**Class code**

| ARTH-UA 9599.G1.001.SP12 |

**Instructor Details**

| Name: Francesca M. Baldry |
| NYU Home Email Address: francesca.baldry@nyu.edu |
| Office Hours: Wednesday afternoon, or by appointment |
| Office Location: Villa La Pietra & Villa Ulivi |
| Office Extension: 206 |

*For fieldtrips refer to the email with trip instructions and trip assistant’s cell phone number*

**Class Details**

| Semester: Fall 2012 |
| Full Title of Course: Visual Literacy. Art Collecting and Museology |
| Meeting Days and Times: Wednesday, 9:00-11:45 a.m. |
| Classroom Location: Le Vedute, Villa La Pietra |

**Class Description**

Museums are the treasure-houses of the human race. Through history, the museum -- a dialectical structure -- has been acting as a constant and solid bridge between the private and the public, the past and the present. Museums generally derive most of their prominence and importance from their collections, and these holdings constitute the primary difference between museums and other kinds of institutions.

Using the Acton Collection at Villa La Pietra as a case study, the course examines the history and nature of European private and public collecting trends. Themes such as the influence of artistic taste, the house museum as palimpsest, and the role of artists, collectors, art dealers, and philanthropists in the formation of the early public galleries will be discussed. The Acton collection will provide many behind-the-scenes opportunities to take a close look at a great variety of art objects and study issues related to taste and display, museum management and conservation. Finally through the visit to many other museums and exhibitions in Italy, the students will have the opportunity to explore, as a class and individually, different ways to display and interpret works of art and other museum objects. During Fall 2012 semester there will be a special focus on the 19th century collectors’ interiors, used as models in contemporary museography. A visit to Celle (Pistoia) will shed light on a “site-specific” art collection.

**Desired Outcomes**

On completion of this course, students should:

- Be able to analyze, describe, interpret and compare works of art, museum collections and different kind of displays
• Think critically and engage in complex reasoning and express their thoughts clearly through their written work
• Have a basic understanding of museum theory and practice
• Be familiar with all Florentine Museums and main European Museums
• Have mastered an original curatorial project for a museum or exhibition as part of their semester long project

Assessment Components

Attendance, participation and 3 class assignments: 10%
Midterm Exam 30%: oral presentation of 7 minutes on a work of art and its display; a 10 written essay questions on first part of the course readings.
Museum Journal 30%: 15 pages paper, including rooms schemes and labels
Final Exam: 30%: Oral and written presentation of the Final Museology Project.
Paper 9 pages (font 12)-

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

Course Organization

-The course consists of class lectures at Villa La Pietra, lectures on site in Florentine museums and exhibitions, and a field trip at the Gori Collection at Celle, Pistoia. Always check your syllabus in advance for the class meeting point.

-Throughout the semester students are asked to undertake visits to as many museums they can. They will report their observations in the Museum Journal. Each student will receive from NYU a personal Amici Museum Card which will give free access to all state museums on Florence.

-During the second part of the semester students will work in small groups on an assigned Museology Project which will serve as a curatorial and educational exercise based on the material and readings presented and discussed during the course.

- In general, readings are designed to be most useful after the lecture day on which they are assigned. You must be ready to discuss and present them during the following class, unless indicated.

- Two short written assignments (5 pages total) will be given throughout the semester; these will be evaluated as part of the participation and assignments grade.

MidTerm Exam: 24/10/2012 (30%) 
- Written test, with 10 essay questions related to the topics of the first part of the course (class notes, handouts and assigned readings).
- Brief oral presentation in class (“the speaking label”, 7 min. each) of a work of art displayed in a Florentine museum or church. Include in your presentation:
info on artist, subject, date, location, iconography and iconology, medium, condition, original provenance and commission if known, display in museum.

