MAP Expressive Cultures: Images  
V55.0720, Spring 2006

Prof. Dennis Geronimus  
Department of Fine Arts, Silver Center  
Lectures Tuesday & Thursday 2.00 - 3.15 pm (Rm. 300)  
Recitation 1: Monday 9.30 - 10.45 (Rm. 302)  
Recitation 2: Monday 11.00 - 12.15 (Rm. 302)  
Recitation 3: Monday 12.30 - 1.45 (Rm. 302)  
Recitation 4: Monday 2.00 - 3.15 (Rm. 302)  
Office hours: Fridays 11 - 1 (sign up for appt. with department secretary)  
Dept. telephone: 212. 998.8180  
E-mail (to be used with discretion, please): dvg2@nyu.edu

Please do not hesitate to come and see me or to get in touch with me during my office hours or by private appointment.

Preceptors: Ms. Amy Hamlin (akh218@nyu.edu), Institute of Fine Arts  
Ms. Elizabeth Monti (eamonti@yahoo.com), Institute of Fine Arts  
Office hours: Amy: Monday 3.30 – 4.30  
Elizabeth: Thursday 3.30 – 4.30

Principal texts  
Helen Gardner, Art Through the Ages (Fort Worth, 2004) – 12th ed. only  
Sylvan Barnet, A Short Guide to Writing About Art (New York, 2005) – 8th ed. only

Optional but recommended texts  

Everyone must obtain the two required texts. Copies are waiting for you at the NYU Bookstore. The texts should also be available from internet discounters (Amazon, Alibris, etc.) at comparable, if not better, prices. The optional texts have not been ordered for the NYU Bookstore, although this may change, provided there is enough interest.

The required reading will provide important background information and overviews as a complement to the class lectures. Additional assigned readings, related specifically to six short critical synopses interspersed throughout the semester, will be available as course packets.

Our goals in the context of MAP  
“It is the onlooker who makes the pictures.” – Marcel Duchamp

In this class, you are to be your own researcher, traveler, narrator. At the heart of the MAP experience is an elasticity, a freedom of thought that extends not only to content but also to modes and methods of inquiry. You will be stretched to see and think in fresh ways, developing your creative faculties while at the same time honing your critical reading and writing skills. Although this course is intended for non-specialists, it will nonetheless challenge all of you,
regardless of major, to tackle the rich discipline of art history with the same intellectual rigor that you would invariably bring to a course more in your "comfort zone." Of course, this transition from the familiar to the unfamiliar will require work on your part — work to create meaning, and even to extract pleasure. It is my job to make this work provocative and rewarding.

Some of the free-ranging questions that will be addressed in this course are: What are the fundamental issues associated with the interpretation of visual art? What vocabulary do we employ to best express these interpretations? How does one parse a critical text? What are the broader consequences of our inquiry? For example, how might one relate the ideas that emerge in class to other academic disciplines and to our perceptions of culture, high and low? How do museums and galleries construct meaning? By approaching all of these questions with a receptive mind, it is my hope that the journey we are now set to embark upon will be full of surprises and fascinating detours, ultimately leading to an understanding of art that is not limited by our own tastes and immediate experiences — that is, to liking only what we know.

The most unique feature of MAP is its recitations. Divided into four sections and led by the graduate student preceptors (Amy and Liz), these weekly sessions will enhance your understanding of the material covered in lecture. The main objective of these more conversational meetings is to build confidence in a new field by familiarizing you with different approaches to interpreting visual language. These meetings may also include short writing exercises, aimed at sharpening your eye as well as your prose. There is no fixed formula to these informal meetings. No recitation will ever be quite the same. Brainstorming is always encouraged, in the hope of generating discussion in new, unforeseen directions. While some time may be spent on the clarification of material covered in lecture, discussions may also draw upon the preceptors’ own scholarly interests and negotiations. What projects are they engaged with at the moment? What are the interpretative strategies that they have brought to bear on their material? What are their most surprising findings? Their biggest obstacles?

