How to Look at Chinese Painting
FYSEM-UA 773

One of the joys of life is having a clean table by a bright window, brush, inkstone, and paper
- Su Shunqin (1008-1048)

Description: In conjunction with the upcoming exhibition “Chinese Painting and Calligraphy Up Close” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, this course will familiarize students with the materials, forms, and histories of Chinese painting. Designed as a general introduction, the course combines in-class discussion of key paintings with visits to the museum where we will be studying objects first-hand. Issues that will emerge during the semester include but are not limited to the materiality of Chinese painting, the interpretation of its most common genres, its developments into the modern world, as well as the history of collecting and exhibiting Chinese painting in Western museums. Interdisciplinary in its approach and participatory in its pedagogy, the class will offer a solid foundation to anyone interested in broadening their education beyond the canonical histories of Euro-American art.

Objectives: Learn how to ‘read’ Chinese paintings, inscriptions, colophons, seals; gain familiarity with the different modes of representation and manners of expression of Chinese painting as well with the social and intellectual forces behind it; understand the contexts of production, circulation, and appreciation of Chinese painting; learn how to contextualize landscape painting in relation to other genres (portraiture, bird-and-flowers); develop a critical understanding of issues about medium, support, or the notion of canon; develop a methodological framework to reconsider the relationship among formats (portable formats, screens, murals); critically engage with twentieth-century scholarship on early Chinese painting and its narratives.

Office hours and Contact Info:
Tuesdays 1-3PM or by appointment
Office: 303A-04
Telephone: 212.998.8246
Email: mam445@nyu.edu

Class Schedule:
Thursdays 9:30-12:00

Course requirements:
1. Regular Class Attendance and Participation 20%
2. Completion of All Assignments
   a. Two Short Papers [6-5 pages altogether] 30%
   b. In-class discussion leadership 20%
   c. Creative Assignment 10%
   d. Final Museum Presentation and Paper 20%

THE USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES [LAPTOPS, SMARTPHONES, TABLETS] IS NOT ALLOWED IN CLASS DURING OUR MEETINGS
Assignments in detail

1. **Visual Analysis**: During our first meeting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, we will introduce the exhibition “Chinese Painting and Calligraphy Up Close.” During that visit, you will select one painting of which you will write, in max 3 pages, a visual analysis. I will provide more information and guidelines about formal analysis in class. This assignment tests your visual and writing skills, allowing me to gain a more solid grasp of your previous training.

2. **Short paper 1 (Picture Gallery)**. During our second visit to the museum, we will look at the expansion of the exhibition, scheduled to open on March 1st. You will be asked to select two more paintings that thematically, stylistically, or temporally are related to yours. You will need to write a short (max 3 page) memorandum explaining the reasons for your choice. Guidelines will be distributed in class.

3. **Creative Assignment (painting and poetry)**. A standard feature of elite Chinese painting of the premodern period is the combination of picture and text, often in the form of a line of poetry. To understand the complexity of the relationship between word and image, we will create our own pictorial response to a line of poetry and poetic response to a painting in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

4. **In-Class Discussion Leadership**. Two students will be responsible for introducing weekly readings. The students will be sharing short summaries of each readings and develop critical questions to guide class discussion. In addition, each pair will research the Metropolitan Museum’s database to find works of art that relate to the two main objects for each week.

5. **Museum Presentation**. Each student will share the outcome of their research with the rest of the class. The research is meant to provide an analysis of three paintings from the exhibition. We will discuss the specific requirements in class according to each student’s interest and preferred approach. Each student should then hand in a final paper of around 10 pages.

**Academic Integrity**

“The College is a “community of the mind.” Its students, faculty, and staff all share the goal of pursuing truth through free and open inquiry, and we support one another’s endeavors in this regard. As in any community, membership comes with certain rights and responsibilities. Foremost among these is academic integrity. Cheating on an exam, falsifying data, or having someone else write a paper undermines others who are “doing it on their own”; it makes it difficult or impossible to assess fairly a student’s interest, aptitude, and achievement; and it diminishes the cheater, depriving him or her of an education. Most important, academic dishonesty is a violation of the very principles upon which the academy is founded. For this reason, violations of these principles are treated with the utmost seriousness.”

