

Simply Divine: Religious Art of the Renaissance

ACLT6241

Course Outline

Description:

The Renaissance period (15th - 16th centuries) witnessed a flurry of artistic production in Italy and northern Europe, which resulted in some of the finest art ever created. With the predominance of the Church, the art almost always contained religious themes based on both the Old and New Testaments. Through illustrated lectures, this course will highlight many of these beautiful paintings and sculptures, and offer insight into the spiritual values of the time. Works by Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael will be featured, along with those by many prolific artists who sought to make both descriptive and interpretive imagery meant to inspire spiritual devotion. Join award-winning lecturer Sonia Halpern to learn about the thematic and stylistic components of this artistic period rich with divine treasures!

Course Goals: The student will learn about the distinctive religious subjects and styles of Italian and Northern Renaissance artists of the 15th and 16th centuries, and have a better understanding of artist biographies, and the social/historical context in which the works were created.

Course Objectives: At the completion of this course, the student will be able to identify and describe the major artistic features of religious Italian and Northern Renaissance painting, and their influence on later artistic styles, and identify the names and works of select Renaissance artists.

Texts: N/A

Attendance Requirements:

Students are required to attend 80% of class time in order to receive a "complete" for this course. Completion reports will be issued by Continuing Studies.

Code of Student Conduct

The purpose of the Code of Student Conduct is to define the general standard of conduct expected of students registered at Western University, provide examples of behaviour that constitutes a breach of this standard of conduct, provide examples of sanctions that may be imposed, and set out the disciplinary procedures that the University will follow. For the complete Code of Student Conduct: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/board/code.pdf>

Course Schedule:

WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION; THE EARLY RENAISSANCE IN ITALY: THE 15TH CENTURY

The "Renaissance" literally means "re-birth." The term refers to the re-birth or revival of Classical (ancient Greek and Roman) ideals. It is particularly reflected in the societal perceptions and art of the 15th century, especially in Florence and Rome. Balance, order, and harmony, so valued in Classical art, were of utmost importance to Early Italian Renaissance artists. A formula for mathematical perspective was also invented, which meant that paintings could now suggest a three-dimensional space with a convincing foreground, middle-ground, and background.

Selected artists:

Masaccio, Donatello, Fra Angelico, Piero della Francesca, Botticelli, Mantegna

WEEK TWO: WOMEN ARTISTS IN THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

Women artists flourished in the 16th and 17th centuries, particularly in regions outside of Florence and Rome, where restrictions for women were less rigid. Women artists were often hired by the Royal Courts to be court painters, an occupation seen as somewhat suitable for professional women artists because of its sheltered environment. Most women depicted portraits because this subject was deemed suitable for them, yet some also portrayed religious scenes, which traditionally was a male domain.

Selected artists:

Sofonisba Anguissola, Lavinia Fontana, Elisabetta Sirani, Artemesia Gentileschi

WEEK THREE: THE EARLY RENAISSANCE IN THE NORTH: THE 15TH CENTURY

Flemish artists worked on the device of aerial perspective. Unlike the Florentines, they were not particularly interested in antiquity, and so their paintings do not have a Classically-inspired appearance. The medium of oil paint was developed by Jan van Eyck in the 1430s, and it enabled artists to work slowly and build up their works gradually. The works suggest this through their emphasis on naturalistic detail in the figures, domestic interiors (including objects of disguised symbolism), and nature.

Selected artists:

Jan van Eyck, Robert Campin, Hugo van der goes, Hieronymous Bosch

WEEK FOUR: WOMEN ARTISTS IN THE NORTHERN RENAISSANCE

Court patronage and some greater freedoms for women of Northern Europe (as compared with women in Italy) were factors which enabled a relatively large number of women to become artists in Northern European centres. As in Italy, however, many women artists pursued careers after the "Renaissance" occurred for male artists. Typical subjects for Northern women artists were portraits, genre scenes (scenes of everyday life), still-lives, and insect and flower paintings. Many of these secular works were also imbued with themes of Christian morality.

Selected artists:

Caterina van Hemessen, Judith Leyster, Clara Peeters, Maria Sybilla Merian, Maria van Oosterwyck, Rachel Ruysch

WEEK FIVE: THE NORTHERN AND ITALIAN HIGH RENAISSANCE: 1498-1520

In Northern European painting, the tradition of Flemish artist Jan van Eyck was still felt. His emphasis on naturalism and detail was still a concern for artists of Northern regions. In Italy, painting revolved around the work of three artists: Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Michelangelo. All were interested in depicting human anatomy: Leonardo investigated it as one aspect of his interest in natural phenomena, and Raphael and Michelangelo in their interest in Classical inspirations, which Michelangelo revealed in both his painted and sculptural forms.

Selected artists:

Matthias Grunewald, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Michelangelo

WEEK SIX THE LATE RENAISSANCE, AND MANNERISM, IN ITALY: 1520-1600; CONCLUSION

In the Late Renaissance, Venetian art followed a path independent of Florence and Rome. This was partly due to the fact that state and private patronage was more popular in Venice, and the Church did not dominate artistic patronage. Titian was the leading artist of the time. Mannerism, often seen as the transitional style between the Renaissance and Baroque periods, developed in reaction to the order and

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harmony of Renaissance art. It includes asymmetry, spatial ambiguity, and exaggeration of forms. In conclusion, The Baroque style that followed (17th century)) witnessed an emphasis on drama and movement. Diagonal compositions were common, as they contributed to the dynamism of the image. A similar transition occurred in ancient times with the change from the Classical to the Hellenistic style.

Selected artists:

Titian, Parmigianino (Mannerist), Bernini (Italian Baroque sculptor), Caravaggio (Italian Baroque), Peter Paul Rubens (Northern Baroque)

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Nash, Susie. Northern Renaissance Art. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Pietrantonio, Vera Fortunati, et al. Italian Women Artists: From Renaissance to Baroque (exhibition catalogue). Washington: National Museum of Women in the Arts, 2007.

Plumb, John Harold. The Italian Renaissance. Revised and Illustrated. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.