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 identified in 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 Brunelleschi, Ghiberti, Donatello, Alberti, Marsilio Ficino, and Pico della Mirandola.

The mid-term examination will regard Michelangelo’s art, and the art theories of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus. The final will regard Michelangelo’s art as well as his theories.

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Learning Outcomes:

At the completion of the course, students will be able to

A) Discriminate how art and beauty are recurrent concerns of Western philosophy since our philosophers and artists (Ancient as well as Christians, Classical or Modern) have monitored artistic creativity for their exploration of the human situation and reality

B) Identify and compare different historical approaches to art and beauty in due order and succession (from Ancient Greece to Michelangelo’s Renaissance Florence)

C) Analyze the interdependence of philosophy and art as historically useful to the development of the human person.

D) Evaluate in which manner the interdependence of philosophy and art concerns values like rationality and creative freedom, and emphasizes both the creative opportunities as well as the limitations of the human beings.

E) Understand the specific moral, social, religious and philosophical tendencies that can be read in Florentine art, and how those tendencies constituted a rebirth of classical ideas of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus, as this appears clear in philosophers like Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, poets like Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio, artists like Alberti, Leonardo, and Michelangelo.

F) Become aware of a possible integration between Western aesthetics with the origin and principles of Jesuit culture and education.

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Course requirements:

1) Attendance at scheduled classes.
2) Careful reading of the assigned pages prior to class sessions, and thorough review of class notes.
3) Because the course will be conducted in an interdisciplinary seminar style, students are expected to participate imaginatively and effectively in every discussion. The professors will distribute in advance of some seminar sessions a set of questions, that will serve to focus the reading and guide the discussions. Students are expected to prepare responses to these questions prior to the pertinent class session.

4) A 3 to 5 pages short essay expressing your feelings about the Role of Art and Beauty in Contemporary Life.

5) A 5 to 8 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 plagiarized assignment/paper, research project, etc will be graded 0 (zero) and sent to the Main Campus accompanied by a report.

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

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

A list of reading assignments will be handed weekly.

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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

**First week (May 22^{th} - 25^{th}.)**

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, Ion and Symposium* in *Philosophies of Art and Beauty*, pp. 8-14, 30-34, 53-57, 75-77.
Aristotle’s philosophy of art (1)

**Second week (May 29^{th} - June 1^{st}.)**

Plotinus’s and Ficino’s philosophy of art
The ordeal of sculpture
Design, unifier of all arts. Reading assignment: Plotinus, from *The Enneads*, in *Philosophies of Art and Beauty*, pp.143-154; Marsilio Ficino, from *De Amore*, in *Philosophies of Art and Beauty*, pp.207-210

**Third Week (June 5^{th} - 8^{th})**

Michelangelo’s early works. Forming artistic influences behind Michelangelo’s early works
The *Baccus* The *Pietà*. Pico della Mirandola.
**Mid-term examination June 3rd**

**Fourth Week (June 12^{th} - 15^{th})**

Michelangelo’s *David*. Art and politics in Renaissance Italy
Michelangelo’s *David in piazza della Signoria*
Michelangelo’s frescoes in the Sistine Chapel. Religious art of the Renaissance.
Fifth Week (June 19th – 22nd.)

Michelangelo's New Sacristy. Life and Death, Faith and Sin according to Michelangelo
Bandinelli's Hercules. The myth of Rome.
Class discussion on the Social Role of Art and Beauty for You. Reading assignment: Michelangelo's Poems, in Philosophy of Art Reader, pp.194-202

Sixth Week (June 26th. -29th)


June 30th Final examination.

Readings:
from Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Marsilio Ficino, Savonarola ( in Philosophy of Art and Beauty, pp. 8-12, 30-34, 53-57, 75-77, 93-101, 109-112, 143-154, 207-210; and Philosophy of Art Reader, pp.62-76, 125, 149-150, 194-202)

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

H. Hibbard, Michelangelo, New York 1974
Kristeller P. O., Ficino's Historical Position, in Philosophy of Art Reader , pp.62-71
Kristeller P. O., The Platonic Academy of Florence, in Philosophy of Art Reader , pp. 72-76
Blunt Anthony, The Social Position of the Artist, in Philosophy of Art Reader, pp.188-193