**CORCORAN ART HISTORY**

**FALL 2025 COURSE OFFERINGS**

Prof. Lynn Matheny:

**CAH 1000.11 Dean’s Seminar: Art & Politics, M 4:30 PM – 7:00 PM**

At the heart of this class is the deceptively simple question, “Is all art political?” From this central query, we will explore others: Can art spark political change? Does it have a moral obligation to do so? Should art provide a respite from politics? Is there a line between art and activism? Between art and propaganda? Between art and reportage? Among the lenses through which we will study this subject are portraiture, photography, language and conceptual art, public art, craft, abstraction, government sponsorship, and museums. Using these organizing categories, we will discover how artists from the early 20th century to the present have responded to a range of issues, including war, immigration, identity politics, climate change, gender and sexuality, racism, health policy, and economic justice. Examples of topics covered include cultural policy in Nazi Germany, the use of abstract art as a strategic tool of the Cold War, artistic responses to the Vietnam War, the creation of the AIDS memorial quilt, artistic attempts to humanize the migration crisis, and visual artists’ painful and poignant grappling with the reality of police brutality. The course will include field trips and special effort will be made to incorporate discussion of art seen in Washington.

\* Restricted to first-year students \*

\* GPAC – Creative or Critical Thinking in the Arts \*

Prof. Christopher Wilson

**CAH 1031 Survey of Art and Architecture I, MW 11:10 AM – 12:25 PM**

This course examines painting, sculpture, architecture, and other forms of visual art produced from the Prehistoric era through the Late Middle Ages (ca. 1300 C.E.). In order to cover a large time span of material, the course will concentrate on key works of art from each period and culture under consideration and will identify artistic trends of that time and place. A particular focus is historical context: how works of art reflect, reinforce, and sometimes subvert the values of the society in which they were created, including religion, politics, gender, and class.

\* GPAC-Critical Thinking in the Humanities \*

• GPAC – Global or Cross-cultural Perspectives \*

Prof. Alexander Dumbadze

**CAH 1090 Art History I: Art Now, Contemporary Perspectives in the Visual Arts, T 7:10 PM – 9:40 PM**

This course is an introduction into the histories and theories of Modern and Contemporary Art. The class covers thematically and historically art made from 1900 to the Present. Our frame of reference will primarily be art made in a North Atlantic context; however we will look at art and artists from around the world in order to gain a more nuanced and accurate sense of the histories of Modern and Contemporary art.

\* GPAC – Creative or Critical Thinking in the Arts \*

Prof. Sandra Tropper

**CAH 2001 Navigating the Art Market, R 3:30 PM – 6:00 PM**

The art market is a fascinating part of the art world that influences art historians, whether they work for museums, auction houses, galleries, or have positions in academia. Who is buying art, who is selling art, what they are buying and how much they are paying are topics covered in “Navigating the Art Market.” In the class we look at some of the major “players” who have made the market the important force that it is in the art community. The class covers issues such as authentication, catalogues raisonné, the databases and sources for price information, and the terminology used by the buyers and sellers.

Prof. Clement Akpang

**CAH 2001 Introduction to the Arts of Africa, MW 12:45 PM – 2:00 PM**

This introductory survey explores Africa's material culture from antiquity to the early modern period. We will examine the defining characteristics of African arts, their creation and uses across different societies, and the role of tangible heritage in shaping the social structures of kingdoms and dynasties on the continent before European colonization. Through lectures, discussions, museum visits, videos, images, and selected readings, students will acquire knowledge of the history of Africa’s rich and diverse artistic traditions and their religious, cultural, and social significance.

*\* New class! Consult with DUS about how it fulfills breadth requirements. \**

Prof. Sarah Rogers Morris

**CAH 2001W Ports of Entry, MW 9:35 AM – 10:50 AM**

“Ports of Entry: Architecture Between the Local and the Global” explores the buildings and spaces that connect people, places, and things into global circuits of migration, trade, and cultural exchange. From grand terminals and soaring skyscrapers known as cathedrals of commerce to immigration depots, telegraphically wired interiors, and modern shipping container terminals, architecture serves as a critical gateway and point of both connection and division between local and global geographies. Through case studies spanning the 19th century to the present, students will examine how architecture shapes and is shaped by the flow of people, goods, and ideas between spatially distant sites.

*\* New class! Consult with DUS about how it fulfills breadth requirements. \**

Prof. Katherine Markoski

**CAH 2071 Surveying American Art, TR 9:35 AM – 10:50 AM**

Surveys art of the present-day United States from the colonial period to the contemporary moment. Examines interplay between works of art and their specific historical, social, and political contexts with special attention paid to the relationships between art and religion, Indigeneity, nationalism, crisis, the environment, race, class, gender, sexuality. Considers historical inclusions and exclusions within the category of American art.

