

GONZAGA-IN-FLORENCE SYLLABUS

Course: VART 360: Museum Studies
Credits: 3 Credits
Instructor: F. Vosilla



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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The most important functions of museums are preservation, education, and contributing to the creation of the social fabric of their communities. Therefore museums are the treasure-houses of the human race. European museums, especially those in Florence, preserve artifacts that embody a large part of the cultural heritage of the Western World. The cultural strength of Florence is also the foundation of its economic present and future, because museums play a major role in cultural tourism, attracting significant numbers of visitors from other countries.

This class strives to acquaint students of art, science, business and communication with the ethical issues and opportunities faced by both American and Italian museums in contemporary society. It will be our goal to learn about Museum Studies and to investigate the history of Florentine museums. First we will examine the value and the function of such institutions mainly addressing the social role that museums play in inspiring their visitors to learn about any city and any culture.

Then the class will study the history of Florentine museum as outstanding examples of Western culture from the Renaissance to the 20th century, also visiting many local churches and museums. This historical background is the beginning step of Museum Studies, because the historical notion is ensuring museums a peculiar role in the regeneration of local cultures. Researching the history of those collections treasured in a given museum also serves to identify and to represent identity and continuity for the cultural heritage of any modern society at times of grand global changes.

On a theoretical level students situate museums socially, historically and economically, acquiring conceptual tools necessary to explore the manner in which museums interpret their collections, serve their audiences, respond to new technologies, and come to grips with complex ethical issues including the cultural implications of the work they do and the extent of its impact from any local community (here Florence) to the global market.

A detailed list of images, topics and reading assignments will be handed weekly.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

All students, whether enrolled for credit or audit, are expected to submit **two essays**.

For the first one, students will write about the history of a Florentine Museum, also describing how artefacts are presented to inform, educate and inspire the visitors. As a matter of fact the success of such institutions requires the combined skills of a variety of museum professionals and the participation and contribution of the audiences and communities being served by museums. Possible choices: **Palazzo Vecchio, Opera del Duomo, Uffizi, Museo Stibbert, Bargello, Museo di San Marco, Accademia, Museo Archeologico, Museo della Specola, Museo degli Argenti**

The second essays/ project could be labeled *Florence the city as a museum*. A fundamental aspect of Florence is the peculiar relationship between landmarks (such as the large statues or the architectures in Piazza della Signoria), Italian history and local economy.

Choose 2 items from around Florence (building, fountain, bridge, statue, a square, whatever strikes you) that represent to you the Gonzaga-in-Florence experience. Take pictures, print or develop them, and write a short text for any image as if the photos and your writing were going to be a part of an exhibit on Florence as a museum-city. Mount the photos on paper with the printed comments beneath the photo. The text for each of the comments should be no less than 90 words. Write 2 pages as an introduction for your own selection.

SCHEDULE

First week

Thursday Presentation of the Syllabus. What is a Museum?

Second week

Monday Types of Museums and the role of Museums.
Tuesday Museum Studies and history of Collections. Collections in the Ancient World.
Thursday **Visit to piazza della Signoria.**
Reading assignment: *A Museum: What is it?* (from *Museums: In Search of a Useable Future*) and *The Term Museum and Some Other Terms of Similar Meaning* (from *Museums: In Search of a Useable Future*), in **Museum Studies Reading Packet**, pp. 1-2; 221-225

Third week

Monday Collections in the Middle Ages.
Tuesday Petrarca, history and the visual arts. The Studiolo
Thursday Humanism and Niccolò Niccoli's collection. Reading assignment: J. VON SCHLOSSER, *Die Kunst und Wunderkammern der Spatrenaissance*, Leipzig 1908, (any english edition)

Fourth week

Monday Cosimo il Vecchio and Piero de' Medici.
Tuesday Lorenzo de' Medici patron of the arts.
Thursday **A visit to Palazzo Medici.**

Fifth week

Monday Collections in Venice and Rome *Disegno* unifier of all arts. The birth of modern art history . Moral nature and function of art and history from Savonarola to Vasari. de' Medici
Tuesday Cosimo I. The first studiolo in Palazzo Vecchio.
Thursday **A visit to Palazzo Vecchio.** Reading assignment: A. Blunt, *The social position of the Artist*, from *Artistic Theory in Italy*, Oxford 1940, pp. 48-57 in **Renaissance Philosophy of Art Reader**, pp.188-193.

