

# ARTH 1010: World Art before 1400

Fall 2023

Prof. Ann Kuttner

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Lecture: MW 12-12:59

Recitation: F 10:15-11:14 / F 12-12:59

Room: TBA

Prospectus draft 2, July 19 (update from March)

The Canvas site for this course will be live within two days. I will put up our textbook information there (see also below), along with further contact information for myself and your TA. As soon as Penn tells us where the classrooms are, that information will be posted.

The final syllabus draft will be up by around **August 25**.

*\*\* In August I will experiment with the AI chatbots and additional resources accessible to students to revise the tasks for this course in light of those tools. I might assign AI use for a task or two: wait and see. If I do this there will, of course, be the option not to use AI tools, and I will devise alternative task versions for those students who do not wish to share their information with an AI system.*

## ***Penn catalogue description:***

"The course serves as a double introduction to the History of Art. First, it is a survey of the ancient world that lays the foundation for the history of art across the Eastern Hemisphere. Throughout this enormous spread of time and geography, an emphasis will be placed on moments of interaction, as well as on analogies. Secondly, through this survey of the ancient world up to around 1400 CE, the basic skills that serve the student in the study of history of art will also be introduced and developed: close looking, understanding plans, the basics of iconography, questions of stylistic development, among others."

**Skills to develop:** attentive observation, close looking and reading, critical thinking and conceptual awareness, intellectual imagination, (re)search and project design, verbal articulation of what you see and think, brainstorming on your own and in a group, cross-cultural awareness. You will get a look at

what it means to make histories of any kind, including those of what people make. Throughout this course a key issue is that of **'how we know what we think we know'**. What is evidence evidence of? What constitutes evidence? How does one reconstruct a past culture, from the vantage point of one's own?

### **Actual things and the museum institution:**

This course will put you with **museum and archive** holdings at Penn several times, as well as with online museum archives and databases in some of the little 'readings'. How that is carried out depends on the size of the class.

*If you would like to be in touch about this course, email me at [akuttner@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:akuttner@sas.upenn.edu) to set up a time to speak in person or on Zoom.*

*If you would like to find out more about some of my scholarly interests, and see the range of student research projects at undergraduate and graduate level that I have advised at Penn, and the courses I have taught, see the version of my cv posted to my faculty page on the Dept. of History of Art site, <https://arth.sas.upenn.edu/people/ann-kuttner>.*

### **Textbook**

The e-textbook is that used for the last several years:

Stokstad and Cothren, **Art History, Volume 1**, 6th edition, published by Pearson,  
<https://www.pearson.com/en-us/subject-catalog/p/art-history-volume-1/P200000003090/9780137500383>

**E-Textbook**, 10.99/month for a minimum of 4 months; you can also pay it all up front.

**Print rental**, 74.99. (When the rental expires there is an option to pay that price, again, to own it.)

You can purchase through the Penn Bookstore at 3601 Walnut St, or you can go directly to the publisher site. I put in the Bookstore order July 19, and hope it will be ready soon.

Buy the eTextbook, or rent a hardcopy, as you prefer.

There is a phone app for the e-book you can download at the publisher site. It has some useful study features like being able to add some online notes and flashcards, listen to an audio version, and zoom on the images. Some people, however, feel they study a text most effectively from a physical copy.

**Do NOT buy the e-version called Revel**, 74.99, which is much more expensive than the regular ebook. Revel is a course platform in which the instructor can run multiple-choice quizzes and their grading inside the platform. I am not going to use it. I write your exam questions myself, I don't like multiple-choice questions, and a human - I or the TA - will always evaluate your work. (Revel quizzes ask verbal questions only. My tests will also typically show you an image and ask you to comment on it.) **The only**

**feature significantly different to the regular ebook is that Revel would let you give yourself some practice quizzes** of the kind it thinks you would take, derived from its text. That could be a nice study aid. However, I may not be assigning you to learn everything in a given chapter, and your TA and I hope you will also learn from additional concepts, language and information which we present that are not in our book, as well as from any additional readings.

