Social History of Art

Above: Jan Bruegel the Elder and Hieronymous Francken II, The Archdukes Albert and Isabella Visiting a Collector’s Cabinet (1621-23), today in the collection of the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland. This seventeenth-century oil painting is a celebration of the visual arts and visual culture, depicting wealthy and privileged connoisseurs – including the archdukes of the title – appreciating beautiful and meaningful things: paintings, sculptures, antiquities, musical and scientific instruments, exotic shells, rare flowers, and even living animals. The painting is also a deliberate refutation of iconoclasm (the conscious destruction of art objects) and a philosophical statement asserting the importance of seeing (and touching) art and other objects as a legitimate path to understanding. For more information about this painting and its meanings, visit the Walters Museum website: https://art.thewalters.org/detail/14623/the-archdukes-albert-and-isabella-visiting-a-collectors-cabinet/

Best contact: email tfarnold@bsu.edu at any time with any questions or concerns.

“Office hours” will be held virtually by appointment – just email to set up a Zoom or similar session. Available times will include, but are not limited to: MWF 8:00-9:30 and TR 10:00-12:00 + 2:00-3:00. Significant time during scheduled in-person class meetings will be available to go over and clarify general questions about readings, assignment instructions, evaluation criteria and policies, etc.
Using Canvas:

The course Canvas site is the essential organizing hub for this class, including announcements and other instructions. Threaded discussions will be hosted on the class Canvas site, and daily course class session outlines and readings will be found on that site as well. For all these reasons, students should regularly and routinely check the course Canvas site, especially on the day of every scheduled class session.

Course goals include:

• Exploring the forms and meanings of "art" in human societies of very different times and places.

• Understanding the persistence and power of art in human society, including how historical images and artistic meanings help shape our perceptions and behavior today.

• Recognizing some of the most important and influential patterns of artistic expression in human history.

• Identifying some of the most significant art objects in history, and explaining the connections between objects of different times and places (or explaining a lack of connection between representative objects).

• Becoming familiar with the basic concepts and vocabulary of art history and artistic production.

• Learning how to better see the world, and understanding what is seen.

• Creating art to respond to the objects and ideas under study.

Class policies:

Attendance will be taken for all in-person sessions according to the policies explained in the student handbook. Please promptly contact the instructor with any questions regarding the application of those policies.

Students are free to use a laptop, tablet, or phone for class purposes at any time. Class session outlines, art object images, discussion readings and other materials will be online or distributed as a pdf document. Students may read or view these on a device, or print them out as hard copies, as they see fit. In any case, students are expected to be able to refer to any image or text under discussion.

Students are encouraged to take notes on all readings, and during any class sessions, as they see fit. Students are not expected to have mastered any reading or other material before the class session in which that image or text is first encountered or discussed. However, if students find that they do not understand the basic ideas and examples presented by a text or image, even after in-class conversation, then they have a responsibility to further work on that material – with their fellow students as well as with the instructor – to be able to contribute to the online threaded discussion.

A generous time allowance will be provided for all online threaded discussions. If you need extra time, please ask. Reasonable accommodations will be provided should circumstances warrant. In the case of missing threaded discussion posts, a grade of 0% may be entered if a required discussion post is not made within seven days, and no accommodation or extension has been granted. In the case of other missed assignments, a grade of 0% may be entered if no assignment is received by the given due date, and no extension has been granted. Any 0% grade may be replaced upon submission of work, with an appropriate grade penalty for lateness, and after discussion with the instructor to determine acceptance and any appropriate penalty.

Grades will be posted to PowerSchool following a reasonable time for evaluation. Discussion grades will normally be posted within a few days of the last class session or final online discussion thread pertaining to a given topic or week. Other assignments will normally be evaluated and the grades posted within a week of submission. Students
will be informed in circumstances of delay. Students should regularly and routinely check their grades on PowerSchool, share those grades with parents or guardians, and promptly contact the instructor with any questions or concerns.

Academic dishonesty and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Please review the student handbook for a full discussion of the relevant policies.

There may be provision for extra credit or additional or replacement assignments. Such opportunities, if any, will be announced during the semester.

If circumstances warrant, alternate assignments, extended due dates, and other exceptions to stated policies can be arranged on a case-by-case basis after consultation with the instructor. All reasonable accommodation will be made.

