Spring 2019 - Expressive Culture: Artists and Authors of the Italian Renaissance
CORE-UA 9765
Thursdays, 3:00-5:45 p.m.
Villa La Pietra, Aula Le Vedute

Class Description:
The profound changes in artistic production that characterize the art of Renaissance Italy were accompanied by an equally extraordinary series of developments in the literature of art. Indeed, modern art history, art criticism and art theory can all trace their origins to literary forms that developed simultaneously with, affected or were influenced by contemporary developments in artistic practice. This course proposes an interdisciplinary approach to visual and textual analysis by examining a variety of literary sources that regard art and artists of the Renaissance in conjunction with the works themselves. The course materials are organized around three broad themes: historiography, criticism and theory; authors and artists; and artists as authors.

“Artists and Authors” is an Expressive Culture offering. Expressive Culture is intended to introduce you to the study and appreciation of human artistic creation and to foster your ongoing engagement with the arts. Through critical engagement with primary cultural artifacts, it introduces you to formal methods of interpretation and to understanding the importance of expressive creation in particular social and historical contexts. As a part of the College Core Curriculum, it is designed to extend your education beyond the focused studies of your major, preparing you for your future life as a thoughtful individual and active member of society.

“Artists and Authors” is designed to foster your ability to view and understand works of art, primarily painting and sculpture, while helping you develop tools for critical thinking when reading texts about art. The particular context addressed in this course is fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy, where many key works of the Western artistic tradition were produced. Our shared goal is to seek to understand why these works look the way they do, how they functioned, and what they meant to the people who made and interacted with them, rather than to cultivate particular aesthetic values. In doing so, we will seek to challenge received knowledge and preconceived notions about works of art and consider a variety of ways in which we as modern viewers can approach them.

The course is conceived as a seminar. Class meetings will generally be organized in two parts. In the first, the instructor will present the relevant works, identifying their significance for the history of art, including issues of style, function and iconography. This will be followed by a discussion of the relevant weekly readings. Class discussion will focus on the interpretation of these texts and how this interpretation is affected by comparison with the relevant works of art and/or how our understanding of these works changes in relation to the literary sources at hand. Some class meetings will take place on site, to examine key works in person, in order to learn techniques of visual analysis and refine our discussion of textual sources and their rapport with art objects.

Instructor Details:
Name: Bruce Edelstein
NYUGlobalHome Email Address: edelstein@nyu.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3:00-5:00 p.m., or by appointment
Office Location: Villa La Pietra
Office Extension: 07246
Desired Outcomes:
On completion of this course, students should:

- Be introduced to modes and methods for the interpretation and appreciation of human artistic creation, including both formal approaches and concern for social and historical contexts.
- Be exposed to a wide range of creative work in one or a number of media.
- Have developed the ability to critically examine the definition and autonomy of the cultural forms under consideration and how their meaning is constructed by their creators, their intended recipients, and their reception into other traditions of collection, interpretation, use, and study.
- Be stimulated to pursue ongoing engagement with the arts.

Assessment Components

- 15%: Attendance and Class Participation
- 20%: Midterm Exam (approximately 6-8 handwritten pages)
- 30%: Final Exam (approximately 6-8 handwritten pages)
- 35%: Written Assignments (3 assignments, approximately 3-4 typewritten pages each, 9-12 typewritten pages total)

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

Exams: The midterm and the final exam are comprised of three short essay questions. You will be presented with three broad topics discussed in class; write a well-organized essay, with an introduction, exposition and conclusion in response to each of these. **You are expected to cite relevant primary sources analyzed in class – texts and/or objects; answers that do not cite any of these primary sources will not receive full credit.** The final exam will only cover material discussed in the second half of the course. Both the midterm and the final are carefully timed: **see below if you are entitled to an Academic Accommodation.**

