The information presented here is as of 10/26/2010.

ART (Div. I)  
Chair, Associate Professor PETER LOW


GRADUATE COURSES IN ART HISTORY

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Art History

To qualify for the Master of Arts degree in art history, candidates complete a minimum of eleven courses for graduate credit plus two winter study periods, the latter consisting of a GP Study Trip in the first year (ARTH 51) and preparation of a Draft Qualifying Paper in the second (ARTH 52). Students must also demonstrate reading proficiency in two foreign languages, courses which will be German (for more specific information on the language requirements, see below, after the listing for ARTH 597/598). At the end of the second year, students present a shortened version of the Qualifying Paper in the annual Graduate Symposium. They deposit copies of the Symposium paper, augmented with scholarly apparatus and illustrations, in the Williams College Archives and the Clark Library.

At least seven of the eleven courses must be graduate seminars. Included in this number are three required of all students: ARTH 504, "Methods of Art History and Criticism," to be taken during the first semester; ARTH 506, "An Expository Writing Workshop," to be taken during the second semester; and ARTH 509, "Graduate Student Symposium," to be taken during the fourth semester.

With permission of the Director, up to four undergraduate courses in fields pertinent to their course of study at the 200-, 300-, or 400-level may be taken for graduate credit, with the understanding that resultant papers submitted in such courses meet a standard commensurate with those prepared for graduate seminars. Students who wish to take undergraduate courses for graduate credit must receive permission of the instructor. In the case of undergraduate lecture courses, students should register for them as ARTH 597 (in the fall) or ARTH 598 (in the spring). With the permission of the Director, one course in studio art may be included among the four.

Beyond the three required seminars, students must fulfill a distribution requirement by the end of their course of study. At least one course must be taken in three of six areas:

(1) East Asian, Indian, Islamic art
(2) Ancient Near Eastern, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman art
(3) Early Christian, Byzantine, and Western Medieval art to 1400
(4) Western art, 1400 to 1780
(5) Western art, 1780 to present
(6) Arts of Africa, Oceania, the Americas (Pre-Hispanic or Native American cultures)

With the approval of the Director, a thematic or non-period specific course may apply toward the distribution requirement, provided the student works substantially and primarily on topics within one of these six areas.

Private Tutorial

In addition to the regularly offered seminars and classes, students may apply to take courses designated as “Private Tutorials” (ARTH 595 in the fall semester, ARTH 596 in the spring). Students wishing to register for a private tutorial should submit a petition to the Director describing the substance of the project and the nature of the work to be submitted for evaluation, as well as a written agreement with the instructor. The petition should be signed by both the student and the faculty instructor. Up to two private tutorials may be accepted for credit. Of the minimum requirement of eleven courses, the combined number of private tutorials and undergraduate courses applied to the degree may not exceed four.

The Qualifying Paper

The Qualifying Paper will normally take the form of a revision of a seminar or private tutorial paper produced in one of the previous three semesters, expanded and refined so that it would meet the standard for publication. The student must submit the topic of the Qualifying Paper in writing to the Director by the final day of exams of their third semester. Before submitting the final version of the manuscript, students must obtain the written permission of their private tutorial supervisor to supervise the Qualifying Paper.

No later than the first Friday of their fourth semester students submit copies of a Draft Qualifying Paper, including illustrations, to their three readers (generally the Director, the Associate Director, and to the faculty supervisor or third reader). Although a draft, the paper should be brought to a high level of completion. The Draft Qualifying Paper should not exceed 8,000 words, including footnotes and bibliography.

Early in the fourth semester students will meet with their readers for a Qualifying Paper Discussion, at which time they will discuss revisions and modifications of their draft. Students then submit the final version of the Qualifying Paper to the Graduate Program at a date set by the Director.

The Graduate Symposium

All students participating in the Symposium will be assigned an ad hoc committee to advise them in preparing their presentation. Each ad hoc committee will include (but is not limited to) the Director of the Graduate Program, one additional faculty mentor, one first-year graduate student, and one second-year graduate student. The first and third dry runs will be presented to the ad hoc committee. The second dry run will be presented to (and only to) the other second-year students in a Dry Run Workshop scheduled by the GP. Speakers must distribute copies of their paper in each dry run. To meet the time limit of twenty minutes, the text, excluding footnotes, should not exceed 2,800 words. Students must submit the text of the final talk, augmented with notes, bibliography, list of illustrations, and a 250-word abstract, in hard and electronic copy to the Program for placement in the College Archives and the Clark Library.