Any student with a disability will be accorded appropriate accommodation, as arranged in advance.

As the semester develops, course topics and readings may be amended as the instructor sees fit. Therefore, be alert to all announcements and any revisions to the below calendar of readings and threaded discussions.

This syllabus may be amended by the instructor at any time. In such cases, students will always receive timely prior notification of any changes.

Required syllabi statements:

1. Indiana Academy Mask Policy:

   a. Requirement

   The Indiana Academy will follow Ball State University’s mask policy. Effective July 1, 2020, all people on campus—including faculty, staff, students, vendors, contractors, suppliers, and visitors—should wear face masks (covering nose and mouth) while inside campus buildings. Face masks are specifically required in the following situations:
   i. When in the presence of others (indoors or outdoors) and physical distancing is difficult to maintain, such as in hallways, elevators, stairs, public spaces, and common areas;
   ii. When in a classroom or laboratory;
   iii. When using campus transportation (such as a shuttle bus);
   iv. When multiple individuals are in a University vehicle.

   Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to bring their own mask. Masks will be provided to anyone who is unable to bring a mask or their mask is damaged.

   b. Non-compliance

   If a student declines to wear a face mask as required, the student will be referred to the Director of Academic Affairs or the Director of Residential Affairs. If the situation occurs in a classroom or other academic setting, it is considered a classroom management issue, and the teacher will remind the student of the requirement and give the student a chance to comply with it prior to referring the matter to the Director of Academic Affairs or the Director of Residential Affairs. Wearing masks is crucial to preventing the spread of COVID-19 to others.

2. Ball State diversity and inclusion statement:

   Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains a diverse faculty, staff, and student body. We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect
and civil discourse as expressed in our Beneficence Pledge and through university resources found at http://cms.bsu.edu/campuslife/multiculturalcenter.

3. Indiana Academy History Department content statement:

As with many history classes, the lectures, readings, and discussions [in this course] will include a range of topics that may be triggering, emotionally distressing, and difficult for some students. Engaging with topics such as slavery and human suffering is essential to this discipline. History seeks to understand the experiences and thought processes of former generations, whether for good or ill. Sometimes the language and word choices used by people in the past may be insensitive or politically incorrect today. Nevertheless, the goal of history is to understand the past within its own context and time. If a reading, image shown in class, or discussion is truly troubling to anyone, please do not hesitate to talk to your instructor. In some circumstances, an alternative reading can be assigned.

Evaluation overview:

Online threaded and in-class discussion
- 16 weekly discussion grades @ 25 points each 400

Curatorial assignment series
- Virtual Museum Visit paper 25
- Kunstkammer Collection construction 200
- Exhibition catalog 100
- Art Auction final exam simulation 50

Formal analysis papers
- 5 short essays @ 25 points each 125

Total 900 points + any extra credit

Grading scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>.940-1000</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.900-939</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.870-899</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.830-869</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.800-829</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.770-799</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.730-769</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.700-729</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 700</td>
<td>D*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussions:

Students will receive a discussion grade for each week of the semester, from Week 1 through Week 17 (with Weeks 1 and 2 evaluated together as the first discussion grade of the semester). Evaluation will principally be based on posts to that week’s online discussion threads hosted on the course Canvas site. Evaluation will also be supplemented by spoken participation in any in-class or virtual sessions.

Normally, there will be three threaded discussion topics per week, first posted on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and highly correlated with the content and questions of that day’s class session.
Some topics may have only one question or thread; others may have more than one question or thread. These will always be clearly labeled; i.e., Week 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, etc. Students will have a generous 24 hours to first post to a given topic or thread; the expectation is that the online conversation will flow and develop over a couple of days or more. Students are encouraged to respond to each other’s posts, and to post their own follow-up points, etc. Students are expected to return to and potentially add to the online conversation, not just post once and not return to read comments, reply to others, etc.

The instructor will of course post and respond to student activity, but cannot guarantee responding to each and every student post. Students will receive further general and possibly individual instruction and guidance as to what constitutes effective or impressive online discussion performance. Students should feel free at any time to contact the instructor with any questions or concerns regarding discussion evaluation. In their posts, students will be expected to be respectful of all persons at all times.