The emphasis throughout is on active learning and innovative thinking rather than inherited concepts — in short, what brings all of us together here at the University, the life of the mind.

A more specific battle plan

Contemporary novelist Don DeLillo has written, “In our world we sleep and eat the image and pray to it and wear it too.” In this class, we will attempt to recapture what is at stake in our encounter with visual images when seen not as props or illustrations but as creations with meanings entirely their own. While we may engage with uncertainty and contingency in our rethinking of accepted ideas, we must, at the same time, acknowledge that every work of art was done somewhere, some when, by someone. Works will be examined on their native terms: both as physical objects, with sensitivity to their materiality and formal qualities, and as works with specific intended functions, ranging from the ritual to the theatrical. As we shall see, images in the Renaissance, my own area of specialization, were received in very particular ways: not necessarily as we receive them, but gradually, through mediation and time. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that the art of the Renaissance, like that of other periods, was also generally concerned with great and universal themes. The purpose of this course, therefore, is the recognition of various patterns, overlappings, associations and disconnections that we can draw from our visual analysis, whether the image in question is a medieval stained glass window or Pixar animation.
Our main focus will be the art of Europe and North America from the fourteenth century to the present. Our guiding principle, whatever the period, will be the study of images as process – the process of making, of interpretation and translation. To this end, we will study not only the effect – the final appearance of an art object – but also the means. In other words, the “how” and the “why” of image-making will often prove of greater interest to our enterprise than the “what,” yielding a history not only of artifacts but also the culture-specific ways in which images functioned within the social, intellectual, ceremonial or political contexts in which they were originally intended to perform their dramas, big and small.

Rather than studying the history of art as a linear progression of greatest hits, we will try to appreciate its complex web of relationships. The Renaissance, for instance, was not simply a period of noble equilibrium, as it is often reductively presented; rather, it is one harboring many different, often contradictory strains. In order to recognize the many trends and countertrends that will emerge, we will touch upon a variety of themes: artistic practice and technique, issues of style, iconography, patronage, economics and material culture, and the mutual encounter not only between individual artists but between Italy and northern Europe, as well as between East and West. Critical to understanding many of these issues are the fluid, shifting boundaries of creativity, originality, authenticity, derivation and imitation.

This kaleidoscope of topics demands an equally broad range of methodologies: formalist, typological, documentary, technical-material, cultural-historical, gender-based. Although we cannot possibly cover all of these interpretative strategies in class, students will be presented with a rich sampling of different types of art historical writing.

Requirements

Regular class attendance, punctuality and keeping current on reading assignments are expected. Three unexcused absences (without a note from a doctor or guardian) will result in a drop in a letter grade for the class (from A to A- and so on). Leaving early twice will equal one absence.

Each lecture will cover a wide range of material and missed information will be difficult to regain. If you do miss a class or recitation, you are responsible for photocopying a classmate’s notes.

Reading should be coordinated with lectures and done before the meeting of the class and the introduction of new topics, in order to familiarize you with the issues to be discussed. Before each class, students are also encouraged to reread the class notes from the previous lecture. Do your best to study the material as it is presented to you; this way, you will rarely feel overwhelmed.

Please use a dictionary (or art historical dictionary) if you come across unfamiliar vocabulary. The Gardner textbook offers a useful glossary in the back.

I also urge you to use the “Buddy System.” Exchange your number/email with another fellow classmate with whom you can correspond regarding missed material, share ideas and clarify topics covered in lecture or the readings.
Other important reminders

* All work must be completed in order to pass the course.

* No make-up exams are given unless in the case of a serious illness or a family emergency. Again, a written note from a doctor or guardian is then required. Failure to contact the professor or preceptors about a missed exam – within 48 hrs. – will result in a failing grade for the exam.

* Extensions for the writing assignments will not be granted, so please do not ask. Papers that are not handed in when due are not accepted. If you are absent on the date the paper is due, the paper must still reach me, one way or another.