Sixth Week

Monday The Guardaroba
Tuesday Francesco de' Medici
Thursday Florence: the city as a museum. **A visit to Piazza SS. Annunziata.** Reading assignment: D. HEIKAMP, *Mexico and the Medici*, Firenze 1972, pp. 7-33

Seventh Week

Monday The Uffizi
Tuesday review for mid-term
Thursday **Mid-Term Examination**

Eighth Week

Tuesday *Gallerie*, palaces, churches
Thursday A. Kircher and the museum for the Collegio Romano

Ninth Week

Monday The Grand Tour (1) Florence from the Medici to the Asburgo Lorena
Tuesday Pietro Leopoldo, the new Uffizi
Thursday **.Visit to the Uffizi.** Reading assignment: F. HASKELL, *Patrons and Painters, Arts and Society in Baroque Italy*, London 1980, pp. 178-179, 192-198.

Tenth Week

Monday The Zoological Museum. La Specola
 Tuesday Vivant Denon, the Louvre, Napoleonic Florence. The Accademia Galleries in Italy: Florence, Brera, Venice
 Thursday **Museo Nazionale del Bargello: a visit.** Reading assignment: *Dominique Vivant Denon and the Louvre...*, in **Museum Studies Reading Packet**, pp. 81-110.

Eleventh Week

Monday Famous foreigners in Florence. Frederick Stibbert: the man, the collection.
 Tuesday Florentine antiquarians and museums
 Tuesday Herbert Percy Horne's ideal Florence.

Twelfth Week

Monday The city, tourism, museums.
 Tuesday **Visit to Santa Maria del Fiore, a church as a museum.**
 Thursday American Museums and Italian Museums: a brief comparison. Reading assignment: G. Kulik, *Designing the Past: History-Museum Exhibitions from Peale to Present*, in **Museum Studies Reading Packet**, pp. 3-37.

Thirteenth Week

Monday The city, tourism, museums (2). Reading assignment: M. WALLACE, *Visiting the Past: History Museums in the United States* (from *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public* in **Museum Studies Reading Packet**, pp.133-160)
 Thursday **Class discussion on Your Experience in Florence .**

Fourteenth Week

Thursday **Final examination**

REQUIRED READINGS

(to integrate with recent English publications concerning the history of Florentine Museums)

J. VON SCHLOSSER, *Die Kunst und Wunderkammern der Spatrenaissance*, Leipzig 1908, (any English edition)
 BLUNT, *The social position of the Artist*, in *Artistic Theory in Italy*, Oxford 1940, in pp. 48-57 (in **Renaissance Philosophy of Art Reader.**, pp.188-193)
 D. HEIKAMP, *Mexico and the Medici*, Firenze 1972
 F. HASKELL, *Patrons and Painters. Arts and Society in Baroque Italy*, London 1980
Dominique Vivant Denon and the Louvre..., from *Museum Masters...* in **Museum Studies Reading Packet**, pp. 81-110.
A Museum: What is it? , from *Museums: In Search of a Useable Future*, in **Museum Studies Reading Pack**, pp. 1-2
The Term Museum and Some Other Terms of Similar Meaning, from *Museums: In Search of a Useable Future*, in **Museum Studies Reading Packet** pp.221-22
Types of Museums and The Role of Museums, from *Museum Basics*, in **Museum Studies Reading Packet**, pp.6-11
 M. Wallace, *Visiting the Past: History Museums in the United States* (from *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public* in **Museum Studies Reading Packet**, pp.133-160
 G. Kulik, *Designing the Past: History-Museum Exhibitions from Peale to Present*, from **Museum Studies Reading Packet**, pp. 3-37 .