Written Assignments: Over the course of the semester, you will write three short (3-4 pages each) visual analyses of works of art contained in one of the museums in the Gallerie degli Uffizi (Uffizi, Pitti Palace, Boboli Gardens, etc.). You will receive a card allowing you free access to all of these museums without waiting on line. Be sure to bring this card with you to all classes on site regardless of whether the site listed is one of the Uffizi museums. The analyses are intended to allow you to apply the techniques you are developing in class for considering how to look at works of art through the lens of contemporary texts. Three specific assigned readings are intended to assist you in interpreting these works of art. For each assignment, you will view one or more works of art in a specific assigned location independently and identify aspects of the work -- its material, technical execution, style, appearance, subject matter, etc. -- that are illuminated by considering the work together with the assigned reading. Your text is not intended to be a research paper, nor is it intended to be an emotive response to the appearance of the object or site you are examining; your text should be primarily your own personal analysis of the work or works you have chosen to describe in relation to the specific contemporary text. However, you are welcome to refer to assigned readings or works previously studied in class.

The three assignments are:

1. **Gallerie degli Uffizi:** Examine Raphael’s Portraits of Elisabetta Gonzaga and Guidobaldo della Rovere. Consider these works together with the first book of Baldassare Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier*. Describe the works as precisely as possible. Try to identify specific characteristics of these paintings that reflect Castiglione’s text. Due in class, session 5.

2. **Giardino di Boboli (Pitti Palace):** Visit the Boboli Gardens and examine sculptures on display in the gardens. Compare the representation of male and female subjects in two works. Particularly
recommended are the sculptures inside Buontalenti’s Grotto (open several times throughout the day -- check times at ticket window), but you may discuss any two works you choose (for works not in the Grotto, please include images along with your text). Consider the assigned reading by Yael Even as you reflect on how men and women are represented in these works. Due in class, session 11.

3. Tesoro dei Granduchi (Pitti Palace): Choose any two works in the museum and discuss their relative merits according to the terms of excellence defined by Cellini throughout his Autobiography. Works dated before 1600 may be most fruitful for your analysis but you are welcome to discuss any works you wish (please include images). Due in class, session 14.

Submitting your work: Electronic submission of your assignments is welcome, although you may also submit assignments in hard copy. All electronic submissions must be made in Word (.doc or .docx format), Google Document or PDF (.pdf); for all other formats, please contact me to confirm their acceptability before submission. If you submit assignments electronically, you must do so before the beginning of the class for which that assignment is due.

Readings
Readings are listed under the weeks for which they are assigned and must be done in advance of those classes. Unless otherwise noted, all readings are available in the books listed for this course or in electronic form in the Resources section of the NYU Classes site for this course. The electronic resources may also be available in their original books in the Villa Ulivi library. It is essential that you keep up with the readings as they serve as the basis for class discussion. Active participation in class discussion is an essential component of your class participation grade, which is worth 15% of your final grade.

Assessment Expectations

Grade A: The student’s work demonstrates an understanding of the subject that goes beyond assigned course readings. The student writes essays/exam questions that are an original synthesis of source materials, demonstrating the ability to evaluate source material critically. Written arguments are clear, well-organized and well-presented; oral presentations are concise, incisive and supplemented by appropriate visual materials. The student’s contributions to class discussion have been distinguished throughout the course of the semester.

Grade B: The student’s work shows a clear understanding of assigned readings and materials covered in class. The student writes clear, well-organized and well-presented essays/exam questions; oral presentations are concise, incisive and supplemented by appropriate visual materials. The student is prepared in class and asks relevant questions.

Grade C: The student’s work shows a basic understanding of the subject treated in assigned readings and covered in class. However, written and/or oral work is deficient in one or more of the following areas: clarity, organization or content. The student’s work is generally in need of improvement.

Grade D: The student’s work shows occasional understanding of the subject treated in assigned readings and covered in class. Written and/or oral work is deficient in one of more of the follow areas: clarity, organization or content. The student does not participate in class discussion and has not frequented the instructor’s office hours.

Grade F: The student’s work does not demonstrate understanding of the subject treated in assigned readings and covered in class. Written and/or oral work are either insufficient or are not submitted. The student appears unprepared in class and has not frequented the instructor’s office hours.
Grading Guidelines
A = 94-100
A minus = 90-93
B plus = 87-89
B = 84-86
B minus = 80-83
C plus = 77-79
C = 74-76
C minus = 70-73
D plus = 67-69
D = 65-66
F = below 65

Grading Policy
Please refer to Assessment Expectations and the policy on late submission of work.