* All writing assignments must be typed, preferably double-spaced. It is strongly recommended that you keep all of your written submissions after they are handed back; this is very helpful for me in case I am asked for a letter of recommendation in the future.

* No food or drink is allowed in the classroom, except water.

* Please keep all cell phones and pagers turned off.

* Students may not tape-record lectures or recitation sections.

Even after all these rules and hot beverage-bans, I hold out the hope that you won’t find me to be too scary an ogre. Just wait and see.

Grading

Your grade for the course will be based on the following (with some possible adjustments, at the professor’s discretion):

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Six writing assignments</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm quiz</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final examination (on material since midterm quiz)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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The variety of assignments will give you several different forums in which you may demonstrate your knowledge and understanding. As you can see, attendance and participation – both fair measures of your commitment – go a long way, accounting for nearly a third of your final grade. Take full advantage!

The midterm quiz and final exam will predominantly cover material presented in lecture and will include some combination of the following, as yet to be decided:

1. slide identifications; 2. slide comparisons; 3. brief essay questions; and 4. unknowns (including extra credit)

Slide images appearing on the quiz and final will be drawn exclusively from the illustrations in Gardner’s *Art Through the Ages*. 
In the process of studying, students are urged to review the whole chapter(s), not just the brief passages that apply narrowly to the works you must know. To put it another way, there is knowing and then there is understanding. If you understand the period as a whole, rather than relying solely on shortcuts of memorization, you will be able to better situate and make sense of images you have never seen in class.

For each image appearing in the two exams, everyone is responsible for the object's
1. title or subject / type of object (if without a title)
2. artist
3. date (within fifty years)
4. medium / media
5. original location, but only if the object remains in its original location).

New York museums provide the ideal setting for the study of art in the original, and students will be encouraged in various ways, through six different writing assignments, to take advantage of the benefits offered the city's permanent collections and temporary exhibitions. A selection of some of the most exciting upcoming shows is offered below.

**Important dates to remember**

Dates of short written assignments (subject to slight change):
- Thur., Jan. 26
- Thur., Feb. 9
- Thur., Feb. 23
- Thur., March 23
- Thur., Apr. 6
- Thur., Apr. 20
* No papers are due the week of the midterm or the final week of class (pre-final)

Midterm: Thur., March 9
No class (Spring Break fiesta): Tue. & Thurs., March 14 & 16
Last day of class: Mon., May 1
Final exam: Tue., May 9 (2 - 3.50 pm)

**Winter-spring exhibitions, a dazzling menu**

Perhaps our most important faculty in the context of this introductory course is that of close observation. The foundations of art history are as much in the gallery as they are in the library.
With this in mind, whenever possible this course will take advantage of New York's unmatched cultural resources. At some point in the course, we will try to arrange a group visit (or two) to a temporary museum exhibition and/or number of Chelsea contemporary art galleries. The show(s) and date(s) of our trip will be decided closer to the time. Some of the exhibitions listed below will serve as a starting point for your writing assignments.

As you can see, a number of these collections charge a sizable entrance fee, even with a student discount.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1000 5th Ave. @ 82 St. (suggested admission)
“Fra Angelico,” until Jan. 29
“Antonello da Messina: Sicily’s Renaissance Master,” until March 5

The Frick Collection, 1 E. 70 St. @ 5th Ave. ($5, student adm.)
“Goya’s Last Works,” Feb. 22 to May 14

The New York Public Library, 5th Ave. & 42 St. (free)

MoMa, 11 W. 53 St., bet. 5th & 6th Avenues ($12, student adm.)
“Pixar: 20 Years of Animation,” until Feb. 6

Guggenheim, 5th Ave. & 89 St. ($15, student adm.)
“David Smith: A Centennial,” Feb. 3 to May 14

The Jewish Museum, 1109 5th Ave. & 92 St. (7.50, student adm.)
“Sarah Bernhardt: The Art of High Drama,” until Apr. 2

Research consultation at Bobst Library

Tom McNulty, the Librarian for Fine Arts at Bobst, has kindly offered to conduct one-on-one student-initiated consultations about various aspects of your written work. He is more than willing to answer any questions that you may have about electronic and print resources specific to art historical research. To make an appt., you may contact Mr. McNulty at tom.mculty@nyu.edu. Be sure to have specific questions ready when you meet.