Grades and Academic Standing

The Program uses the following grading system (numerical equivalent in computing grade averages):

A+ = truly exceptional (4.33)  B = satisfactory (3.00)
A = outstanding (4.00)          B- = barely adequate (2.67)
A- = excellent (3.67)          C = inadequate (1.00)
B+ = good (3.33)               E = failing (0)

Any course in which the student receives a grade below B- will not be accepted for graduate credit.

Letter grades are used in all seminars except ARTH 509. In language courses letter grades are kept on record in the Graduate Program Office but are converted to Pass/Fail on the Williams transcript and are not averaged in with other grades. Winter Study courses (ARTH 51 and 32), and the Graduate Student Symposium (ARTH 509) are graded on a Pass/Fail basis. At the end of the first year, each student's record will be reviewed by the Director of the GP. Those whose average for the first two semesters is less than B (3.00) may be asked to resign from the Program. Deadlines for course work are set by the instructor. If a student seeks and receives an extension that results in a semester grade of “Incomplete,” the work necessary to convert that “Incomplete” must be hand in by the instructor’s revised deadline, which will be no later than the Monday following the first full week of the next semester’s classes. Extensions beyond this second Monday will be solely at the discretion of the Program Director (in consultation with the instructor).

A student who resigns from the Graduate Program may, after an agreed upon term of at least one year, submit a petition for re-admission to the Director. Such a petition must include evidence that deficiencies have been remedied and that the student is capable of completing the course of study for the degree without further interruption. It is expected that the requirements for the degree will be completed within four semesters of residence. In no instance will credit be given for coursework done prior to matriculation in the Graduate Program. Students who normally admit students on a semester by semester basis may not accept a student for the second semester without having accepted them for the first semester.

ARTH 500(F)  Clark Visiting Professor Seminar: Photography as Art in Europe, 1839 to 1945 (Same as ArtH 400)

For the first century or so of its existence, photography had a troubled yet generative relationship with art. Even as doubts persisted about whether photography could constitute art, the very notion of art was changing rapidly, in part due to the inescapable and unsettling power of photography. In this course, we will approach a historical understanding of this vexed relationship through a series of case studies, ranging from the beginnings of photography to the end of the Second World War. Rather than provide a comprehensive survey of the topics, the course will enable us to uncover some of the crucial tensions or contradictions that give this history its dynamism. Each case—whether a practice, book, exhibition, or controversy—will offer us a chance to examine how aesthetically ambitious practitioners redefined both photography and art in the effort to achieve their convergence. The issues of skill and desking, chance, automatism, mediation, materiality, finish, oeuvre, modernism, and abstraction will loom large in our discussions. Practitioners of special concern will include: William Henry Fox Talbot, Gustave Le Gray, Julia Margaret Cameron, Peter Henry Emerson, Man Ray, Alexander Rodchenko, Karl Blossfeldt, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Wols.

Format: seminar. Evaluation will be based on class participation, presentation of research, and a term paper of 20-25 pages.

Enrollment limit: 16, with places for 8 undergraduate [ARTH 400] and 8 graduate students [ARTH 500] assured. Preference given to senior Art History majors and Graduate Program students.

Hour: 1:10-3:50 R KELSEY

ARTH 508(S)  Clark Visiting Professor Seminar: Photography as Art in the United States, 1945 to 1989 (Same as ArtH 400)

For the first century or so of its existence, photography had a troubled yet generative relationship with art. Even as doubts persisted about whether photography could constitute art, the very notion of art was changing rapidly, in part due to the inescapable and unsettling power of photography. In this course, we will approach a historical understanding of this vexed relationship through a series of case studies, ranging from the beginnings of photography to the end of the Second World War. Rather than provide a comprehensive survey of the topics, the course will enable us to uncover some of the crucial tensions or contradictions that give this history its dynamism. Each case—whether a practice, book, exhibition, or controversy—will offer us a chance to examine how aesthetically ambitious practitioners redefined both photography and art in the effort to achieve their convergence. The issues of skill and desking, chance, automatism, mediation, materiality, finish, oeuvre, modernism, and abstraction will loom large in our discussions. Practitioners of special concern will include: William Henry Fox Talbot, Gustave Le Gray, Julia Margaret Cameron, Peter Henry Emerson, Man Ray, Alexander Rodchenko, Karl Blossfeldt, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Wols.

