

**University of Roehampton
International Summer School**

Department of Humanities

Module Title: From Renaissance to Abstraction: The History of Art in London Museums

Module Code: HSA020C902H

Module Rationale

This module introduces students to the study of History of Art, using as its primary sources the art galleries and museums of London. It is specifically designed to utilize the city of London itself and, in particular, its many art institutions, as learning tools. Participants will learn how to view and interpret art, and how to place it within its historical, socio-political and cultural context. The chronological spectrum covered by the module ranges from classical to modern art. This broad overview is made possible by a tight focus on key periods and art movements, such as ancient Greek and Roman Art, the Baroque, Neoclassicism, Romanticism, Victorian Art, up to and including Modern Art. Working together, in a small group setting, we will examine how the concept of a national gallery/museum emerged in Britain and more generally in Europe. We will investigate its evolution from the late eighteenth to the early twenty-first century, paying particular attention to the radical shifts in artistic tastes during this period. Additionally, we will consider the dramatic changes in how art is displayed, especially within the framework of a national gallery/museum. As a means of comparison we will also visit a few smaller, more local and special interest museums.

A particularly strong thread running through the module is the investigation of the reception of Greek and Roman art, literature, history, and mythology in later artistic movements, as an example of how ancient art and culture was appropriated and refashioned in the service of new artistic, ideological and political agendas. Beyond this, the module seeks to develop students' knowledge of the institutional frameworks within which art has been historically produced, disseminated, and consumed. A further aim is to broaden participants' understanding of the public functions of art, such as the construction of national and civic identities and the propagation of political ideas and regimes. The module has been specifically designed specifically for Study Abroad students.

Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete this module will be able to:

- Learn how to view and interpret art
- Learn how to place art within its context and consider the ways in which these frameworks are reflected in the artwork
- Analyse the display of art
- Develop a good understanding of the public functions of art and of the role played by cultural, social and political institutions in the production, dissemination and consumption of art
- Develop a good understanding of the main movements and stylistic developments in Western Art
- Critically analyse the formal characteristics of artworks, including visual images and sculpture
- Critically evaluate art exhibitions and public art forms
- Carry out independent research on a chosen topic and utilise this information to construct a logical argument
- Develop written and oral presentation skills to communicate their ideas effectively

Syllabus

The module begins with an introduction to the study of art, focusing on the history of Western Art, underpinned by a thorough grounding in the critical methodology used to interpret art. We will examine the socio-economic and cultural bases of art, its public functions, and changing institutional settings. After this, the core material is structured around various artistic, cultural, social, and political agendas represented by particular artistic movements and their display in public and private settings. The lectures and field trips will concentrate on an integrated analysis of key artworks, their institutional framework, and their social and cultural context. The primary focus of the module will be on painting and sculpture, although we will also consider architecture, the decorative arts, and even more ephemeral forms of art such as posters. The module will consider works by numerous key artists, ranging from Botticelli, Titian, Reynolds, Constable, Turner, Rossetti, Leighton, Cézanne, Picasso, and Warhol.

Topics included in this module may include:

- The public functions of art in modern states in an age of globalization
- The institutional frameworks and social bases of art production, dissemination and consumption
- The emergence of the art gallery as a public institution in Britain
- The mission to elevate British art production and training
- The rule of the Academy: the hierarchy of genres, approved subjects, neoclassicism, romanticism and historicism
- The reception of ancient Greek and Roman art in Western Art
- The cultural capital of Greek art
- The role of art galleries in the construction of national and imperial identities in Britain
- British art and colonialism viewed through a post-colonialist perspective
- Feminist perspectives on art and the question of why there are not more women artists
- Art for the masses - the social project of bringing art to the people
- Dissenting artistic movements, new subject matters and styles: from the Pre-Raphaelites to Modernism
- Art as propaganda - the political uses of art in Britain
- The national vs. transnational and global nature and ownership of art

Teaching and Learning Methods

The module will be introduced through a series of classroom-based lectures but will mainly involve visits to art galleries, museums, and sites of public and private art in London.

Our fieldtrips will take us the National Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery, the British Museum, the Tate Britain, the Tate Modern, the Royal Academy, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Courtauld Gallery, the Sir John Soane's Museum, Leighton House, Chiswick House & Gardens and the Museum of London. Also included will be walking tours of central London and the Bloomsbury area.

Assessment

- A 10-minute oral presentation of a chosen essay topic [50%]
- A 2,000-word reflective essay closely related to the main themes of the module and the artworks we examine over its course [50%]

Primary Bibliography

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Further Reading

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