

## How to read paintings and buildings

Dr Emily Guerry

### **Course Description:**

This course will explore the history of art through detailed analysis of paintings and buildings, providing students with the opportunity to develop a wealth of skills. It also aims to enrich your enjoyment of art and architecture. Although the structure of the course is essentially chronological, every week highlights a different set of aesthetic themes. Each of the twelve lectures will assess some of the major transformations in the history of art and architecture, outlining interventions and paradigm shifts through a variety of methods and approaches. Together, we will focus on various works of art as case studies and their historical context, while our seminars, tutorials, and special field trips enhance your understanding through direct encounters with the artworks and critical engagement.

The aim of the course is to cultivate your

- ability to understand paintings, buildings, and their cultural significance
- understanding of the changing ‘ways of seeing’ throughout time
- critical skills of visual analysis and ‘visual literacy’
- interpretive skills for the study of cultural history and aesthetics
- competence in crafting an argument and developing sharp critical thinking

The course is designed to be interdisciplinary and is suitable for students of all subjects. There are no prerequisites and no previous knowledge of art history/analysis is required.

### **Teaching Methods and Assessment:**

- 12 x 1.25hr Lectures (15hrs)
- 6 x 1.25hr Seminars (7.5hrs)
- 4 x 1.25hr Tutorials (5hrs)

Lectures as described above. We will visit some museum and heritage sites outside the period of the lectures. We also we have the unique opportunity to meet with and learn directly from experts in the field.

Seminars and Tutorials (10 in total) will allow for further analysis of the history and theory of art and architecture. In addition to a research essay and exam, every student will give a short presentation in seminar on one specific work of art or architecture, analysing its form and function as well as its cultural significance.

### **Final assessment:**

An essay of no more than 3,000 words (40%)

A final three-hour written examination (40%)

An oral presentation (10%)

Participation in seminar discussion (10%).

## Detailed Lecture List

- 1 Introduction
- 2 *Mimesis*: The heritage of Apelles
- 3 Rome, *Romanitas*, and the Romanesque
- 4 Image on the edge
- 5 Iconography and the Gothic imagination
- 6 Vasari and canonisation
- 7 *Nympha* and the legacy of (Warburg's) cultural history
- 8 From Romanticism to Restoration via Viollet-le-Duc
- 9 The Painter/Painting of Modern Life (Baudelaire/Clark)
- 10 Norm and Form
- 11 The politics of display – From globalization to monetization
- 12 Starchitects and the New Art History

### Required reading:

- John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (1972; rpr 2008).  
Ernst Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (16<sup>th</sup> ed., 2007)  
Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture* (1942)

### Supplementary reading:

- Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence* (1990)  
T J Clark, *Heaven on Earth* (2020)  
Roger Fry, *Vision and Design* (1920 / 2007)  
Katy Hessel, *The Story of Art without Men* (2022)  
Matthew Rice, *Rice's Language of Buildings* (2018)  
Liz Rideal, *How to Read Paintings* (2014)  
John Ruskin, *Modern Painters I + The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849; rpr 2010)  
Marine Tanguy, *The Visual Detox* (2024)