackboard’s Grade Center. The semester grade will be determined by summing and weighing as done in the Grade Center, and the assigned letter grade will be that designated by the Grade Center as corresponding to the overall numerical score.

### Course Requirements

- *Attendance:* Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to participate in all assigned activities. Class participation grades are predicated on attendance at all class meetings. Students not posting or posting late Discussion Board assignments will be charged with one class absence for each such incident. In keeping with BALS policy, students with two or more absences, excused or unexcused, may receive a failing grade for the course. Late arrivals and/or early departures of more than seven minutes count as ½ of an absence. Excused absences will be given *only* in rare circumstances and *only* if student and instructor discuss and arrange the absence **in advance**.
- *Late Work:* Discussion Board Postings will receive the grade of “zero” if they are posted after the due dates. Students not posting are marked “absent” for that week. Please turn in essays electronically at Dr. Bradford’s email address given at the top of the syllabus. Emails to other addresses will not be acknowledged or accepted. Essays must arrive in the incoming email box at or before 4:55 pm on the assigned due date. A late essay arriving after 5:00 pm on the due date is lowered one letter grade. Any essay received more than 48 hours late is lowered two full grades. Essays received one week late automatically receive an F. **You must, however, complete all assigned work in order to receive a grade for the course as a whole.**
- *Excused Late:* Essays and Postings will be excused late *only* in rare circumstances and *only* if student and instructor discuss and arrange the absence **in advance**.
- *Incomplete Grades:* Extension of time to finish coursework will be granted only in unusual and clear documented situations. Extensions must be mutually agreed upon between student and instructor no later than the last class meeting. Then all such agreements must be approved by the Associate Dean. In no case will the extension exceed three additional weeks. Work not received by the Incomplete deadline will result in a change of the semester grade to “F.”

### Course Format: Importance of Blackboard Site

This is a **hybrid** course, which means that some class assignments are online rather than in the classroom. This includes some weeks of individual work and discussion board postings, and two class online sessions when we all meet together. The course Blackboard site will be the location of these online assignments and activities and access of designated websites and other online materials. Details of written assignments will also be posted here.

### Weekly Course Schedule

(Reader = *The Italian Renaissance Reader*; Sayre = *The Humanities: Culture, Continuity, Change*)

September 6 Introduction to Humanism and Renaissance Art AB & NM  
Medieval Background: Giotto, the Limbourg Brothers, and the Visual Arts  
Reader, Introduction (ix-xviii). Medieval Backgrounds quiz assigned.

September 13 **Individual online work:** The Florentine Renaissance NM  
Sayre, 460-493  
See Bb Discussion Board for Posting assignment.  
Medieval Backgrounds quiz via email.

September 20 Renaissance Art: Florence: Massaccio, Piero della Francesca, Botticelli NM