College Learning Center

Some of you may find that you need or want extra help with class matters, whether this consists of reviewing for an exam, better understanding a particular concept or organizing a paper. Expert (and free) peer-on-peer tutoring is available at the College Learning Center, located at: 5-11 University Place, 1st floor. Director: Dr. Kimberly Yousey (kim.yousey@nyu.edu). For more information, see http://www.nyu.edu/cas/clc

Internet Use and the Virtue of the Virtual

“Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?” – T.S. Eliot (from “The Rock”)

Nothing can replace the experience of standing before Leonardo’s Last Supper in the refectory of S. Maria delle Grazie, Milan. The best print reproduction offers a less than satisfying substitute. The World Wide Web does present us with a readily accessible and often helpful resource to study art. Leonardo himself is proof enough that the creative and the technical mind are far from mutually exclusive and capable of producing extraordinary results. Nonetheless, the element of speed and convenience that makes the Web so tempting should be approached with caution, as it can become all too easy to go adrift in an ocean of information that is inaccurate, misleading, and
ultimately unreliable. The “WebMuseum,” put together by a computer technician, is the most notorious example of unfiltered information with dubious, undisclosed sources. Beware!

I strongly encourage everyone to read your handout titled “Guidelines for Evaluating Websites,” written by the Electronic Resources Librarian at the Metropolitan Museum and providing useful criteria for critically judging the legitimacy of any given site. The main question to be answered is whether the site was designed by a recognized authority in the field … or someone who merely pursues art history as a hobby.

I ask that a student should consult with me prior to using any website as a research tool for a written assignment. The following are a few of the trustworthy sites of which students may take advantage and can be readily found on the Bobst website, under “Art” in the “Humanities” database:

Grove’s Dictionary of Art Online (www.groveart.com/shared/views/home.html).
Bridgeman Art Library – one of the finest image data services available (www.bridgeman.co.uk/search/quick_search.asp)
Encyclopedia Britannica Online (www.britannica.com)
World Wide Arts Resource (WWAR) – more of a catalogue/gateway of online sites related to art

For finding specific articles via indexes (http://library.nyu.edu/collections/find_articles.html):

RLIN: comprehensive database that serves as a major union catalogue; reflects the collections of major research libraries; academic, public, corporate and national libraries; archives and museums; historical societies and international book vendors.
Art Index Retrospective (alternate access: http://hwwilsonweb.com/)
BHA (Bibliography of the History of Art); indexes approximately 2,500 American and European art journals; coverage is from 1973 to the present.


* Some of the above sites, such as Grove’s Dictionary of Art, require subscription, but can be accessed at the Bobst computers.

Museum web sites are traditionally reliable. See, for example: the Metropolitan Museum (www.metmuseum.org), Frick Collection (www.frick.org), Louvre (www.louvre.fr), or the National Galleries in Washington (www.nga.gov) and London (www.nationalgallery.org.uk).

The Metropolitan Museum web site in fact offers a useful, tried-and-true list of online resources, organized by curatorial departments, under the heading “Educational resources” on the main page. (See: www.metmuseum.org/education/er_online_resource.asp).
Plagiarism

NYU has a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism, as do I. If I find that you have plagiarized a paper—passing off the ideas or concepts of another as your own without giving due citation or credit—you will at best receive a zero on the paper. At worst, the punishment may include failure in the course and other disciplinary action on the part of the University. You must therefore use proper footnotes/endnotes and bibliography, when applicable (form to be discussed later).
Guidelines to Using the Writing Center

This Writing Center is an educational service open to all members of the NYU community. Our purpose is both to help clients with specific writing tasks and to help them develop strategies for and approaches to writing they can use on their own.