Academic Accommodations
Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or see the Moses Center for further information.

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in a class are encouraged to contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For more information, see Study Away and Disability.

Attendance Policy
Study abroad at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers is mandatory, and unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.

For courses that meet once a week, one unexcused absence will be penalized by a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade. For courses that meet two or more times a week, the same penalty will apply to the number of class times over a single week.

Excused 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. The only excused absences are those approved by the Office of Academic Support; they are as follows:

Absence Due to Illness
- If you are sick, please see a doctor. Contact the Office of Student Life for assistance.
- For absences that last for two or more consecutive days, a doctor’s certificate, “certificato medico” is required. The doctor will indicate in writing the number of days of bed rest required. Please note these certificates can only be obtained on the day you see the doctor and cannot be written for you afterwards.
Absences can ONLY be excused if they are reported WITHIN 48 HRS of your return to class via the online NYU Florence Absence Form.

OAS will not accept a student email or telephone call regarding an absence due to illness.

OAS will only notify faculty of absences REPORTED on the ABSENCE FORM.

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.
- Information regarding absences due to religious observance must be provided at least SEVEN DAYS PRIOR to the date(s) in question using the online NYU Florence Absence Form.
- Please note that no excused absences for reasons other than illness can be applied retroactively.

**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 La Pietra Dialogues, Acton Miscellany or the Graduate Lecture series.
- Information regarding absences due to a class conflict must be provided at least SEVEN DAYS PRIOR to the date(s) in question using the online NYU Florence Absence Form.
- Please note that no excused absences for reasons other than illness can be applied retroactively.

Students with questions or needing clarification about this policy are instructed to contact a member of the Office of Academic Support located in Villa Ulivi or to email florence.academicsupport@nyu.edu.

**Late Submission of Work**

- All course work must be submitted on time, in class on the date specified on the syllabus.
- To request an extension on a deadline for an assignment, students must speak to the professor one week prior to the due date.
- 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 Policy**

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.

**Writing Center**

The Writing Center, located in Villa Ulivi, offers you feedback on any type of writing, at any stage in planning or drafting; very rough drafts are welcome. Sign up for a consultation at the Writing Center’s website and submit your working draft or ideas at least six hours in advance to NYU Florence Writing Center. You can drop in for a consultation M-Th, but remember that appointments are given priority.

Please also note that the Writing Center does not correct or “fix” your writing but prompts you to think and work. The aim is to create stronger writers in the long term, not necessarily perfect papers in the short term.
Required Text(s)
The following texts are available for your purchase at Paperback Exchange, via delle Oche 4/r:


Copies of each textbook are available for consultation and short term loans in the Villa Ulivi Library. Extra copies of some textbooks are also available for semester long loans. For more information on Books and Course Materials go here.

Supplemental Text(s)
Required readings not in our textbooks are available through our Classes site in electronic form but you are warmly encouraged to read the original texts, which are all available in our library.

Internet Research Guidelines
The careful use of internet resources is encouraged and a list of recommended websites will be given. Failure to cite internet and other non-traditional media sources in your written work constitutes plagiarism.

Additional Required Equipment: N/A

Class Assignments and Topics

_The locations for classes that meet on site are specifically indicated. All other classes meet in our regularly assigned classroom._

Session 1 - Feb. 1, 3:30-5:00 p.m.
Location: Villa Sassetti, Sala Caminetto Florence in the Fifteenth Century
The city’s urban development; the guild and political systems; the rise of humanism; and the principal literary and artistic patrons.