**Curatorial assignment series:**

One theme of this course will be the investigation of museums and art collections: Why do we collect and display art, and what is accomplished by this practice? This exploration will include four very different assignments: a short “virtual museum visit” paper; a “Kunstkammer” private art collection project that includes fabricating a model space for an ideal personal art collection; curating and writing a “catalog” for a public art exhibition; and an “art auction simulation” experience final exam. Further information about these assignments, including instructions and due dates, will be provided over the course of the semester.

**Formal analysis papers:**

An essential tool for the academic examination and understanding of art is the formal analysis. (In this case, “formal” refers to artistic form – that is, the observable qualities of line, shape, color, composition, etc. that can be described and then analyzed to determine or deduce meaning.) The terms and purposes of formal analysis will be the focus of the first unit of the course. Students will write a formal analysis paper examining one specific art object for each of the five units of the course.

**Textbook and readings:**

This class requires no printed book from the book room.

Discussion readings and other materials will be provided by the instructor, in most cases as a pdf document posted to the course Canvas site. There will be a printed class outline for most in-person class sessions, with links to art objects that in museum collections. This outline will also be available as a pdf document posted to the course Canvas site.

**Course calendar**

**Unit 1, Weeks 1-2: Form**

*How can we more carefully and effectively look at and describe art objects, as a preliminary step to discovering their potential meanings?*

Week 1 (all online)

- Mon Jan 4 Syllabus review
- Wed Jan 6 Exploring form online discussion exercise
- Fri Jan 8 Introduction to Virtual Museum Visit assignment

Week 2 (all online)
Unit 2, Weeks 3-6: Nature

Describing and finding meaning in the world we see. How do artists depict the world around us, and what do those depictions tell us about our world? Why do artists (often, but not always) work hard to depict the world as we actually see it? What is gained by such attention – and what is potentially gained by abandoning this “naturalism?”

Week 3
- Mon Jan 18 MLK Day, no class
- Wed Jan 20 First in-person class session
- Fri Jan 22 Workshop session

Week 4
- Mon Jan 25 Workshop session
- Wed Jan 27 Workshop session
- Fri Jan 29 Workshop session

Week 5
- Mon Feb 1 Workshop session
- Wed Feb 3 Workshop session
- Fri Feb 5 Workshop session

Week 6
- Mon Feb 8 Workshop session
- Wed Feb 10 Workshop session
- Fri Feb 12 Workshop session

Unit 3, Weeks 7-10: Body

Describing and finding meaning in the human body. How do artists depict the human body, and what do their interpretations tell us about how different societies and cultures view – literally – the physical human presence?

Week 7
- Mon Feb 15 Workshop session
- Wed Feb 17 Workshop session
- Fri Feb 19 Workshop session

Week 8
- Mon Feb 22 Workshop session
- Wed Feb 24 Workshop session
- Fri Feb 26 Workshop session

Week 9
- Mon Mar 1 Workshop session
- Wed Mar 3 Workshop session
- Fri Mar 5 Workshop session

Spring Break
Week 10
Mon Mar 15 Workshop session
Wed Mar 17 Workshop session
Fri Mar 19 Workshop session

Unit 4, Weeks 11-13: Person

Describing and finding meaning in the individual person. How do artists depict individual, specific human beings (such as in a portrait)? What do these images tell us about how different societies and cultures view – literally – the experience of being a distinctive, individual person?

Week 11
Mon Mar 22 Workshop session
Wed Mar 24 Workshop session
Fri Mar 26 Workshop session

Week 12
Mon Mar 29 Workshop session
Wed Mar 31 Workshop session
Fri Apr 2 Workshop session

Week 13
Mon Apr 5 No class, extended weekend
Wed Apr 7 Workshop session
Fri Apr 9 Workshop session

Unit 5, Weeks 14-17: Narratives

Finding meanings in the collective and historical human experience. How does art communicate narratives, or tell stories? And how do these stories – these myths and histories – shape our human societies?

Week 14
Mon Apr 12 Workshop session
Wed Apr 14 Workshop session
Fri Apr 16 Workshop session

Week 15
Mon Apr 19 Workshop session
Wed Apr 21 Workshop session
Fri Apr 23 Workshop session

Week 16
Mon Apr 26 Workshop session
Wed Apr 28 Workshop session
Fri Apr 30 Workshop session

Week 17
Mon May 3 Workshop session
Wed May 5 Workshop session
Fri May 7 Workshop session

Final exam session for Art Auction simulation experience TBA