**MUSEUM JOURNAL DUE: 9/11/2012 (30%)**

The journal must include notes from your visits in museums and exhibitions. Visit as many museums you can during the semester and record your formal critique at least for 2 museums and 1 exhibition:

1. **#1 visit to a minor museum in Florence, which we are not visiting with the class (check syllabus) and different from your companions (check with me)**
2. **#1 visit to a major museum in a European city**
3. **#1 visit to a temporary exhibition in Italy**

**Entries for the Museum Visits (5 pages each):**

1. **Museum History:** including name, location, architect(s), date of opening, original use of the building if not built to be a museum
2. **Mission:** find it on the museum’s website or determine from what you can assess during your visit
3. **Collection:** describe the kind of collection(s) and indicate how they came together
4. **Display:** Make a detailed graphic survey (drawing) of one room in the museum marking all the art objects, doors, windows, other structural elements or display devices. Indicate the visitors’ circulation. Comment on the display of the objects in relation to the visitors’ behavior and feel free to make a few suggestions (drawing with key).
5. **Object:** choose 1 object and write a good label for it (including link with its original context). Indicate location of label next to the object and type of material (glass, plexi-glass, wood etc.). Provide picture of object
6. **Education:** plan an educational project that could help the museum to improve the quality of their service for the public, e.g. special tours for kids or adults with a theme, hands on lab, behind the scene, treasure hunt, a flyer, a lecture series etc.
7. **Information:** How well is the museum publicized? (Website, signs in the street, other?). Recommendation on what you would do to increment its visitors, if needed

**Entry for the Exhibition Visit (6 pages)**

1. Exhibition location, title, dates, opening hours, cost of ticket, advertisement (on web, banners)
2. What is the theme of the exhibition and what is its goal?
3. What are the main issues discussed?
4. How well is the theme connected to the city and to other collections in Florence?
5. Choose one of the sections and describe it (collector, objects)
6. What kind of display techniques have been used in this exhibition (vitrines, stations, platforms etc.)?
7. What kind of preventive conservation tools have been adopted to protect the works?
8. Observe the visitors and how they move in the space. Comment on the flow and itinerary
9. Ask 2 visitors to comment about the exhibition and report their words
10. What aspect of the exhibition would you change, if any?

D. Museology Group Project to present in class on 12/12/2012 (30%) – to review with Professor on 5/12/2012

The aim of the Museology Project is to practice on the research, curatorial, display and educational work needed when planning a new display for a permanent collection in a museum (e.g. a room with a specific theme or an artist monograph) or when creating a temporary exhibition, tied with the museum collection or the city or country history & culture.

- The project involves: meeting as a group and with the professor, visiting museums and other exhibition sites, planning and research; graphical work for the display presentation; creating text for labels and introduction panels; research and graphical work to develop and communicate the educational project; putting together a power point presentation to describe and present the project in class. Topics and more info will be posted on blackboard during Fall break.

Sources for your research may be found among those listed on this syllabus, in the Course Reader on our Blackboard site, or any other relevant source available in the Ulivi Library, The British Institute Library, Biblioteca di Storia dell’Arte UNIFI, The Art History Dutch Institute, The Library of the Center for Renaissance Studies at Palazzo Strozzi, JSTOR or other databases of scholarly articles (i.e., see “articles via databases” on the NYU Libraries site – link in External Links on our Blackboard site)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Policy</th>
<th>Please refer to Assessment Expectations and the policy on late submission of work.</th>
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</table>
| Attendance Policy | **Attendance:**  
Attendance is expected and required of all students. Any absences will negatively impact upon your course grade.  

**Absences:**  
In case of absence, **regardless of the reason**, the student is responsible for completing missed assignments, getting notes and making up missed work in a timely manner based upon a schedule that is mutually agreed upon between the faculty member and the student.  

**Absence Due to Illness**  
- If you are sick, please see a doctor (contact the OSL for information).  
- **Only a medical certificate from a local medical professional** will be accepted to justify an absence due to illness.  
- Within 24 hours of your return to class you must bring this note to the Office of Academic Support, located on the ground floor of Villa Ulivi. We will review the medical certificate and we will notify your faculty via email about your justified absence due to illness.  
- Absences for short term illness **without a medical certificate** are not justified and count as **unjustified absences**. We will not accept a student email or telephone call regarding an absence due to illness. We will not notify your faculty about these absences.  
- The Office of Student Life, when assisting you in cases of severe or extended illness, will coordinate with the Office of Academic Support to properly record your absences.  