\* GPAC – Creative or Critical Thinking in the Arts \*

\* Same as CAH2071/ AMST2071 Introduction to the Arts in America \*

Prof. Lisa Lipinski

**CAH 2162W History of Photography, TR 11:10 AM – 12:25 PM**

The course examines the historical, social, aesthetic and technological developments of the photographic medium, including its relationship to modern art and modes of visual representation and the properties that inform our understanding of photographic meaning. It includes a significant engagement in writing as a form of critical inquiry and scholarly expression to satisfy the WID requirement.

\* GPAC – Creative or Critical Thinking in the Arts \*

Prof. Jungsil Lee

**CAH 2190 East Asian Art, MW 2:20 PM – 3:35 PM**

This course provides an introduction to 5,000 years of East Asian art through the study of objects in four thematic units. It is designed to deepen students' understanding of how the exchange of ideas and artistic practices among different Asian cultures has shaped artistic expression. Each lecture will explore diverse forms of artistic expression from East Asia, including tombs, cave temples, palatial structures, gardens, sculpture, painting, ceramics, prints, calligraphy, and other decorative and ritual artifacts. We will examine and analyze a wide range of artworks and artifacts within their respective cultural, religious, and social contexts.

Prof. Elise Friedland

**CAH 3102 / CLAS 3115 Ancient Art of the Roman Empire**

**MW 12:45 PM –2:00 PM**

This course surveys the art and architecture of the Roman world from its Etruscan predecessors (c. 1000 B.C.E.) through the Christianization of the empire begun by Constantine (324 C.E.).  Special consideration will be given to the use of art as propaganda, external influences on Roman art, and the legacy of Rome to the Medieval, Renaissance, and modern worlds. "Antiquity Now," five special topic days scattered throughout the semester, introduces students to some of the most puzzling problems of Roman art currently facing scholars and cutting-edge new techniques employed to solve them.

Prof. Christopher Wilson

**CAH 3120 Italian Art and Architecture of the Thirteenth through Fifteenth Centuries, MW 2:20 PM – 3:35 PM**

This course examines art and architecture in Italy ca. 1300 to ca. 1500, a period noteworthy for celebrated artists including Giotto, Duccio, Masaccio, Botticelli, and Leonardo da Vinci. Topics will include the social, religious, and political functions of art; the revival of interest in classical antiquity; the training and changing social status of artists; patronage and audience; and constructions of gender. We will pay particular attention to roles played by women as artists, subjects, viewers, and patrons in Renaissance Italy. Students will make extensive use of the Italian Renaissance collection at the National Gallery.

Prof. Barbara von Barghahn

**CAH 3122 Castles & Chivalry: France, T 12:45 – 3:15**

This course concerns the palaces and courtly environment of the Valois royal family, beginning with Charles V (1364-1380), who renovated the Louvre Castle, and his younger brothers -- Louis I, Duke of Anjou, and Jean, Duke of Berry. Magnificent tapestries, rare manuscripts, rich fabrics and decorative objects filled their lavish residences, where fabulous jousts and hunts were the entertainment of the day. Among topics to be explored are: Regional Fortresses & Châteaux as Citadels of Art and Power; Aristocrats of the Queen’s Coterie & Artistic Patronage; France & England during the 100 Years War (Edward III, the Black Prince, Henry V); Chivalric Orders & Arthurian Grail Quest; Woven Narratives of the Biblical Apocalypse; the Mythical Hunt of the Unicorn; Sacred Relics & courtly ceremony in Paris & Prague; the Insanity of Charles VI & Regency of Queen Isabeau of Bavaria; Christine de Pisan’s “City of Women”: Praising Joan of Arc & Criticizing the Ribald “Romance of the Rose”, etc. Course Requirements: Three objective/short essay exams and a brief written analysis (open choice topic); Available on Blackboard: PowerPoints/Detailed Handouts/Articles, etc. No course prerequisites

Prof. Paul Reuther

**CAH 3170 Materials, Methods, and Techniques in Art History, F 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM, Flagg Building**

This coursewill investigate works of art as objects first and foremost. It will familiarize students with the raw materials of art and the techniques and methods used by artists to produce work in a variety of traditional visual media. The course will also introduce students to current practices in conservation science. Students will spend time conducting research in the collections of the National Gallery of Art and will roll up their sleeves and get thoroughly involved in making art through the time honored practice of copying masterworks and in the process gain experience in the more technical aspects of art history.