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Hour: 1:10-3:50 R KELSEY
rise of the photographic tableau. In other words, between the end of the Second World War and the fall of the Berlin Wall, photography went from serving as the antithesis of painting to embodying its new form. In this course, we will trace this curious history, focusing both on artists using photographs and on photographers making art. Why did artists turn to photography in the 1960s? What new forms of art were photographers exploring? How did conceptual artists use photography? What are we to make of the rise of the photographic tableau in the 1980s? These are some of the questions we will pose. Practitioners of special concern will include: Roy DeCarava, Robert Frank, Andy Warhol, Ed Ruscha, Diane Arbus, Dan Graham, Sally Mann, Cindy Sherman, Jeff Wall, and Hiroshi Sugimoto.

Format: seminar. Evaluation will be based on oral presentations as well as two research papers.
Enrollment limit: 12. Preference given to Graduate Program students and then to senior Art History majors.
Hour: 2:10-4:50 T

ARTH 506(S) An Expository Writing Workshop
A common and depressing consequence of too much education is how our writing tends to devolve, as the task of saying what we mean is complicated by new anxieties: trying to impress our potential employers, intimidate our competition, claim our place in an intellectual community, and generally avoid looking like fools. In many professions, bad prose tends to proliferate like some disgusting disease, as scholars, trying above all to avoid mistakes, become tentative, obscurantist, addicted to jargon, and desperate to imitate other bad writers. In class we will try to reclaim the basic skills of effective communication and adapt them to new and complicated purposes. In class we will go over weekly or bi-weekly writing assignments, but we will also look at the essays you are writing for your other courses, to give them an outward form that will best display their inner braininess. Among other things, I am a fiction writer, and part of my intention is to borrow the techniques of storytelling to dramatize your ideas successfully.
Limited to and required of first-year students in the Graduate Program in the History of Art.
Hour: 1:10-3:50 M

ARTH 508(S) Art and Conservation: An Inquiry into History, Methods, and Materials
This course is designed to acquaint students with observation and examination techniques for works of art, artifacts, and decorative arts objects; give them an understanding of the history of artist materials and methods; and familiarize them with the ethics and procedures of conservation. This is not a conservation training course but is structured to provide a broader awareness for those who are planning careers involving work with cultural objects.
Format: slide presentations, lectures, gallery talks, hands-on opportunities, technical examinations, and group discussions. Sessions will be held at the Williamstown Art Conservation Center, Williams College, the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, and the Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza Art Collection in Albany. Examination questions may be formulated from exhibitions at these locations. Six exams will be given. Exam scores will be weighed in proportion to the number of sessions covered by the exam (e.g., the format: symposium. Requirements: each student will present three dry runs and a final oral presentation at the symposium.
Limited to and required of second-year students in the Graduate Program in the History of Art.
Hour: 6:30-8:30 MR

ARTH 509(S) Graduate Symposium
This course is designed to assist qualified fourth-semester graduate students in preparing a scholarly paper to be presented at the annual Graduate Symposium. Working closely with a student/faculty ad hoc advisory committee, each student will prepare a twenty-minute presentation based on the Qualifying Paper. Special emphasis is placed on the development of effective oral presentation skills.
Format: symposium. Requirements: each student will present three dry runs and a final oral presentation at the symposium.
Prerequisites: successful completion and acceptance of the Qualifying Paper.
Limited to and required of second-year students in the Graduate Program in the History of Art.
Hour: 12:15-1:30 T (bi-weekly), in addition to dry runs.