We will work with you at any stage of your writing, beginning with making sense of an assignment. What we work on depends largely on you--what you have already done, what you want. We will suggest alternatives if we think that is in your best interest.

We are not a proofreading or copyediting service. We can help you recognize errors and develop ways of correcting those errors, but we will not correct your paper.

If you are working on a specific assignment, it is often helpful for you to bring a copy of that assignment.

We advise you come at least a few days before your assignment is due, so you will have time to work with what you and the consultant discussed. If you come to a conference with a paper due the next day, we can work on some specific aspect of that paper with you. We will not go through your paper and fix it.

If you are working on a long assignment, we suggest you set up several sessions beginning at least several weeks before your assignment is due.

If you are an international student working towards a greater mastery of English, we suggest you work with us over one or more semesters.

There is a great demand for Writing Center services, and so we have very strict attendance and cancellation policies. If you do not show up or are late too many times, we will not allow you to use our facilities for the remainder of the semester.

We encourage you to become a regular user of the Writing Center and to find a consultant with whom you enjoy working. Although scheduling difficulties may prevent you from always working with that consultant, an ongoing working relationship is helpful for the client and the consultant.

If you have any questions or problems please see Krystyna Illakowicz, secretary or Mary Wislocki, director of the Writing Center.

The Writing Center 269 Mercer Street Second floor 212-998-8866
Academic Guidelines for Students
Morse Academic Plan, College of Arts and Science

To help foster common academic expectations among students and instructors, the following guidelines for MAP courses are offered to students. While these represent minimum expectations across the curriculum, individual faculty members may set additional course requirements. Students should therefore consult the course syllabus for details of policies in each class.

Attendance
Inasmuch as students have voluntarily sought admission to the University, they are expected to attend all class meetings, including all lectures and all meetings of associated recitation, workshop, or laboratory sections. Students may be excused for documented medical or personal emergency and will receive reasonable accommodation for the observance of religious holidays. In these cases, they should contact their instructors in advance or, in cases of emergency, as soon as is practicable. Students are responsible for making up any material or assignments they miss.

Classroom Decorum
The classroom is a space for free and open inquiry and for the critical evaluation of ideas, and it should be free of personal prejudice. Students and instructors alike have an obligation to all members of the class to create an educational atmosphere of mutual trust and respect in which differences of opinion can be subjected to deliberate and reasonable examination without animus.

As a matter of courtesy to their fellow students and instructors, students should arrive at class promptly, prepared and ready to participate. Students are reminded particularly to shut off all cellular telephones and pagers and, except in cases of emergency, to remain in the classroom for the duration of the lecture or section meeting. If it is necessary to leave or enter a room once class has begun, students should do so quietly and with as little disruption as possible. Under University policy, disruptive classroom behavior may be subject to faculty review and disciplinary sanction.

Completion of Assignments
Students are expected to submit course work on time and to retain copies of their work until a final grade has been received for the course. Instructors are not obliged to accept late work and may assign a failing or reduced grade to such assignments.

Students who encounter sudden and incapacitating illness or an other comparably grave circumstance that prevents them from completing the final examination or assignment in a course may request a temporary mark of Incomplete from the course instructor. To receive an Incomplete, students must have completed all other requirements for the course, including satisfactory attendance, and there must be a strong likelihood they will pass the course when all work is completed.

Questions and Concerns
Up-to-date course information is available on the MAP website: www.nyu.edu/cas/map. Questions, concerns, comments, and feedback may be directed to the following members of the MAP staff, located in 903 Silver Center, 212-998-8119. Complaints will remain confidential.

Director: Dr. Eliot Borenstein  morse.plan@nyu.edu
Associate Director, FCC: Dr. Vincent Renzi  map.fcc@nyu.edu
Associate Director, FSI: Dr. Trace Jordan  map.fsi@nyu.edu
Director of Administration: Mike Summers  morse.plan@nyu.edu

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