**Due to Religious Observance**  
- Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the **holiday only** and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday  
- Students must notify their professor and the Office of Academic Support in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose  

**Due to a class conflict with a program sponsored lecture, event, or activity**  
- All students are entitled to **miss one class period** without any penalty to their grade in order to attend a lecture, event or activity that is sponsored by NYU Florence or La Pietra Dialogues, Acton Miscellany or the Graduate Lecture series. |
Students must notify their professor and the Office of Academic Support in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose.

- All course work must be submitted on time, in class on the date specified on the syllabus.
- To receive an incomplete for a course at the end of the semester, two weeks before final exams, both the student and the faculty member must meet with the Assistant Director of Academic Affairs to review the request and if granted, they must both sign an Incomplete Contract detailing the terms for completing missing coursework.

PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED IN ANY FORM:
The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

In the event of suspected or confirmed cases of plagiarism, the faculty member will consult first with the Assistant Director for Academic Affairs as definitions and procedures vary from school to school. Please consult the “Academic Guidelines for Success” distributed on your USB key at Check-in and on the NYU Florence Global Wiki.

For a detailed description of some possible forms of plagiarism and cheating please consult the Community Compact that you signed at Orientation, a copy of which is on the above mentioned Wiki and USB key.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Texts</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts</strong> / Bettina M. Carbonell, Blackwell Publishing. 2nd ed. 2012 (A selection of readings - 2 copies of this book are available in the Library at Villa Ulivi.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigned readings in the Art Collecting &amp; Museology Binder in the Library in Villa Ulivi (VUL) and on blackboard.</td>
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**ART ICONOGRAPHY AND TECHNIQUE**
- *The Thames and Hudson Dictionary of Art Terms*, New York, 1995

**MUSEUM THEORY, HISTORY, MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION**
- *Thinking about Exhibitions*, ed. by R. Greenberg, B. W. Ferguson, S. Nairne, Routledge,
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History and Functions of Museums, AASLH Press, 1979</td>
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**TASTE OF COLLECTING IN THE MODERN AGE AND THE ACTON COLLECTION**

- C. De Benedictis, *Per la Storia del collezionismo italiano. Fonti e documenti*, Firenze, 2010

**Bibliography and images for Museums**

JSTOR; ICOM; RLG Cultural Materials

**Libraries in Florence**

The Harold Acton Library, The British Institute (Lungarno Lanfredini)
The careful use of internet resources is encouraged and a list of recommended websites is given below. Failure to cite internet and other non-traditional media sources in your written work constitutes plagiarism.

NYU Libraries’ databases and useful Search Engines:

- [http://librarycatalog.nyu.florence.it/webif/user_nyu1/](http://librarycatalog.nyu.florence.it/webif/user_nyu1/) (Villa Ulivi)
- [http://www.bobcat.nyu.edu](http://www.bobcat.nyu.edu) (NYU Bob Cats)
- [http://www.iris.firenze.it/](http://www.iris.firenze.it/) (art history inquiry in the Libraries in Florence)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Date</th>
<th>Course Schedule</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>5 Sept.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Course Intro</strong></td>
<td><strong>Taste, Collecting, Objects, Display: from Private to Public</strong></td>
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| | - What is the ‘artistic taste’? How would you define ‘the quality of an object’?  
| | - Is collecting an art in itself?  
| | - From the collector’s private study to the public museum: similarities and changes  
| | - The origin of the word “Museum”  
| | - What is its function today? Collect - Study – Preserve – Educate  
| | - What is the role of the public? How do people learn?  
| | - Can you think of different kind of museums and different missions? (Universal Survey Museum, the Territory & Regional Museum, the House-Museum, the Site Specific Museum…)  
| | - Museum Buildings: how do they or don’t speak to the art they display?  
| **Reading (discussion in class on Sept. 26)** | 
| | - Museum Basics: Units 1-9; 13; 74-75; 81;83.  
| | -- Key concepts on Museology, ICOM  
| | - History of Museums (PDF on blackboard)  
| | - Sam Lewishon, *Is Collecting and Art*, in Panassus, 6, 5, 1934, pp. 14-15. (JSTOR) (Binder 1)  
| **Session 2** | **12 Sept.** |
| **Site Visit:** | **Museo del Bargello** - Discussion on the history of the building, the collections and their presentation in the museum context. Vis to the temporary Exhibition *Fabulae Pictae: Myths and Stories of Renaissance Maiolica* – see catalogue in Villa Ulivi Library (reserved shelf)  
| **Location:** | Museo Nazionale del Bargello (via del Proconsolo, 2)  
| **Time:** | 9:15 am |
### Assignment 1
**Due on Sept. 19**
Write and introduction text for the Bargello exhibition about majolica: include information on its technique, subject and meaning, use and fortune (check *Museum Basics* session for format)- List other collections in Florence where the visitor can find similar objects.
- 1 page