ARTH 522(S) Envisioning Divinity: A Global Perspective on Christian Art
This seminar has two fundamental goals. First, through readings and class discussion, it aims to examine the origins and evolution of representations of God in the early centuries of Christianity and in the visual arts. In particular, the seminar will consider the relationships at play in regard to these works of art—amongst form, iconography, materials, function, meaning, and audience. The seminar will also investigate Early Christian anxieties about the making and using of images as well as the controversies that arose as a result of these anxieties. In the process, we will explore a number of tensions manifest in or evoked by this art, including picture vs. text, symbolism vs. mimesis, and asceticism vs. splendor. Second, in their individual research projects, students will assess the seminar's findings concerning Early Christian art in relation to specific depictions of divinity found in later Christian art and trade anytime and anywhere around the world. What is the relationship, these research projects will investigate, between Early Christian paradoxes—concerning the production, content, or reception of, or theorizing about, art—and later developments? The aim here will be to use the case study of representations of divinity in Christian art to test the value of thinking about the history of art on a global scale.
Format: seminar. Evaluation will be based on class participation, oral presentations, and a term paper of 20-25 pages.
Enrollment limit: 12. Preference given to Graduate Program students and then to senior Art History majors.
Hour: 1:10-3:50 F

ARTH 535(F) The Strange World of Albrecht Dürer: Art and Historiography
This seminar will focus on Albrecht Dürer’s artistic production and theoretical writings from the perspective of late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century visual culture, devotional practice, humanist aesthetics, printing history, and gender anxiety. As well, students will consider Dürer’s art historical legacy, shaped in this country by German émigré scholars. Questions posed of these visual and historiographic texts will be situated between early modern contextualizations and twentieth-century preoccupations. For example, Dürer’s allegorical representations of women and relations between the sexes will be considered as part of the fabric of his own time and in terms of gender studies today. Readings will address related topics such as German Expressionism’s adoption of the Renaissance woodcut and Hitler’s political absorption of Dürer during the Third Reich. The Clark’s collection of Dürer prints numbers over 350 sheets and will be the primary focus of our visual inquiry.
Format: seminar. Evaluation will be based on class participation, several short presentations and one long one, and a term paper of 20-25 pages.
Enrollment limit: 12. Preference given to Graduate Program students and then to senior Art History majors.
Hour: 2:10-4:50 W
ARTH 551(F)  Winslow Homer

In this seminar we will explore the life and art of Winslow Homer. Paintings, prints, watercolors, and photographs in the collection of the Clark and the Williams College Museum of Art will focus our discussions and provide the basis for understanding Homer’s art making and his place within the art culture of his day. A consideration of his subjects will necessarily intersect with many of the nation’s most pressing issues during his era: the Civil War and Reconstruction, the rise of middle-class leisure, the relation of man to the environment. Format: seminar. Students’ responsibilities will include class discussion, two short papers, an oral presentation (and response to someone else’s), and a term paper of 20-25 pages. Enrollment limit: 12. Preference given to Graduate Program students and then to senior Art History majors.

Hour: 1:10-3:30 F

ARTH 562(S)  Andy Warhol: A Factory

This seminar examines the expansive career and influence of one of the most famous and controversial artists of the twentieth century, Andy Warhol. The artist who wanted to be a machine has become an icon of pop culture, the avant-garde, and postmodernism. Over twenty years after his death, the extent of Warhol’s influence thrives not only in art but also in film, music, fashion, and the very concepts of fame and celebrity. The structure for the seminar will be both thematic and chronological, which will enable us to explore the range of his activities, from silkscreen to film and installation to publishing, while also critically examining the recurrent tropes used to evaluate his work and impact. This process will entail reexamining the critical relations between style, youth culture, appropriation, camp, and resistance.

Format: seminar. Evaluation will be based on two short papers, an oral presentation, and a term paper of 20-25 pages. Enrollment limit: 12. Preference given to Graduate Program students and then to senior Art History majors.

Hour: 2:10-4:30 W

ARTH 595(F), 596(S)  Private Tutorial

Students may petition to take a private tutorial by arrangement with the instructor and with permission of the Graduate Program Director.

ARTH 597(F), 598(S)  Undergraduate Lecture Course Taken for Graduate Credit

LANGUAGE COURSES

The Graduate Program’s degree requirements include reading competence in two languages, other than English, of high scholarly and academic relevance to the history of art. One of the two languages must be German. Many students select French as their second language. The Program offers dedicated courses in reading French and German for art history. With permission from the Director or Associate Director, it is possible to substitute another language for French. For other languages taught at Williams see the Coilege Course Catalog, although please note that students may face difficulty juggling undergraduate and graduate schedules.