**\*\* If you have a financial aid package that supports course textbook purchases**, then buy through the Penn Bookstore in order to get reimbursed. The Bookstore can guide you in this process.

<https://www.business-services.upenn.edu/services/bookstore>

<https://www.shopsatpenn.com/university-pennsylvania-bookstore>

215 898 7595

**No other course materials cost money to read.** Articles and book chapters will be posted to Canvas in pdf form, or you will be given a library link for some to download on your own. No digital sources that I assign have a paywall.

#### **AI tools:**

If I assign the use of an AI tool (and I might) for a task, the free version will be sufficient for that task, even if the paid version has more features and permits better access than the free version. I will discuss AI tools and the policies for AI use with you in the first couple of class sessions, and also as the course evolves.

#### **Devices, recommended:**

In this class we look closely at images of our materials. I hope very much you will often have access to a screen at least as large as that of a tablet, so that you can look as closely as possible at the image slides from class (which will be shared with you on Canvas) with their captions, at web-sites I may assign, and at illustrations in texts.

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**Below: some comments to the course, a description of the structure of each week, and a draft list of course tasks and grade percentages.** *This course uses a Canvas site for all teaching and reference materials, the lecture PPTs, announcements, and discussion posts. A final syllabus and calendar will be posted there by August 25th.*

**\*What is "art"?** *Many of our cultures of study had no one word for what many in this country mean by "art". You will see painting and sculpture and mosaic, cathedrals and ziggurats, as you might expect. But you will also see portable objects of many kinds which were treasured by our cultures of study - artifacts - ranging from fine textile to luxury ceramics to ivory boxes and enameled buckles, illustrated books and fine calligraphy, and more. Our monuments and things come from civic, domestic, religious, funerary and other settings. The buildings we look at often had richly decorated surfaces - paint, mosaic, stucco, fine stone veneers; thus, often in this class questions about images, structure and space will be interlinked.*

**\*What does 'World Art' mean here?**

*There is far too much to see .... so the 1010 instructor selects, to give a very broad range, aiming for two things: to show traditions that at some point historically interlinked, and to show great case-study comparisons even between cultures without those links. The 1010 instructor is also thinking about what is on show in the Penn Museum of Archaeology and some of the other museums in Philadelphia.*

*Why 1400? well, it needs a cutoff somewhere, with ARTH 1020 picking up where this course leaves off. Roughly, the cut off falls around the peak of what was called, in art histories of Europe, 'medieval', with historians now talking sometimes about a 'global middle ages'. The edges of set periods get fuzzy, true: the class will talk about this issue of how historians define periods and what those mean for our subjects.*

*Our territory:*

- *cultures on the continent of Africa*
- *cultures across the massive continent of Eurasia, and some of its important offshore island systems like those of Japan and Britain, islands in the Mediterranean, etc.*
- *and perhaps a few more zones, another continent or two .... TBA.*

This course introduces you not just to art history but also to **thinking historically** more broadly, touching briefly on contexts of politics, religion, trade and economy, social history, ethnicity and race, and more, whenever they can illuminate our stuff. You will learn how our things are, often, key evidence for understanding those realms of human behavior.

Some of the cultures we study are **connected** in one way or another across space and time; others present **parallel developments** without necessarily having those connections, just as you would meet in **case study** series in anthropology or political science. People in art history and **archaeology** talk a lot these days about 'world art' and 'global art history': this course tests those models. For the deep past, much of what people know comes from literally unearthing its traces, or finding things in ruins and in later re-use; **relations between archaeology and art history** will be a topic for us. You will also meet people of the past in their own **surviving texts** that touch on the arts.

A great deal of what history of art studies has ended up in a **modern museum setting**, sometimes very far distant from its point of origin, even though it was made for a very different setting, in a world before current nation states. For this class you will be in the Penn Museum of Archaeology more than once. Thinking about what museums are for, and critiquing how they have historically collected and told stories, is something you will meet often in lectures and in recitations.