### Session 3
**19 Sept.**
**Site Visit:** *Palazzo della Signoria a.k.a. Palazzo Vecchio* - The History, Medici Collecting, the Studioli and an example of Museum Education
- Special Itinerary to visit the Studioli: *Itinerari Segreti* in collaboration with *Il Museo dei Ragazzi*
**Location:** Palazzo Vecchio (piazza Signoria, in front of the Perseo)
**Time:** 9:00 am

#### Readings
- *Museum Basics*, Units 13; 14; 15.

### Session 4
**Friday 21 Sept.**
**Field Trip to Collezione Gori in the Parco di Celle (Pistoia)**
Contemporary Art Site Specific Art Collection – 4 hours walk in the park-Wear comfortable shoes! Bring your camera.
**Meeting point & time** will be announced-

#### Assignment 2
**Due Sept. 25**
Choose a work of art and write a label as if the artist was talking about his piece on site (1 page) – if you want you can consult the catalogue in VU.

### Session 5
**26 Sept.**
**History of Art Collecting I: From the Antiquity to 16th century**
- The Greek *Mouseion* in Alexandria
- The Cathedral of Saint Denis and the Abbot Suger: “I tesori”
- The beginning of Inventories
- The Studiolo and the Wunderkammer
- The Popes in Rome
- The Medici in Florence
- Venice and the beginning of conservation and Fide Commesso
- The Birth of Art Legislation
**Location:** classroom

#### Readings
- *Museum Studies*: P. Findeln, pp. 23-50
- *The Cultures of Collecting*, A. A. Shelton, pp. 177-203
- *Binder 2*: H. Taylor, 3-32; 55-72; Haskell-Penny, II.
| Session 6 3 Oct. | Site Visit: **Galleria degli Uffizi** – Works of art and changes of display through history, from the Tribuna to the recent project of the Nuovi Uffizi- Behind the scene: Discussion on curatorial choices-Visit to the temporary exhibition: *Bagliori Dorati. The International Gothic Style*. This exhibition has on display a painting by Mariotto di Nardo from the Acton Collection (circa 1400)

**Location:** Galleria degli Uffizi (piazza Signoria, in front of the Perseo)

**Time:** 8:45 am

**Readings:** Entry in catalogue in Villa Ulivi, reserved shelf.

**Binder 3:** Haskell- Penny, VIII.

Flyer on the Tribuna conservation – see also web page. |
| --- | --- |
| Session 7 10 Oct. | **The History of Art Collecting II: From the Age of Enlightenment to the Birth of the Modern Museum.**

- Organizing and Re-inventing the past: the Museums of antiquity in Rome (Belvedere and Pio Clementino); the Museum of the Revolution (Le Louvre); The British Museum in London and the Elgin marbles; the Collectors’ House-Museums in England and Italy from John Soane in London to the Acton villa in Florence.

**Readings**

- *Museum Studies*: C. Duncan and A. Wallach, pp.51-64
- *The Cultures of Collecting*, J. Elsner, pp. 153-176

**Binder 3:** G. Pinna, *Introduction to Historic house Museums* (2001); Haskell- Penny, chapters IX; XIV- F. Baldry, *Vivere Collezionando*, 2005 (this last text is posted also on blackboard).

