

ARTH 0500

Biography and Art History

Tuesdays, 12-3pm | Jaffe History of Art Building, Room 104

Prof. Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw

Office Hours: Online, Wednesdays, 2pm-4pm (in person by appointment, Jaffe 304)

gshaw@sas.upenn.edu

Beginning with the ancient Greeks, people have created specific biographical structures to understand and explain the artistic process. Artists have often been labeled as natural prodigies possessing creative powers on par with the divine. This seminar will examine the role that biography plays in the assessment of visual art and the creative process over time and across European and American culture. During the semester we will read germinal texts and discuss recent biographically focused art history, as well as the historical and post-structuralist critical theory that has helped to shape the current cultural construction of the artist. Throughout the seminar we will discuss the underlying debates around these various approaches to biography.

Requirements:

1. Attendance at all meetings is mandatory, as is active, vocal participation in class discussions. Readings must be completed prior to the class for which they are assigned. 25%
2. Each week a different group of students will present the readings and begin the class discussion with a set of at least three questions. The group presentation is graded based on collective effort and engagement. 25%
3. In consultation with the professor, each student will choose a paper topic related to the themes of the class. If the student chooses to focus on an artist, then the artist must be deceased and have at least one book-length biography written about them that is

immediately available. The student will then produce a 10–12-page paper due on December 6, 2022, by 11pm. The paper must be submitted in hard copy and to the Canvas site. The MS Word document name must include the paper title and the student's last name. Utilizing the critical methods examined in the seminar, the paper will be a historiography of the important biographic materials relating to the student's chosen artist. 50%

Required Books are Available at the Penn Book Center:

Kris, E. and O. Kurz. (1979). *Legend, Myth and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment*. New Haven, Yale University Press.

Freud, Sigmund. (1916). *Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood*. New York: WW Norton, (originally published 1910).

Vasari, Giorgio. (1998). *Lives of the Artists, Volume 1*. Oxford World's Classics. This version PLEASE.

Please see the university's website for guidelines on Academic Integrity.

http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/ai_codeofacademicintegrity.html

SCHEDULE | READINGS

AUGUST 30 - Introduction

SEPTEMBER 6 - Vasari, selections from *Lives of the Artists*, 1550-68.

SEPTEMBER 13 - Kris and Kurz, *Legend Myth and Magic in the Image of the Artist*, 1931.

SEPTEMBER 20 - Levy, "*The Legend of the Artist and Mein Kampf*," 2013.

SEPTEMBER 27 - Freud, *Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood*, 1910.

OCTOBER 4 - Schapiro, "Leonardo and Freud," 1956.

OCTOBER 11 - Foucault, "What is an Author," 1979, & Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 1989.

OCTOBER 18 - Garrard, "Artemisia and Susanna," 1982, & Spear, *Artemisia Gentileschi: Ten Years of Fact and Fiction*, 2000, & LaPierre, selections from *Artemisia*, 1998.

OCTOBER 25 - Buick, "The Ideal Works of Edmonia Lewis," 1995, & Burgard, "Edmonia Lewis and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow," 1995.

NOVEMBER 1 - TBD

NOVEMBER 8 - FILM & Individual Meetings with Professor Shaw

NOVEMBER 15 - Barnett-Sanchez, review of *Frida Kahlo: Her Life and Art Revisited*, 1997, & Garber, "Art Critics of Frida Kahlo," 1992, & Baddeley, "De-Frocking the Kahlo Cult," 1991.

NOVEMBER 22 - NO CLASS

NOVEMBER 29 - Presentations

December 6 - Last Class Meeting