Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael

HAA 58m  
Spring, 2018  
Prof. Cammy Brothers  
Monday/Wednesday, 10-11am  
Fogg Art Museum, Deknatel Hall

A painting attributed to Leonardo da Vinci recently fetched the highest price on record for a work of art, a staggering 450 million dollars. The price speaks to the tremendous fascination certain Italian Renaissance figures still hold, 500 years after the fact. The Renaissance had many protagonists, but few loom as large as the three contemporaries and rivals who will form the focus of the course. In many regards, they shaped the notion of “genius” that we have inherited around themselves. The course builds out from these specific figures to a broader understanding of the Renaissance as an artistic and cultural phenomenon.
Works of art such as Leonardo da Vinci’s Mona Lisa, Michelangelo’s David, or Raphael’s School of Athens are so iconic, and so often reproduced, that it is easy to assume there is nothing more to know about them. This course reinserts these works and others into the social, political and aesthetic conditions in which they were produced, demonstrating that many crucial questions are still open. Along the way, it reveals the ways in which the artistic problems confronted by Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael—how to represent the human figure; how to convey a story; how to show emotion; how to represent space—are still topics of contemporary interest and relevance.

Each of these artists operated in multiple media, including sculpture, architecture, fresco and oil painting, as well as writing in poetry and prose. Our approach is inclusive, giving time to each of these pursuits. When possible, we read the poems, letters and notes of the artists themselves, as well as of their critics and champions.

Expectations and goals: The course assumes no prior knowledge and is open to both majors and non-majors. The course is not only about the Italian Renaissance but also about how to look closely at works of art, how to describe them, and how to articulate the questions they pose. Slide lectures will be supplemented by visits to Harvard and Boston area museums and special collections.

Although the bibliography of these artists is vast, an effort has been made to keep the weekly readings manageable, with the expectation that they are completed before class. The actual text you are expected to read is often much less than the page numbers imply, because the readings are for the most part heavily illustrated.

Readings are on reserve in the Fine Arts Library in Littauer Hall. Journal articles are available on Canvas. No books are required for purchase.

Special visits: In addition to in class lectures, several visits to local collections will be arranged.

Please note: An important exhibition of Michelangelo’s drawings is on view through February 12 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (“Michelangelo, Divine Draftsman & Designer”). This represents an extraordinary opportunity to see many of the works we are discussing in class in the flesh. You are not required to visit, but you are encouraged to do so if you have the opportunity. If you do, you may write a one-page critical commentary on the exhibit which can substitute for one of your weekly assignments.
Course requirements and grading:

Weekly writing/looking exercises: In lieu of a midterm and a final exam, there are weekly class assignments, mainly centered on the course readings but also on looking assignments; this will amount to roughly one page of writing per week. Some of these assignments will be given in advance (the week before they are due), others will be in class exercises that will be turned in at the end of lecture (40%).

Notebook: Notetaking must be by hand, both so that you may make sketches related to class lectures and to avoid distraction. Some of your class assignments will be done in your notebook, and it will be turned in and assessed at the end of the semester (10%).

Class attendance and participation: Lecture attendance is mandatory and active participation in class discussion is encouraged (15%).

Final Paper or project: 7-8 pages, not including footnotes, bibliography, and illustrations, due April 18 (details to follow; a rough draft will also be submitted). Both traditional research papers and alternative, visual papers are possible (35%).

Extensions are granted for documented medical or family emergencies. Late papers will be graded down by one-third grade per day.

Class supplies:
You should purchase a blank notebook for in class notetaking and drawing related to class assignments. It should be at least 5” x 7” and no larger than 8 ½” X 11”, unlined, and be dedicated exclusively to this class. Many options are available at Bob Slate as well as elsewhere. Please keep it in tact throughout the semester (do not tear pages out), as it will be collected at the end of term for grading (and returned to you).

