BLHS 106: The Renaissance  
Renaissance Humanism and Renaissance Art

Professors
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Schedule
Tuesdays 5:20-8:25. 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 10 and November 21, 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 polices 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 500-word critical analyses based on a selection of topics. They must also reply to two postings by other class members. Postings will receive an “F” grade if they are less than 500 words long. Replies must be 200 words.
- *Essays:* Three 750-word essays requiring critical analysis are assigned. Topics are based on interpretation of assigned reading and artwork. All essays are due by 5:25 p.m. 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.

**Evaluation**

Class attendance and participation. 20%
Postings on the course Discussion Board. 30%
Three short essays. 30%
Group presentations. 20%

**Grade Computation**

All assignments will be graded using letter grades. The letter course grade will be determined by entering each letter grade into Blackboard’s Grade Center and using it to calculate a percentage for each grade and for a weighted average percentage. That percentage will then be converted back to a letter course grade according to the following ranges:

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<thead>
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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>92.499 to 90.0</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>89.999 to 87.5</td>
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<td>87.499 to 82.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>82.499 to 80.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>79.999 to 77.5</td>
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<td>67.499 to 60.0</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>59.999 to 0.0</td>
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Course Requirements

- **Attendance:** Students are expected to **attend all class meetings and to participate in all assigned activities.** Students not posting or posting late Discussion Board assignments will be charged with one class absence for each such incident. Any student who misses more than two class sessions for any reason, classroom or online/Discussion Board, may receive an "F" grade for the semester. Late arrivals and/or early departures of more than five minutes count as ½ of an absence. Excused absences will be given only in rare circumstances and only if reported and approved in advance.

- **Late Work:** Essay assignments submitted after 5:25 p.m. on the due date will lose one whole letter grade for each 24 hours of lateness or portion thereof. Discussion Board Postings will receive the grade of "zero" if they are posted after the due dates.

- **Excused Late:** Essays and Postings will be excused late only in rare circumstances and only if approved prior to the deadline.

- **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."

- **All work must be done to pass the course.**

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*)

Sept. 8  
Introduction to Humanism and Renaissance Art  AB & NM
Medieval Background: Giotto, the Limbourg Brothers, and the Visual Arts Reader, Introduction (ix-xviii).

Sept. 15  
**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, 1st day 1st story; 1st day 4th story; 3rd day 9th story; 6th day 7th story. Medieval Backgrounds quiz via email. Short essay #1 assigned.

Sept. 22  
**Individual online work:** Renaissance Humanism: Pico Della Mirandola  AB Reader: Pico, 178-184.  
See Bb Discussion Board for Posting assignment.

Sept. 29  
Renaissance Humanism: Pico and Machiavelli  AB  
**Group presentation on Pico**
Reader: Machiavelli, 258-297 Short essay #1 due.
Oct. 6  \textbf{Individual online work}: The Florentine Renaissance \ NM Sayre, 460-493  
See Bb Discussion Board for Posting assignment.

Oct. 10 \textbf{Museum Visit}: Italian Renaissance Art \ NM  
Meet in the rotunda of the National Gallery of Art, 10:05 a.m.

Oct. 13 \textbf{Rennaissance Art}: Florence: Massaccio, Piero della Francesca, Botticelli \ NM  
\textit{Group presentation on Florentine art}

Oct. 20  \textbf{Individual online work}: Humanism: Alberti, More, Elizabethan England \ AB  
Reader, Alberti, 164-177; Sayre 622-649  
See Bb Discussion Board for Posting assignment.

Oct. 27  \textbf{Online class meeting}: Humanism: More, Erasmus, Elizabethans \ AB  
Erasmus material posted on Blackboard.  
Short essay #2 assigned

Nov. 3  \textbf{Individual online work}: Art: Rome/Venice and Mannerism \ NM  
Sayre, 494-533, 651-673  
See Bb Discussion Board for Posting assignment.  
Short essay #2 due via email.

Nov. 10 \textbf{Renaissance Art}: Rome/Venice and Mannerism \ NM  
\textit{Group presentation on Rome/Venice or Mannerism}  
Short essay #3 assigned.

Nov. 17  \textbf{Individual online work}: Renaissance Art: Durer and the North \ AB  
Sayre, 534-559, 570-587.  
See Bb Discussion Board for Posting assignment.

Nov. 21 \textbf{Museum Visit}: Northern Renaissance Art and Renaissance influences \ NM  
Meet in the rotunda of the National Gallery of Art, 10:05 a.m.

Nov. 24 \textbf{Renaissance Art}: Durer and the North \ AB  
\textit{Group presentation on Northern Renaissance Art}  
Short essay #3 due.

Dec. 1  \textbf{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.

Dec. 8 \textbf{Reflection and synthesis}: Group Presentations \ AB & NM

Dec. 14 \textbf{Individual online work}: Reflection and synthesis \ AB & NM  
See Bb Discussion Board for Posting assignment.
Required Textbooks

UNIVERSITY POLICIES
*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 on Blackboard Collaborate; 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.

*The Honor Pledge*
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.

*Religious Observance*
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.

*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. Students must present documentation to receive accommodation in the course. Accommodation will not be applied retroactively.