**Assignment for Oct. 17-** Visit one of the Anglo-American house museum collections in Florence (I Tatti, only by appointment; Acton, sign up for tour; Herbert Horne or Frederick Stibbert) and write a concise text (1000 words) for the entrance that invites the visitor to walk in, understand the taste of the owner, appreciate the atmosphere and the display (how objects relate among them and in connection to the rooms spaces) – It could be useful to refer to the text by Maleuvre, 1999, pp. 115-187 (in Ulivi Library) and F.Baldry, in *Le Stanze dei Tesori* 2012 (Binder 3 and on blackboard). |
| Assignment 3 (3 pages) |
| Session 8 | **House Museums in Florence: Stefano Bardini & Palazzo Davanzati**  
                      **Location:** via de’ Renai and via Porta Rossa. Meeting point will be announced.  
                      **Time:** 9:00 |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 17 Oct.   | **Readings**  
                     Intro and rooms descriptions in the Handbooks of the museums in Ulivi Library. |

| Session 9 | **MID TERM EXAM**  
                     Written test with 10 questions on all course material (lectures, readings, lecture and site visits) and 5 min. oral presentation on a work of art in a museum / church in Florence that you have seen on site. |
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<tr>
<td>24 Oct.</td>
<td><strong>FALL BREAK</strong></td>
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| 31 Oct.   | **Session 10**  
                     **Museum Collection Management: Study, Interpretation and Display**  
                     - Documentation system (record keeping, visual documentation, database, registration) - The object record (catalogue file).  
                     - Interpretation techniques and installations for the display of the objects in the museum/exhibition space (showcases, light, panels, labels).  
                     - Communication – The constructivist learning theory  
                     - Guidelines and policies for exhibitions & loans |
| 7 Nov.    | **Location:** classroom |
|           | **Readings**  
                     - *Museum Basics*, Units 28-54. |
| 9 Nov.    | **Museum Journal Due** |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 11</th>
<th><strong>A Methodological Lecture on Hortense L. Mitchell Acton and her Callot Soeurs Dresses: collection or personality? – Ideas for an exhibition</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14 Nov.</td>
<td><strong>Location:</strong> classroom and textile studio to see the Callot Soeurs dresses and Hortense’s shoes (11.15)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Session 12</th>
<th><strong>Site Visit: House Museums and Historic Properties: Visit to Villa La Pietra and the Acton Collection</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>21 Nov.</td>
<td>History of the villa, the Acton Collection, the Photo Archive, Issues of conservation and preservation in the house, the photo archive and in the garden.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location: Villa La Pietra (in front of the villa)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time: 9:00 am</td>
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### Readings

### Session 13
**28 Nov.**
**Caring for museum collections: Preventive Conservation and Remedial Conservation - History & Practice**

**Location:** Class room and textile studio at Villa La Pietra: upholstery and tapestries (11.15 am).

**Readings**
- *Museum Basics*, Units 55-73; 79-80
- Binder 4. C. Brandi; *Theory of Restoration; Clean Art?, The Acton tapestries, research and conservation.*

### Session 14
**5 Dec.**
**Review of Final Projects**

**Site Visit: Museo Marino Marini**
The Museum space and its collection
Educational Laboratory with the Educational Department L’Immaginario

**Location:** Museo Marino Marini (piazzaPancrazio)
**Time:** 9:00 am meeting in bar in front of the Museum to review final project. 10:00 Museo Marino Marini Visit & lab

**Readings**
- *Museum Basics*, Units 13-15; 17-18

### Session 15
**12 Dec.**
**FINAL EXAM:** Final Museology Project will be presented and discussed in class by each group- Final written paper due-

**Location:** classroom

### Required Co-curricular Activities
See Field trip description under Session 6 above

### Volunteer Activities
- 2 Students could be offered the option to volunteer as docents for the Acton Collection or another Florentine Museum– talk with Professor Baldry-
- Other suggested optional co-curricular activities will be announced in class and/or via email by the professor throughout the semester.