Session 2 - Feb. 14
Setting the Stage: Perspective
Our first discussion text will be from the first great theorist of Renaissance art, Leon Battista Alberti. Alberti’s treatise Della pittura, first written in Latin in 1435 but translated by Alberti himself into Italian with a new dedication to Filippo Brunelleschi by the following year, may be considered a manifesto of the new art developed in Florence in the first quarter of the fifteenth century. In class, we will examine the art that inspired Alberti’s text (e.g., works Masaccio and Ghiberti) and art that attempted to employ Alberti’s prescriptions (e.g., works by Botticelli)

Reading:
Session 3 - Feb. 21
Site Visit: Composing the Story
Location: Gallerie degli Uffizi (reserved entrance door, groups)
One of Alberti’s most attentive readers was Leonardo da Vinci. Selections from Leonardo’s writings will offer a window onto the astonishing, eclectic interests of this painter-sculptor-author-composer. A wide variety of fifteenth-century Florentine paintings, from Gentile da Fabriano and Masaccio, to Filippo Lippi and Domenico Veneziano, to Botticelli and Leonardo, will be examined in relation to the texts by Alberti and Leonardo read over the course of weeks 2 and 3. Special attention will be given to the examination of Leonardo’s artistic oeuvre, to identify the characteristics that rendered it both unique and avant garde and discuss the ways in which Alberti’s and Leonardo’s own writings improve our understanding of his artistic intent and how his works affect our understanding of these texts.

Reading:

Session 4 - Feb. 28
Site Visit: The Paragone
Location: Gallerie degli Uffizi (reserved entrance door, groups)
The Paragone, or rivalry between the arts, was a hotly contested topic in Renaissance Italy. Initially a rivalry between the visual arts and poetry intended to raise the status of painters and sculptors from that of mere craftsmen as practitioners of the mechanical arts to one comparable to poets as practitioners of the liberal arts, the competition eventually devolved into a contest between painters and sculptors to assert which was the superior art. The letters of Michelangelo and his contemporaries to Benedetto Varchi and Vincenzo Borghini’s critique of these responses will be discussed together with works of art that directly attempted to respond to the rival claims of painters and sculptors.

Reading:

Session 5 - Mar. 7
Raphael’s Urbino
One of the outstanding artistic friendships of the sixteenth century was that of the diplomat and letterato Castiglione with the painter Raphael. Castiglione’s *Libro del cortegiano*, set in Raphael’s birthplace, Urbino, will be read and discussed over the course of several weeks in relation to four fundamental themes that bind Castiglione’s writings to Raphael’s art: friendship, the portrait, architecture and antiquity.

Reading:

Written Assignment 1 Due

Session 6 - Friday, Mar. 8, 9:00 a.m.
Field Trip: Raphael and the Renaissance Portrait
Location: Palazzo Pitti, Galleria Palatina
The Galleria Palatina’s extraordinary collection of paintings by Raphael will serve as a foil for continuing discussion of Castiglione and Raphael. Time permitting, other works (particularly by Andrea del Sarto, Titian and Bronzino) will be examined for connections to the Paragone or other literary themes.

Reading:
Session 7 - Friday, Mar. 8, 2:00 p.m.
Field Trip: Gender and Space in the Early Modern Court
Location: Palazzo Vecchio
Among other things, Castiglione’s text provides a unique window onto gender relations at the early modern court. Discussion of men and women’s roles in noble society will take place in the halls and apartments of Florence’s own ducal, later grand ducal palace, the Palazzo Vecchio.
Reading:

Session 8 - Mar. 14
Site Visit: Court Art: Portraits, Allegories and Mythological Paintings
Location: Gallerie degli Uffizi (reserved entrance door, groups)
Reading:

Session 9 - Mar. 21
Midterm Exam

Session 10 - Apr. 4
The “First” Art Historian: Giorgio Vasari
In 1550, on the occasion of his 75th birthday, Michelangelo received a remarkable gift: a copy of a biography celebrating him as the greatest living artist, just printed as part of the first edition of Giorgio Vasari’s *Vite dei più eccellenti architetti, pittori et scultori italiani*. While Michelangelo was apparently pleased with the homage, he was also furious about certain “errors,” leading to his encouraging Ascanio Condivi, an assistant in Michelangelo’s studio, to write an “authorized” biography. Vasari himself then responded to Condivi’s text in his revised version of the Lives published in 1568. These three extraordinary texts serve as the basis for a discussion of Michelangelo’s art and its interpretation by contemporaries as well as for reflections on the art of biography and the literary techniques employed by the painter-architect-author Vasari in his most important work.
Reading:
Session 11 - Apr. 11
Site Visit: Emulation, Rivalry, and Competition
Location: Piazza della Signoria
One of the most extraordinary texts written in the sixteenth century was the autobiography of the
goldsmith and sculptor Benvenuto Cellini. Cellini’s *Vita* provides a window onto some of the most
important events and people of his day. The *Vita* will be read and discussed over the course of four weeks
and examined in relation to the art of Cellini and his contemporaries as well as for a discussion of the
nature of autobiography as a literary form. Our discussion of Michelangelo’s work will continue along with
the beginning of our discussion of Cellini’s *Vita* directly in the square that would see their two most famous
works face off in a context of rivalry and competition that characterizes much artistic production of the
Italian Renaissance. Special attention will be given to the blatant misogyny of Cellini’s *Vita* in explicit
contrast to a heroic vision of the artist’s life and work.

Warning: Cellini’s *Autobiography* contains many episodes of explicit violence, some of them sexual.
Please note that we are reading this text critically and will be questioning the reliability of his account.

Reading:

Written Assignment 2 Due

Session 12 - Apr. 18
Cellini’s World
The second portion and third portions of Cellini’s *Vita* will be discussed in relation to the works of
contemporaries mentioned by Cellini in the text (e.g., Andrea del Sarto, Rosso Fiorentino, Bandinelli and
Bronzino). Class discussion will focus on the definition of the term Mannerism and its relative meanings for
the visual arts and for literature.
Reading:

Session 13 - May 2
Cellini’s World
Reading:

Session 14 - Friday, May 3, 9:00 a.m.
Field Trip: Cellini’s *oeuvre*
Location: Museo Nazionale del Bargello
The final section of Cellini’s *Life* will be discussed in front of his works and those of his contemporaries in
the collections of the Bargello museum.
Reading:

Written Assignment 3 Due

Session 15 - May 9
Final Exam
Classroom Etiquette

- Eating is not permitted in the classrooms. Bottled water is permitted.
- Cell phones should be turned off during class time.
- The use of personal laptops and other electronic handheld devices are prohibited in the classroom unless otherwise specified by the professor.
- We recycle! So keep it green! Please dispose of trash in the clearly marked recycle bins located throughout the on campus buildings.

Required Co-curricular Activities

See Field Trip descriptions in Sessions 6, 7, and 14 above.

The field trips are an integral part of the course and your attendance is required. Should you have a conflict with a field trip in another course, please speak to someone in the Offices of Academic Support to determine how to resolve your field trip conflict.

Suggested Co-curricular Activities

Suggested optional co-curricular activities will be announced in class and/or via email by the professor throughout the semester.

Your Instructor

Bruce L. Edelstein is an art historian. At NYU Florence he is Coordinator for Graduate Programs and Advanced Research and serves on the Academic Advisory Committee. He is Affiliated Faculty in the department of Italian Studies at NYU. He received his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1995 after completing a dissertation on the patronage of Duchess of Florence Eleonora di Toledo, a reflection of his broader interest in mechanisms of court patronage and the exercise of female authority in Renaissance and Early Modern Italy. He has held teaching positions at the Florida State University Florence Study Center, Syracuse University in Italy and the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and curatorial positions at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston and the Fogg Museum in Cambridge, Mass. His publications include articles on Eleonora di Toledo’s investment policy, the typology of the Albertian hortus, the hydraulic system of the lost Neapolitan villa of Poggiooreale as a model for sixteenth-century Medici gardens, the iconography of Abundance in the courtly persona of Eleonora di Toledo and the mid-sixteenth-century appearance and function of the Camera Verde in the Palazzo Vecchio. During the academic year 2001-2, he was a fellow at the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies at Villa I Tatti. During the academic year 2015-16, he was Visiting Scholar at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, while completing the manuscript for a book on the early history of the Boboli Gardens. He is co-curator of the exhibition “Miraculous Encounters: Pontormo from Drawing to Painting,” seen at the Palazzo Pitti in Florence, the Morgan Library and Museum in New York, and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles in 2018-2019.