\* To find this course online, select “Off Campus” in the schedule of classes instead of “Main Campus.” \*

Prof. Barbara von Barghahn

**CAH 4139/6236 Game of Crowns: European Royal Houses, R 12:45 PM – 3:15 PM**

The game of chess and deck of cards will be a springboard for discussions about European monarchy in this course. The course will begin with lectures that center upon the concept of the Hapsburg King as *Dominus Mundi* in Spain’s most important historical palaces. Among topics to be covered are: The Legacy of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at the Alhambra in Andalusia & the 16th-century Alcázar Fortress of Madrid; Royal Portraits & Mythological Commissions; Philip II’s Madrid as administrative seat (1561); the Escorial Palace-Monastary as Royal Retreat; Philip III & his *valido-*minister the Duke of Lerma at the Pardo Palace Hunting Estate; Diego Velázquez & the *All’antica* Refurbishing of the Alcázar of Madrid under Philip IV & the Count-Duke of Olivares; the Pleasure Palace of the Madrid Buen Retiro & Galleries evoking Spain’s Roman Heritage; Philip IV’s Brother, Cardinal-Prince Ferdinand (Archduke of Flanders) & his Selection of Allegorical Paintings by Rubens for the Country House of the Torre de la Parada; Carlos II, the last Hapsburg & Philip V, the grandson of Louis XIV & First Bourbon Ruler of Spain. Course Requirements: Two oral presentations (with short papers/annotated notes). The first set of presentations will concern European royal courts and focus upon the remaining pieces of the chessboard and deck of cards – the Queen, Knights, Bishops, Jacks, Pawns, Rooks, Face Cards and Jokers. The second set of presentations will be “Gambit”, open choice topic with a thematic focus on the “Mirror of Monarchy & Resplendence of Rule”. Articles for reading; no prerequisites.

Prof. Alexander Dumbadze

**CAH 4149/6269 New York in the 1980s, W 9:00 AM 0 11:30 AM**

This seminar is a detailed examination into the long 1980s (1977-1993) in the New York art world. It is one part a history of Postmodernism, another part a cultural examination of America in a pivotal moment in its history. It is, as well, a rumination, through an excursion into the recent past, of where the United States is today—both artistically and culturally.

Prof. Lisa Lipinski

**CAH 4157/6257 The Body and Photography: Representation, Identity, and Power, T 3:30 PM – 6:00 PM**

This seminar course examines the complex relationship between the body and photography, exploring how the medium has been used to represent, construct, and challenge notions of identity, beauty, power, and embodiment. Engaging with critical theories of the body and visual culture, students will develop a nuanced understanding of photography’s role in both reinforcing and disrupting social norms.

Prof. Mika Natif

**CAH 4165/6265 The Body in Islamic Art, T 12:45 PM – 3:15 PM**

Despite a common belief that Islam forbids figural representation, Islamic art features abundant depictions of humans and animals in manuscripts, luxury objects, and textiles.  This seminar examines tensions and discussion about images that shaped the portrayal of bodies (humans, animals, and others) in Late Antique and Islamic art from the 6th to the 17th century.

Prof. Clement Akpang

**CAH 4169/6260 Restitution, African Art & Museums, R 3:30 PM – 6:00 PM**

This seminar will explore the politics of display in ethnographic and art museums, focusing on the objectification and decontextualization of African material heritage through colonial museology. We will examine debates on the restitution of African artifacts, museum decolonization, and counterarguments against repatriation. Additionally, we will analyze the broader question of the future of museums and non-Western art in a de-racialized and de-hierarchized world. As a practical approach to ethical restitution, we will conduct provenance research into GWU’s African collection, with each student tracing a specific artifact’s origin and cultural significance throughout the semester.

Prof. Barbara von Barghahn

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Prof. Lisa Lipinski

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Prof. Bibiana Obler

**CAH 6258 Writing Art History, W 12:45 PM -3:15 PM**

In this seminar, designed for incoming MA students in art history, we will work toward developing our own approaches to art history by considering a variety of writings that have inspired past and current art historians. In addition to reading assigned texts closely, students will be expected to participate actively and required to write frequently. The ultimate goal of this course is for students to hone their sense of what matters to art-historical writing and to cultivate and refine their own ways forward.

\* Restricted to 1st-year MA students in Art History \*

Prof. Clement Akpang

**CAH 6260/4169 Restitution, African Art & Museums, R 3:30 PM – 6:00 PM**

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Prof. Mika Natif

**CAH 6270 Crafting the Qualifying Paper, W 3:30 PM – 6:00 PM**

This course is designed to guide students through the process of researching and writing a master's Qualifying Paper (QP).

\* Restricted to MA students in Art History who are writing their Qualifying Papers. \*

Prof. Lisa Lipinski

**CAH 6400 History of Exhibitions, F 9:30 AM – 12:00 PM**

This course explores the history of exhibitions, tracing their evolution from early collections and cabinets of curiosity to the dynamic and diverse curatorial practices of today. Students will examine key moments in exhibition history, including the rise of public museums, World’s Fairs, avant-garde art shows, and groundbreaking contemporary biennials. Through case studies, critical texts, and exhibition reviews, the course will analyze how exhibitions have shaped cultural narratives, influenced art movements, and responded to social and political contexts. By the end of the course, students will have a comprehensive understanding of exhibition-making as a historical and theoretical practice, preparing them for further study or careers in art history, curating, and museum studies. Students will be involved in collaborating with the Brady Art Gallery on an exhibition to open in Winter 2026.