

# The Panorama Experience

ARTH / GRMN 5760

Spring 2023

T 1:45–4:44pm ET

Professor Vance Byrd [*he/him*]

Office: Williams Hall 733

[vbyrd@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:vbyrd@sas.upenn.edu)

Office Hours: T 11:00am–12:00pm and by appointment

## COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Painted panoramas were one of the nineteenth century's signature popular entertainments. Since its invention in 1787, audiences from cities and towns around the world have admired these circular landscape representations of nature, cities, and battles, which provide an opportunity to escape everyday life by witnessing scenes from the past and far-away places from an unfamiliar perspective. In this seminar, we will consider the phenomenon of the panorama, above all, as a political art form. We will examine the ways in which European and American artists since the nineteenth century have turned to panoramic forms to tell and call into question stories about empire and colonialism, enslavement and freedom struggles, the mastery of natural environments, as well as military victory and loss. As we debate the politics of panoramic forms, we will gain familiarity with a set of related topics from visual and material culture, including vedute, transparencies, magic lantern projections, panoramic wallpaper, dioramas, cartographic representation, history painting, illustrated print culture and pictorial journalism, travel literature and guidebooks, accordion folds and gatefolds, stereoscopes, panoramic photography, panoramic shots in cinema, and immersive environments. In addition to enriching your knowledge of nineteenth-century media history and how to conduct media archaeological research in libraries, archives, and museums, this seminar will offer an overview of approaches to visual culture from social history, gender, race, colonialism, museum studies, print history, sound studies, transnational history, and digital art history, which will be of use for work in a number of interdisciplinary fields. Students with a background in disciplines, such as architecture, literature, history, cinema studies, gender and sexuality studies, Africana Studies, and material texts, are welcome.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

All course readings and films will be available as downloadable PDFs on Canvas. Some objects will be available in the Kislak Center for Special Collections and at other institutions on campus and in Philadelphia.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

- 25% = One 30-minute teaching session *with a partner* in which you introduce a “panoramic” object or image.
- 25% = One 45-minute teaching session in which you introduce and lead a discussion of an assigned reading.
- 50% = Two 10-pg. essays in which you respond to a prompt synthesizing course readings. *There is no final research paper or exam.*