If you have any questions about plagiarism or on how to properly cite your sources please come and speak with me. More information on the university’s policies of academic integrity can be found here: http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity

**Bibliography:**

All readings are available on NYU Classes as well as in course reserves at the Department of Art History. I am happy to provide more bibliography tailored to your specific needs and interests. For background information, I would recommend the following texts (on close reserve for the class) or online resources:


**Websites**

http://www.metmuseum.org/toah [the Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History- Metropolitan Museum of Art: excellent resource with thematic essays, lists of emperors, and bibliographies…]
http://www.asia.si.edu/

**Policy on incomplete work, late work, and absences:**

1. **Incomplete work:** all work must be completed in order to pass the class. Failure to complete any assignment will result in a no entry for the class

2. **Late work:** late work will be accepted only in case of emergency (and after talking to me). In other cases, works turned in late will be accepted with a grade deducted every day between the due date and the date of submission. Only work turned in in time will receive written comments.

3. Class attendance is fundamental to your learning process, and participation plays an important role in your evaluation. More than two absences per semester will result in a lowering of the grade.

**Writing assignments**

1. **NO ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION** [unless previously discussed with me] All papers should be typed and double-spaced, with a font of 10 or 12. For guidelines on acceptable practices, see the brief outline in Sylvan Barnet, *A Short Guide to Writing about Art*, 6th edition, (New York, Longman, 2000), or the extensive version in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th edition, (Chicago, 1993), both available in the Art Library reference section.

2. All sources should be CITED

3. Please stick to the required length for all assignments

4. Look at pictures as much as you can!

5. Please take time to think about the issues discussed during our conferences. Write your thoughts down and return to them as the class progresses. They will all be very useful for your final paper.

**Inclusion and Diversity Statement**

I am part of the Safe Zone Ally community network of trained NYU faculty/staff/students who are available to listen and support you in a safe and confidential manner. As a Safe Zone Ally, I can help you connect with resources on campus to address problems you may face that interfere with your academic and social success on campus as it relates to issues surrounding sexual orientation/gender identity. My goal is to help you be successful and to maintain a safe and equitable campus.

I am firmly committed to diversity and equality in all areas of campus life, including specifically members of the LGBTQ community. In this class I will work to promote an anti-discriminatory environment where everyone feels safe and welcome. I recognize that discrimination can be direct or indirect and take place at both institutional and personal levels. I believe that such discrimination is unacceptable and I am committed to providing equality of opportunity for all by eliminating any and all discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimization. The success of this policy relies on the support and understanding of everyone in this class.
We all have a responsibility not to be offensive to each other, or to participate in, or condone harassment or discrimination of any kind.

Students with Disabilities
Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. The Moses Center website is www.nyu.edu/csd. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

Schedule

01/30: INTRO: MEET AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART
We will introduce the exhibition and the paintings. You will be asked to select a work around which you will develop your first assignment (see above)

02/06: WHAT IS A “CHINESE PAINTING”?
Object: Zhang Yanyuan, “The Origins of Painting” (847), pp. 49-52
Readings:

02/13: CHINESE PAINTING IN TIME AND SPACE
Objects: Zhou Dongqing, The Pleasure of Fishes, 1291; Lu Ji, Mandarin Ducks and Cotton Rose Hibiscus, 15th century
Readings:
James Cahill, “Adjusting Our Image of the Chinese Artist,” pp. 1-31

02/20: A CASE STUDY: THE RIVERBANK
Object: Dong Yuan (attributed), The Riverbank, 10th c.
Readings:

First Short Assignment Due

02/27 NO CLASS

03/05: OF WORDS AND IMAGES: A PRACTICAL EXERCISE
Objects: Wu Zhen, Fisherman, ca. 1350; Ma Yuan, Viewing Plum Blossoms by Moonlight, 13th century.
Readings:

03/12: VISIT TO THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, SECOND ROTATION
We will study the second rotation of the exhibition and the special exhibition celebrating the 150th anniversary of the museum. You will be asked to select two more paintings that are in dialogue with the one you have worked on for the previous assignment (see above).

03/19 SPRING BREAK

03/26: FIGURES AND NARRATIVE
Objects: Li Gonglin, The Classic of Filial Piety, ca. 1085; Zhao Cangyun, Liu Chen and Ruan Zhao Entering the Tiantai Mountains, 13th-14th c.
Readings:

Second Short Assignment due in Class

04/02: BIRDS, FLOWERS, AND THE WORLD OF NATURE
Objects: Lin Liang, Two Hawks in a Thicket, 15th century; Deng Yu, Bamboo and Rock, ca. 1360-1367
Readings:

04/09: SPACE, HUMAN AND NATURAL
Readings:

04/16: VISIT TO THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART
We will review the material discussed so far and will start thinking about your final presentations.
04/23: ‘CHINESE PAINTING’ IN A GLOBAL WORLD

04/30: COLLECTING CHINESE PAINTING, THEN AND NOW
Object: The Asian Art Department at the Metropolitan Museum of Art:
https://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-met/curatorial-departments/asian-art
Readings:

05/07: FINAL ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION