

# CET Syllabus of Record

**Program:** CET Florence

**Course Title:** Passion, Power & Pestilence: Art in Italy 1500-1650

**Course Code:** FL/ARTH 250

**Total Hours:** 45

**Recommended Credits:** 3

**Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings:** Art History / Italian Studies

**Language of Instruction:** English

**Prerequisites/Requirements:** None



---

## Description

Death, passion, power and religion are some of the topics which we will touch on in our thematic exploration of the art and architecture of Renaissance and Baroque Italy. You will find out how and why some of the great art and edifices of Italy came about, and learn about the people who were the prime movers in their creation – the rich and powerful patrons, as well as the artists, sculptors and architects. You will see how these monuments reflected the values and concerns of the respective political regimes and societies as you begin to “read” the propaganda messages embedded in them.

We will explore art which was made to delight the senses, such as Bernini’s *Daphne and Apollo*. We will examine the role erotic images played in people’s private and public lives, in the decoration of private homes and sumptuous palaces.

We will see how the rich prepared for death and beyond by commissioning private chapels in churches, and how groups of more ordinary people got together to commission extraordinary art for their confraternity chapels. Of course, spirituality was an integral aspect of life in Italy in this period, and art and architecture were used to prompt spiritual feelings and transmit theological messages. Art could engender awe and wonder, as epitomized by Michelangelo’s frescoes in the Sistine chapel, or relate sublime spiritual experience, as with Bernini’s *St Teresa at Santa Maria della Vittoria*, or could render the biblical stories more real and present, for instance in the dark dramas of Caravaggio. Images, especially of Mary and her infant, could comfort and console in times of sorrow and sickness.

You will also discover how the Church and its artists and architects responded to the Protestant Reformation which resulted in the dramatic rupture of Christian Europe.

In our session on portraiture you will see how privileged women and men employed artists to fashion their public and private personae through painted and sculpted portraits; you will analyse these, assessing how apparently innocent likenesses were designed to convey information about the sitter’s status, achievements, wealth, virtue; you will see how rulers and leaders manipulated their portrait images for political ends. Of course, you will also uncover the cultural ideals and assumptions which underlie these images, such as gender roles and social class.

## CET Syllabus of Record

In our discussion of the makers of art, we will look at the figure of the artist and ask how and why the artist's status changed from modest artisan to celebrated creator – even demigod, in the case of Michelangelo. We will consider the sorts of people who became artists, find out how they trained, consider how successfully they managed their careers, and how they operated their studios as businesses.

We will assess how Giorgio Vasari's biographies of artists did so much to influence art appreciation in his own time, as well as inform the tastes of future generations, and we will critically examine some of Vasari's paradigms.

During your time in Italy, you will be able to experience artworks in their original settings, so we will consider the importance of understanding the original physical context, as well as consider how these settings have changed over time. Of course, you will also experience art in a range of public museums, and we will take advantage of the proximity collections of the Uffizi and Pitti Palace for our site visits. You will be encouraged to think about how the placement of an object in the museum can change its meaning, as well as critically appraise the quality of the museum interpretation and presentation.

### Objectives

The course will ensure that you not only experience first hand some of the greatest art and architecture of the Italian high Renaissance and Baroque, but also that you will engage with the art in a directed and intelligent way. You will gain a broad knowledge of the art of period, its main themes, the key patrons and artists, as well as cultural, historical and social contexts which informed it. As the course progresses, you will find that your confidence in appraising and understanding art will grow, so that you will gradually learn to identify, interpret and appraise Renaissance and Baroque art for yourself. You may find that over the duration of the course you will be expected to reappraise the art that you thought you already knew, as well as encounter and assess art which is new to you. Through your increased critical awareness of museums, you will find that you become a more sophisticated and engaged museum visitor, and through preparation of your research papers, you will gain valuable new research techniques and experiences.

Specifically you will:

- Discover ways in which social, cultural and historic circumstances informed visual culture in Italy in the period 1500-1650.
- Begin to interpret the roles and meanings of imagery in the sixteenth and early seventeenth-century.
- Describe and appraise the formal qualities of works of art.
- Become familiar with the most important works of art and architecture in Italy in the period 1500-1650
- Become familiar with some of the most important artists and patrons of the period.
- Gain an understanding of the methods and organisation of artistic production.
- Understand the role and importance of patrons of artists and other buyers of art.
- Critically assess historic and modern readings of artworks.

## CET Syllabus of Record

- Evaluate the ways in which site-specific artworks were informed by the architectonic features, illumination and space of the original physical setting.
- Critically assess the display and interpretation of historic artworks in modern museums.

### Course Requirements

The course is suitable for students of all levels - whether you are new to art history or have already taken numerous classes in the subject. Whatever your previous background in the subject, you will be expected to engage with the topic in hand and contribute to class discussions.

You are required to gain first-hand knowledge of the major monuments and artworks treated during the course, so it is essential that you participate in class and in site visits. To complete your comprehension and experience of Italian art in the period 1500-1650, you are also expected to visit museums and monuments independently.

### Methods of Evaluation

The final grade is determined as follows:

Participation and Engagement	10%
Midterm Exam	25%
Museum assignment	15%
Research Paper	20%
Final Exam	30%

### Primary Texts

A course reader will be provided. You can also refer to:

J. Paoletti, & G. Radke, *Art in Renaissance Italy*, London, 2001 (or other editions);

A. Sutherland Harris *Seventeenth-Century Art and Architecture*, Laurence King, 2005.

R. Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy, 1600-1750*, vols. I & II (6th ed. revised by J. Connors and J. Montagu), Yale University Press, 1999.

### Supplementary Texts

#### Period survey:

F. Hartt & D. Wilkins, *History of Italian Renaissance Art*, Prentice Hall, 2003.

#### Workshops; social and intellectual contexts of artistic production:

B. Cole, *The Renaissance Artist at Work*, New York, 1983 (incl. artists' training, status, workshops, products, patrons).

F. Ames-Lewis, *The Intellectual Life of the Early Renaissance Artist*, Yale, 2000.

See also D. Rosand (1997) below, introduction.

#### Patronage and commissioning:

M. Hollingsworth *Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, London, 1996

## CET Syllabus of Record

M. Hollingsworth *Patronage in Renaissance Italy: 1400 to the Early Sixteenth Century*, London & Baltimore, 1994 (British Institute Library 709.45HOL)

M. O'Malley, *The Business of Art: Contracts and the Commissioning Process in Renaissance Italy*, Yale, 2005.

See also B. Cole above.

### **Potraiture:**

L. Campbell, *Renaissance Faces*, London, 2008.

### **Vasari and theory:**

G. Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, translated by Julia and Peter Bondanella, Oxford, 1991.

E. Fernie, *Art History and its Methods: A Critical Anthology*, London, 1995.

### **Women as artists, subjects and patrons of art**

R. Goffen, *Titian's Women*, Yale, 1997.

C. E. King, *Renaissance Women Patrons*, Manchester, 1998.

G. A. Johnson and S.F. Matthews Grieco, *Picturing Women in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, Cambridge 1997.

E. Cropper, Life on the Edge: Artemisia Gentileschi, Famous Woman Painter, in Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi, ed. By Keith Christiansen and Judith Walker Mann. Exhibition catalogue 2002, pp. 262-281.

### **Venice and Venetian Artists**

J. Anderson, *Giorgione: The Painter of Poetic Brevity*, Flammarion, 1997.

P. Fortini Brown, *The Renaissance in Venice*, London, 1997. (Also published as *Art and Life in Renaissance Venice*).

Chambers and Pullan, *Venice, A Documentary History*, Toronto and London, 2001.

