PHIL 472\ Art 466: RENAISSANCE PHILOSOPHY OF ART  
Fall 2016  
Prof. Francesco Vossilla PhD

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Fall Semester 2016 seminar on Renaissance Philosophy of Art will introduce Gonzaga-in- Florence students to the interdependence of philosophy and art in the Italian Renaissance and will focus mainly on Michelangelo Buonarroti. To appreciate Michelangelo’s great achievements in sculpture, painting, and architecture students will be exposed to the thought of philosophers and artists who shaped the development of Florentine Humanism and influenced Michelangelo: from Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus to Dante, Brunelleschi, Ghiberti, Donatello, Alberti, Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola.

To assist students in achieving a rigorous interrogation of the meaning and value of beauty and art in Renaissance Italy we will fully approach Buonarroti’s art theories. To this end, special study will be made of how specific moral, social, religious and philosophical tendencies can be read from Michelangelo’s art as well as of his contemporaries.

A list of reading assignments will be handed weekly. A detailed list of images will be handed at the beginning of the semester.

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. Final examinations must be administered only during the week indicated in the GIF Academic Calendar (Dec 12-16), and only on the day and at the time indicated in the Final Exam Schedule, which will be published by the Registrar’s Office.

There is to be no eating during class. Cell phones must be switched off during class. Laptop computers may not be used during class to take notes.

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 3 to 5 pages short essay expressing your feelings about the Role of Art and Beauty in Contemporary Life.
5) A 6 to 9 Pages **Final Project**. 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.

**All academic work must be completed on time. No work will be accepted late or after the programs ends.** On the delivery date hard copies typed in standard format are to be handed in to the professor at the end of class.

Standard format: Title, Times New Roman 12, 2 line spacing, Notes and Bibliography.

*Essays submitted late will receive a grade penalty as follows: 1 day—1 letter grade (e.g., A- to B-), 2 days—2 letter grades (e.g., A- to C-), more than 2 days—grade of 0 / F on the assignment.*

*A plagiated assignment/paper, research project, etc will be graded 0 (zero) and sent to the Main Campus accompanied by a report.*

**Grading System**

Research papers 30%
Midterm Exam 20%
Final Exam 40%
Attendance and Participation 10%

**Week 1** (Sept. 13, 15)

Presentation of the Syllabus. Forming influences behind Michelangelo’s art and theories: an introduction

Plato’s philosophy of art (1)

Reading assignment: Plato, from *Republic* (*II, X*) in *Philosophies of Art and Beauty*, pp. 8-14, 30-34; from *Ion and Symposium* in *Philosophies of Art and Beauty*, pp. 53-57, 75-77
Week 2 (Sept. 19, 20, 22)

Plato’s philosophy of art (2). Plato and Aristotle
Aristotle’s philosophy of art (1)
Aristotle’s philosophy of art (2).

Week 3 (Sept. 26, 27, 29)

The ordeal of sculpture
Design, unifier of all arts.
Reading assignment: Plotinus, from Th e Enneads, in Philosophies of Art and Beauty, pp.143-154; Paul Kristeller, The Platonic Academy of Florence, in Philosophy of Art Reader I, pp. 72-76

Week 4(Oct. 3, 4, 6)

Plotinus’s philosophy of art
Plotinus’s philosophy of art (2).
Marsilio Ficino’s philosophy of art.
Reading assignment: Marsilio Ficino, from De Amore, in Philosophies of Art and Beauty, pp.207-210. Paul Kristeller, Ficino’s Historical Position in Renaissance Philosophy of Art Reader, pp.62-71

Week 5 (Oct. 10, 11, 13)

Michelangelo’s early works (1)
Michelangelo’s early works (2)
Girolamo Savonarola and the visual arts.
Reading assignment: Savonarola, Sermons, in Renaissance Philosophy of Art Reader, pp.149-150

Week 6(Oct. 17, 18, 20)

Forming influences behind Michelangelo’s early works. Dante. Alberti.
The Bacchus. The body of a god
The Pietà. The body of God
Class discussion on the Social Role of Art and Beauty for You
Mid-term examination (Oct. 25).
Pico della Mirandola’s philosophy
  Reading assignment: Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, in *Renaissance Philosophy of Art Reader*, pp.120-140

Michelangelo’s *David* (1)
Michelangelo’s *David* (2).

Michelangelo’s *Slaves* and Neo-Platonism
Baccio Bandinelli and Michelangelo

The New Sacristy
Michelangelo’s frescoes in the Sistine Chapel

Michelangelo’s faith and mysticism. The Catholic Reformation
Baccio Bandinelli and Michelangelo. The Florence civil war and the Hercules.
Week 12 (Dec. 5, 6.)

Michelangelo’s theories and the development of architecture and sculpture in the 16th Century. Beauty and realism. Moral nature and function of art

Class discussion on the Social Role of Art and Beauty for You

Reading assignment: Michelangelo, Selected Poems, in Renaissance Philosophy of Art Reader, pp.194-202

Week 13 (Dec.12-16)

Final exams.

Readings:
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
Michelangelo, Selected Poems, in Philosophy of Art Reader I, pp.194-202
H. Hibbard, Michelangelo, New York 1974
Hersey, G.L., High Renaissance art in St. Peter’s and the Vatican, Chicago 1993, pp. 177-224, 249-276
W. Holligworth, Patronage in sixteenth century Italy, London 1996, pp. 7-64

Selected readings
from Plato, Plotinus, Marsilio Ficino, Savonarola (in Philosophies of Art and Beauty and Philosophy of Art Reader)