Incoming students’ language preparation is assessed through exams administered at the outset of the semester. In French and German, the scores attained on the SAT II reading examination determine a student’s placement within the two-semester French/three-semester German sequence. If students attain a minimum score of 700 on the placement exam, they are exempted from further coursework in that language. With a score between 500 and 700, they are placed into the graduate course of readings in art history, French 512 /German 513. With a score below 500, they enroll in French 511, offered in the fall for the graduate students / the appropriate one of two semesters of German study (511 and 512) before advancing to the reading course. In the case of languages other than French, arrangements will be made on an individual basis.

Returning second-year students who have completed GERM 511-512 have the option of taking a non-standardized two-hour reading exam in German as an alternative to GERM 513. This option is intended for students who, following completion of GERM 512, are able to enhance their German reading skills over the summer following their first year. Should a student not pass the translation exam, s/he must register for GERM 513.

GERM 511(F)-512(S)  Reading German for Beginners (Same as German 111(F)-112(S))

German 511-512 is for students whose principal reason for acquiring German is to work with written materials. It is particularly appropriate for students majoring in fields in which the ability to read primary and secondary texts in German can be crucial, such as Art History, Comparative Literature, History, Music, Philosophy, Political Science, and Theatre. In the first semester students learn the elements of grammar and acquire a core vocabulary. In the second semester, while covering advanced grammatical topics, they practice reading in a variety of textual genres in the humanities and social sciences. They also learn how to work with dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other reference works, in both printed and online forms. By the end of the course they will have a solid foundation for building proficiency in German, whether through self-study or further course work. Credit granted only on successful completion of 512.

Format: lecture and discussion. Principal requirements: written homework, quizzes, tests, active class participation.


Hour: 9:00-9:50 MWF

GERM 513(F)  Readings in German Art History and Criticism

This is an advanced course in German reading, focused on the literature of Art History. Texts are selected from fundamental works of art history and criticism and from writings related to concurrent seminars in the Graduate Program in the History of Art. The course includes a grammar review.

Format: seminar. Evaluation will be based on written homework, quizzes, tests, and class participation.

Prerequisites: German 511-512 or equivalent preparation (a score of 500 or higher on the SAT II German Reading Test). Enrollment limited to Graduate Program students; others by permission of the instructor. Enrollment limit: 20 (expected: 12).

Hour: 9:00-9:50 MWF

RLFR 511(F)  Intensive Grammar and Translation

This course is offered for students who intend to acquire a reading knowledge of French to pursue their research in Art History or other fields in the Humanities. Emphasis is placed on a thorough and systematic review of French grammatical structures. During the first semester, students are expected to understand each part of speech and all essential grammar structures, memorizing crucial words and expressions. Reading will be introduced early to become familiarized with the language in its written expression in order to become a “strategic” reader.

Format: Classes meet twice weekly and are conducted in English. Requirements: active and regular class participation, quizzes, midterm and final examinations.

Prerequisite: Students may start this course with little knowledge of French but with a resolute interest in learning how to read it. Enrollment is open for Graduate Students in the History of art; undergraduates are welcome, by instructor’s permission.

Hour: 8:30-9:45 TR

RLFR 512(S)  Readings in French Art History and Criticism

This course is an intensive translation seminar offered as a continuation of RLFR.511, to students in the Williams College Graduate Program in Art History and to interested undergraduate students (with instructor’s permission).

The core of this course is based on the reading and translating of a variety of critical works covering different periods and different genres in the field of Art History and Humanities. The material read in this class is compiled in a textbook and ranges from exhibits and catalogues, excerpts from books, scholarly articles all in various fields and eras. Students will be asked to read with meaning, translate or summarize in order to develop the skills and understand the techniques necessary to accurately read French. Structure and grammar will systematically be reviewed in context.

Format: classes meet twice weekly and are conducted in English. Requirements: active participation, regular class attendance, quizzes, a translation project, a midterm and a final.

Prerequisite: RLFR 511 or permission of the instructor.

Hour: 8:30-9:45 TR