D. Rosand, *Myths of Venice: The Figuration of a State*, University of N. Carolina, 2001.

C. Hope et al *Titian*, (exhibition catalogue) National Gallery London / Yale, 2003.

P. Humfrey, *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice*, Yale, 1993

D. Rosand *Painting in Sixteenth-Century Venice*, Cambridge, 1997. (Also published as *Painting in Cinquecento Venice*).

T. Nicholls *Tintoretto: Tradition and Identity*, London, 1998.

### **Rome / Florence and Central Italian Artists**

C. Falciani and A. Natali *Bronzino: Artist and Poet at the Court of the Medici*, exhibition catalogue, Florence, 2010.

R. Jones & N. Penny *Raphael*, Yale, 1983.

L. Partridge, *The Art of Renaissance Rome 1400-1600*, Prentice Hall, 1996.

A. Hughes, *Michelangelo*, Phaidon, 1997.

M. Hall, *After Raphael: Painting in Central Italy in the Sixteenth Century*, Cambridge, 1999.

G. Hersey, *High Renaissance Art in St. Peter's and the Vatican*, Chicago, 1993.

H. Hibbard, *Michelangelo*, London, 1985.

C. Jr. Seymour, *Michelangelo: The Sistine Chapel Ceiling*, New York, 1972.

## CET Syllabus of Record

C. Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*, Bloomington, 1998.

R. Wittkower, *Sculpture, Process and Principles*. Penguin Book, 1991.

### Outline of Course Content

Note: Fall/Spring students cover approximately 1 topic every 1 to 2 weeks. During the summer, when class periods are longer, students cover just over 1 topic per week.

#### TOPIC 1 - Pestilence: The Plague and its 'Remedies'

Experiencing the plague - eyewitness accounts. Public health measures. The recourse to the Virgin and saints. What are saints and how do you become a saint?

#### TOPIC 2 – Artists and the Business of Making Art

Training and workshop organisation. Object range; replicas and variants. Business strategies. Artists' guilds. – Since when is an artist and artist? – The beginning of the Renaissance

#### TOPIC 3 – Fashioning an Image: Portraiture

Definitions and functions – what is portraiture? Development and proliferation of the independent painted portrait in Italy. Influence and significance of antique models (medals, busts, equestrian monuments). Age, rank, class and gender. The Medici and Brunelleschi. Visits to Bargello Museum, Cathedral Complex and San Lorenzo.

#### TOPIC 4 – Popes, Princes and Plebs: Buyers and Patrons of Art

The Medici – From bankers to Popes. The birth of the Florentine Duchy. Types of patrons and their motivations. Patrons' role; their influence on forms and contents.

#### TOPIC 5 – Power: Rome, Art & Architecture

Historic contexts. Treasures in Heaven and on Earth: papal patronage. Principal sites – civic spaces and papal places. – Julius II, Clement VII and Paul III. Michelangelo, Raphael and the popes. Visits to Medici Chapels, Laurentian Library, Galleria Palatina.

#### TOPIC 6 – Power: Venice, Art & Architecture

Historic background. Venice and her myths. Imagery for State propaganda. Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese.

#### TOPIC 7 - Art in Ecclesiastical Space: Religious Imagery and Catholic Reform

Abuses" in "the Church and calls for reform; Luther and the Protestant Reformation in Northern Europe; the rejection of religious imagery and iconoclasm. The "Counter-Reformation" and visual affirmations of the cult of saints and the Virgin, the rite of the Eucharist, Transubstantiation. The Council of Trent and its effects on religious imagery and the arrangement of high altars. Pictorial correctness and transgressive images. Baroque in Italy. Genre and still life.

#### TOPIC 8 – Passion: Erotic and Mythological Imagery

## **CET Syllabus of Record**

Problematic interpretations – Pleasure domes - palaces, villas and their luxury decorations- Bernini and Cardinal Scipione Borghese. Caravaggio - The female nude: eroticism or erudite humanism? Artemisia Gentileschi.