*Group presentation: Florentine art*

- September 27 **Online Class Meeting:** Medieval Backgrounds: Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio AB  
Reader: Petrarch, 14-21, and Canzoniere Nos. 1, 3, 16, 23, 90, 134, 189, 298;  
Boccaccio, 60-61, and Preface, Introduction, 1<sup>st</sup> day 1<sup>st</sup> story; 1<sup>st</sup> day 4<sup>th</sup> story;  
3<sup>rd</sup> day 9<sup>th</sup> story; 6<sup>th</sup> day 7<sup>th</sup> story.
- October 4 **Individual online work:** Renaissance Humanism: Pico Della Mirandola AB  
Reader: Pico, 178-184.  
See Bb Discussion Board for Posting assignment; Short essay #1 assigned.
- October 11 Renaissance Humanism: Pico and Machiavelli AB  
*Group presentation: Pico;* Reader: Machiavelli, 258-297.
- October 18 **Individual online work:** Art: Rome/Venice and Mannerism NM  
Sayre, 494-533, 651-673; Short essay #2 assigned.  
See Bb Discussion Board for Posting assignment; Essay #1 due via email.
- October 25 Renaissance Art: Rome/Venice and Mannerism NM  
*Group presentation: Rome/Venice;* *Group presentation: Mannerism.*
- October 29 **Museum Visit:** Italian Renaissance Art NM  
Meet in the rotunda of the National Gallery of Art, 10:05 a.m.
- November 1 **Individual online work:** Humanism: Alberti, More, Elizabethan England AB  
Reader, Alberti, 164-177; Sayre 622-649  
See Bb Discussion Board for Posting assignment; Essay #2 due via email.
- November 8 **Online class meeting:** Humanism: More, Erasmus, Elizabethans AB  
Erasmus material posted on Blackboard;
- November 15 **Individual online work:** Renaissance Art: Durer and the North NM  
Sayre, 534-559, 570-587.  
See Bb Discussion Board for Posting assignment; Essay #3 assigned.
- November 19 **Museum Visit:** Northern Renaissance Art and Renaissance influences NM  
Meet in the rotunda of the National Gallery of Art, 10:05 a.m.
- November 22 Renaissance Art: Durer and the North NM  
*Group presentation on Northern Renaissance Art.*
- November 29 Renaissance Humanism: High Renaissance and Mannerism AB  
Sayre, 520-524; 532-533; 558-559; 564-587; 651-673; Renaissance Reader,  
205-226, 347-354: Castiglione, Cellini, Woman humanists, Rabelais,  
Montaigne, Cervantes, John of the Cross; Essay #3 due.

December 6 Reflection and synthesis: Group Presentations AB & NM

Dec. 12 (Mon.) **Individual online work:** Reflection and synthesis AB & NM  
See Bb Discussion Board for Posting assignment.

### **Required Textbooks**

Sayre, Henry M. *The Humanities: Culture, Continuity & Change*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Book 3: The Renaissance and the Age of Encounter. Prentice-Hall, 2012. ISBN: 978-0205013340

Bondanella, Julia Conway, and Mark Musa. *The Italian Renaissance Reader*. Plume. ISBN: 978-0452010130.

### **UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

#### **Disabilities**

If you are a student with a documented disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 or [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu). Accommodations will not be applied retroactively.

#### **Turnitin.com**

Students acknowledge that by taking this course all required papers can be submitted for a Textual Similarity Review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

#### **Extreme weather, Emergencies, and Instructional Continuity**

During inclement weather or other emergencies on a day when we are scheduled to meet face-to-face, check the university's Web site or call (202) 687-7669 for information on whether the university is open. If the university is open, this class will meet. If the university is closed, this class will meet through distance means such as online videoconferencing; check your e-mail for a message from me on how we will proceed in that situation. Due dates for written assignments submitted through Blackboard will not be changed due to campus closings.

The university recently has acquired the capability to send text messages and recorded messages about emergencies to cell phones and other mobile devices. Sign up on MyAccess.

#### **Georgetown Honor System**

All students are expected to follow Georgetown's honor code unconditionally. We assume you have read the honor code material located at <http://scs.georgetown.edu/academic-affairs/honor-code>, and in particular have read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, What is Plagiarism, Sanctioning Guidelines, and Expedited Sanctioning Process. Papers in this course will all be submitted to turnitin.com for checking.

Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge:

*In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.*

#### **Plagiarism**

In accord with university policy, all incidents of suspected plagiarism or other Honor Code violations will be reported to the Honor Council without fail.

If the Honor Council finds that a student has plagiarized or has violated the Honor Code in any other way, the student will receive a grade of F for the course.

#### **Policy Accommodating Students' Religious Observances**

The following is university policy:

Georgetown University promotes respect for all religions. Any student who is unable to attend classes or to participate in any examination, presentation, or assignment on a given day because of the

observance of a major religious holiday or related travel shall be excused and provided with the opportunity to make up, without unreasonable burden, any work that has been missed for this reason and shall not in any other way be penalized for the absence or rescheduled work. Students will remain responsible for all assigned work. Students should notify professors in writing at the beginning of the semester of religious observances that conflict with their classes.