**The digital museum:** many major museums, and smaller ones too (like the Penn Museum), have digitized much of their collections. Your tasks will sometimes send you to online collections sites, and I will indicate museum study resources. I will ask you to think with me about the possibilities of the digital museum and the online exhibition as well as their limits.

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## Thinking broadly, digging deep:

**The structure of each week** is designed to help you learn a panorama of a culture's arts, on the one hand, and, on the other, to share writings that scholars and others make on a focused topic that can be so much more thoughtful than a textbook. Discussion, written and live, is especially centered on such readings.

**1. -- On Mondays I'll lecture a great deal**, though your voices are welcome also: I will be telling a story, demonstrating skills and unpacking the assigned material a bit. This session will be largely keyed to some of the textbook, and also will ask you to sometimes look & read a bit in potentially interesting digital resources.

The course calendar will list the reading & looking task for the week. If I aim to show only some things in the chapter, you will have a monument list. For some monuments I show that are not in our textbook I will set up a PPT or digital source to look at. **Regular quizzes** will be based on these assignments.

*The captioned **Powerpoints** from lecture and recitation will be stored on Canvas for you, so that you can review from them and get thoughts for discussions, exam answers, and, eventually, your final research project.*

Lectures aim to tease out threads for you that might tie the various weeks together - the rise of complex states and the relations of art to power and status, ideas of the sacred, human understanding of landscape and the environment, issues of class and gender, concepts of identity, the status of makers, the role of the viewer, movement in space, etc. Lectures will also work to thread together the connections between the visual and material culture of societies which in some way knew of another's arts.

**2. -- For Wednesdays**, we will also read a good secondary source - an article, a book chapter - on an important monument or site or artifact, **and talk it over in class**. Before class you will do a very small kind of response (content TBA) to share on a Discussion thread on Canvas.

**3. -- On Friday you have a recitation**. This lets you relax with a smaller group in a more intimate setting, in a classroom, museum gallery, archive, etc., to talk over with your TA our material and approaches to it, and to practice analysing, coming up with fruitful questions, and answering them. Occasionally the TA will share with you some images and things additional to those covered in lecture.

Your TA is a graduate student in the Department of History of Art, in the coursework years of the department's PhD program.

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## Tasks and evaluation:

**This class is *\*not\** graded on a bell curve.**

\*I am still working on how to take account of AI tools for these tasks. TBA

**draft, July 2023**

Several in-class quizzes

20% [you may drop your two lowest quiz grades]

Midterm

20%

Final exam (non-cumulative)

20%

First, short takehome task

10%

Second, longer task (5-7 pages of writing of some kind), involving guided research

25%

Participation

5% - any required Discussion thread posts, and committed recitation participation.

**AI tools:** I won't be assuming anyone has used a chatbot before, though many will have. If I ask you to try out employing its possibilities then critiquing them, grading will look at the logic and insight and imagination of what you do, as I would for any (re)search I assign. A task will not assume you already have a great proficiency in crafting gorgeous prompts.

Chances to up the grade: the course is about where you end up, not where you start from, in terms of skills and insight. Our material, and art history itself, are new for many 1010 students. This may even be your first semester in college. For those who struggle at first but improve over time, the grading can take account of large improvement when a final grade is on that half-point borderline.

\*Especially committed participation in recitation discussion, and bravery in trying out thoughtful comments in the main class, can be credited when a final evaluation is on a half-point borderline.

**Testing:** sometimes you will get a written response prompt. Quizzes also will show you images, much of the time. The midterm and final exam tasks will test you on image recognition a bit, in addition to an essay prompt. For the final, only material after the midterm will be tested.

**Other tasks, look/write**

-- The first, short task, set after a few weeks of the course, will incorporate practice at visual analysis and visual imagination, and have a written component.

-- The longer task, due at the end of the semester, will have you practice research skills and critical thinking, and will involve a written component. You will be mentored in your research by me and the TA.