

GONZAGA-IN-FLORENCE
Summer 2009

PHIL 472 / VART466: PHILOSOPHY OF ART
Professor Francesco Vossilla PhD

COURSE DESCRIPTION

To introduce Gonzaga- in- Florence students to Renaissance Philosophy of Art this short course focuses on Michelangelo Buonarroti. To this end, special study will be made of how specific moral, social, religious and philosophical tendencies can be read from Michelangelo's art.

To appreciate Buonarroti's great achievements in sculpture, painting and architecture students will be exposed to the thought of philosophers and artists who shaped the development of European Humanism and influenced Michelangelo: from Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus to Donatello, Alberti, Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola.

The course is composed of twenty-four lessons. The **mid-term** examination will regard Michelangelo's art and the art theories of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus, and the **final** will regard Michelangelo's art as well as his theories. A detailed list of images, topics and reading assignments will be handed weekly.

Course requirements

- 1) Attendance at scheduled classes.
- 2) Careful reading of the assigned pages prior to class sessions
- 3) Students are expected to participate in class discussions
- 4) A 2 to 3 pages short essay expressing your feelings about the Role of Art and Beauty in Contemporary Life due on Tuesday, June 19th.
- 5) A 5 to 8 Pages **Final Project** due on Monday, June 23rd. Each paper, or project, should involve an interface between the philosophy of the Italian Renaissance, Michelangelo's own theories and his works of sculpture, painting or architecture.

Possible choices

- A) A visit to Piazza della Signoria and the Accademia. The student will research the history of Michelangelo's *David* as well as its political meaning. Reproductions of the art works explained and ticket stub must be included.
- B) A visit to the Accademia, analyzing Michelangelo's *Slaves*. Student should research their history, subject, as well as Michelangelo's sculpture theories. The ticket stub and reproductions must be included.
- C) Michelangelo's New Sacresty. Student will research and write on the sculptures and the architecture of S. Lorenzo Sacrestia Nuova. Reproductions of the art works explained and ticket stub must be included.

First week

Presentation of the Syllabus. Forming influences behind Michelangelo's art: an introduction
Plato's philosophy of art (1)
Plato's philosophy of art (2). Reading assignment: Plato, from *Republic (II, X) and Symposium* in **Philosophies of Art and Beauty**, pp. 8-14, 30-34, 75-77.
Aristotle's philosophy of art (1)

Second week

Aristotle's philosophy of art (2). Reading assignment: Aristotle, from *Nicomachean Ethics, Rethoric, Metaphysics, Poetics*, in **Philosophy of Art and Beauty**, pp. 93-94, 96, 99-101, 109-112
Plotinus's and Ficino's philosophy of art
The ordeal of sculpture
Design, unifier of all arts. Reading assignment: Marsilio Ficino, from *De Amore*, in **Philosophies of Art and Beauty**, pp.207-210

Third Weeks

Michelangelo's early works. Forming artistic influences behind Michelangelo's early works
The *Bacchus* The *Pietà*. Pico della Mirandola. Reading assignment: Pico della Mirandola *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, in **Philosophy of Art Reader**, p.125

Girolamo Savonarola and the visual arts. Reading assignment: Savonarola, *Sermons*, in **Philosophy of Art Reader**, pp.149-150; P.Kristeller, *Ficino's Historical Position* and *The Platonic Academy of Florence*, in **Philosophy of Art Reader**, pp.62-76;

Fourth Week

Michelangelo's *David* (1).

Michelangelo's *David* (2)

Michelangelo in Rome

Mid-term examination.

Fifth Week

Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel (1)

Michelangelo's New Sacristy

Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel (2). Bandinelli's Hercules

Class discussion on the Social Role of Art and Beauty for You. Reading assignment: Michelangelo, *Selected Poems*, in **Philosophy of Art Reader**, pp.194-202

Sixth Week

Michelangelo's theories. Moral nature and function of Art.

Beauty and realism. Michelangelo, Leonardo.

Michelangelo's faith and mysticism.

Final examination.

Readings:

Hartt F., and Wilkins D G. *History of Italian Renaissance Art*. Fifth Edition, , New York 2003

Hartt F., *Michelangelo. The complete sculpture*, New York 1976.

H. Hibbard, *Michelangelo*, New York 1974

Hersey G.L., *High Renaissance art in St. Peter's an the Vatican*, Chicago 1993, pp. 177-224, 249-276

Holligworth W., *Patronage in sixteenth century Italy*, London 1996, pp. 7-64

Wallace William E., *Michelangelo Selected Scholarship in English*, New York 1995, I, pp. 1-6, 81-121, 201-215, 278-290, 291-309.

Robb Nesca A. *Neoplatonism of the Italian Renaissance*, New York 1968, pp. 212-238, 239-270

Kristeller P. O., *Ficino's Historical Position*, in *Philosophy of Art Reader I*, pp.62-71

Kristeller P. O., *The Platonic Academy of Florence*, in *Philosophy of Art Reader I*, pp. 72-76

Blunt Anthony, *The Social Position of the Artist*, in I, pp.188-193

Michelangelo, *Selected Poems*, in *Philosophy of Art Reader I*, pp.194-202

Selected readings from Plato, Plotinus, Marsilio Ficino, Savonarola (in *Philosophy of Art and Beauty*, pp. 8-12, 30-34, 75-77, 93-101, 109-112, 207-210; and *Philosophy of Art Reader*, pp.62-76, 125, 149-150, 194-202)