Week 1

Monday, January 22  Introduction

Wednesday, January 24  Leonardo da Vinci and the Idea of the Renaissance Man

Vasari, Lives of the Artists, Everyman’s Library, vol. 1, Life of Leonardo, pp. 625-40; also available on Canvas
Week 2

Monday, January 29  Leonardo and Drawing as Thinking


Wednesday, January 31  Leonardo in Battle


Michael Cole, “Anghiari and Cascina,” section within chapter “The Force of Art,” in *Leonardo, Michelangelo, and the Art of the Figure*, pp. 17-29

Week 3

Monday, February 5  Leonardo, Painter of Smoke and Shadows


Rab Hatfield, “Why Leonardo Painted Mon(n)a Lisa and Why Francesco del Giocondo Commissioned Him to Paint Her,” in *The Three Mona Lisas*, pp. 158-166


Wednesday, February 7  Leonardo and the Last Supper


Leo Steinberg, “The Moment,” and “The Subject” in Leonardo’s Incessant Last Supper, pp. 10-53

**Week 4**

**Monday, February 12  The Salvador Mundi Conundrum**


Jerry Salz, “Christie’s is Selling This Painting for $100 Million. They Say it’s by Leonardo. I Have Doubts. Big Doubts,” *Vulture*, Nov. 14, 2017


**Wednesday, February 14  Leonardo as Naturalist, Architect, and Cartographer**


**Week 5**

**Monday, February 19  Presidents’ Day**

**Wednesday, February 21  Leonardo as Anatomist and Engineer**


**Week 6**

Monday, February 26  **Raphael, Courtly Painter**


Tom Henry and Paul Joannides, “Raphael’s Portraiture,” in *Late Raphael*, pp. 63-67

Wednesday, February 28 **Raphael, the Pope’s Painter**

Bette Talvacchia, “Roman Patronage: The Vatican Court and Aristocratic Commissions,” in *Raphael* pp. 105-136


**Week 7**

Monday, March 5  **Raphael, Draftsman**


Wednesday, March 7  **Guest Lecture, T.B.A.**
Week 8

March 10-18 Spring Break

Week 9

Monday, March 19  Raphael, Antiquarian

Jones and Penny, “‘Seeking Rome in Rome’”, Raphael, pp. 199-205


Raphael and Castiglione, The Letter to Leo X, in Hart and Hicks, Palladio’s Rome, pp. 177-192

Wednesday, March 21  Raphael, Architect


Raphael’s Letter on the Villa Madama in Jones and Penny, Raphael, pp. 247-248

The Letters of Pliny the Younger, ed. Helen Tanzer, selections

Week 10

Monday, March 26  Raphael’s Late Religious Paintings

Christian Kleinbub, “Raphael’s Transfiguration as Visio-Devotional Program,” in Vision and the Visionary in Raphael, pp. 120-145

Wednesday, March 28  The School of Raphael

Tom Henry and Paul Joannides, “Raphael’s Boys,” in The Late Raphael, pp. 67-76.

**Week 11**

Monday, April 2 **Michelangelo in Florence**


Wednesday, April 4 **Michelangelo and Drawing as Invention**


**Week 12**

Monday, April 9 guest lecture Tony Sigel

**Michelangelo, Scultore**


Wednesday, April 11 **Michelangelo and the Sistine Ceiling**

Johannes Wilde, “The Sistine Ceiling,” in *Michelangelo: Six Lectures*, pp. 48-84

Week 13

Monday, April 16  The Figure and the Frame

Wilde, The Tomb of Julius II, in Michelangelo: Six Lectures, pp. 85-113

Brothers, “The Figure and the Frame,” in Michelangelo, Drawing, and the Invention of Architecture, pp. 85-151

Wednesday, April 18  The Laurentian Library

James Ackerman, The Architecture of Michelangelo, pp. 95-119

Brothers, “Architecture as Subject,” in Michelangelo, Drawing, and the Invention of Architecture, pp. 153-203

Week 14

Monday, April 23  Michelangelo as Poet and Writer

James Saslow, The Poetry of Michelangelo: An Annotated Translation
Poems 5, 84, 151 and others to be assigned

Deborah Parker, “From Experience to Expression: Representations of Captivity in Michelangelo’s Art, Poetry, and Letters,” in Michelangelo and the Art of Letter Writing, pp. 87-115

Selections from Michelangelo’s Letters

Wednesday, April 25  Michelangelo’s Late Works and Legacy

Johannes Wilde, “The Last Thirty Years,” in Michelangelo: Six Lectures, pp. 147-192


Michelangelo, Letter on Sangallo’s plan for St. Peter’s