Course title:	**History of European Art: Cities, Networks, and the Making of Artistic Traditions**
Instructor:	Dr. Stefano de Bosio, partially co-taught by Dr. Mėta Valiušaitytė
Email address:	stefano.debosio@fu-berlin.de
Track:	B-Track
Language of instruction:	English
Contact hours:	72 (6 per day)
ECTS credits:	8
Prerequisites:	Students should be able to speak and read English at the upper intermediate level (B2) or higher.

Course description

This course explores selected key moments in European art from the 15th to the 20th century, focusing on how artworks were produced, circulated, and interpreted within specific urban, political, and cultural contexts. Rather than offering a linear survey, it investigates pivotal episodes that illuminate broader issues of mobility, identity, and canon formation.

Drawing on case studies from cities such as Florence, Venice, Paris, and Berlin, students will examine how interpretive categories—including national, stylistic, and canonical labels—were historically constructed. From the commissions of Raphael and Michelangelo in 16th-century papal Rome to the emergence of genre painting in the Flemish and Dutch Golden Age, and from the *peintres de la vie moderne* in 19th-century Paris to the radical experiments of the German avant-garde in the 1920s, the course will investigate artworks in relation to the historical conditions and urban environments in which they were created. It will consider the dynamic interplay between artists and patrons, the tension between local traditions and individual agency, and the broader political, cultural, and social frameworks that shaped the production of images and architecture.

Students will gain understanding of the main art movements and relevant artists from the Renaissance to the postwar period as well as the basic concepts and terminology of art history. Particular attention will be given to the experience of studying artworks in person. Visits to the outstanding collections of Berlin museums and in-class exercises will train students to observe attentively, engaging with the artwork as a complex object of visual, material, and historical meaning. Learning to look closely, as a form of critical attention, is at the core of the course's methodology.

Student profile
The course addresses students of any subject.

Course requirements
Regular attendance and active participation, mid-term oral presentation and final written exam.

Required language skills
The language of instruction is English. Language proficiency on an advanced intermediate level (B2) is a prerequisite for participation. For orientation purposes, you can assess your language skills here (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168045bb52

Attendance
Each class consists of six teaching modules (45 minutes each). If you miss 8 modules (unexcused), your final course grade will drop by one grade. Coming more than 20 minutes late counts as one missed module (this also applies to excursion days). If you come late to class six times (up to 20 minutes) your entire course grade will also drop by one grade. If you miss 20 modules or more (unexcused), you will fail the class. Excused absences, such as those with medical documentation, do not count toward these totals.

Class times

9 - 10:30 am
11 am - 12:30 pm
2 - 3:30 pm

(Break times may be adjusted in consultation with the class.
Additionally, on field trip days adaptation of class times is possible.)

Grading
Attendance & participation: 30%
Mid-term presentation: 30% (oral presentation of a work during the museum visits)
Final Exam: 40%

Readings
A digital reader will be provided.

Course schedule

Date	Program*
Saturday, May 29, 2027	Arrival day / Move-in day (no classes)
Sunday, May 30, 2027	Orientation day (mandatory)
Tuesday, June 1, 2027	**9:00-10:30: General introduction** • Introduction of instructor and participants • Course objectives • Syllabus review **11:00-12:30: (Some of) the questions art historians ask** • Authorship, subject, patronage, context and place, audience, time of creation, cultural significance, historical interpretations Requested reading: What is Art History? In: *Gardner's Art through the Ages. A Global History*, ed. by F. Kleiner, Boston 2009 (13th ed.), pp. 1-12. **14:00-15:30: Flanders in the 15th century (van Eyck, van der Weyden)** • Court society and commercial cities in the Burgundian Netherlands • The birth of the modern portrait
Friday, June 4, 2027	**9:00-10:30: Early Renaissance Florence I (Donatello, Brunelleschi, Masaccio, Botticelli)** • Florentine artists and civic identity; The Medici family • Travelling objects: Flemish artworks in Florence and their impact on Florentine art **11:00-12:30: Early Renaissance Florence II** • Travelling objects: Flemish artworks in Florence and their impact on Florentine art **14:00-15:30: Excursion 1:** Berlin, Bode Museum Fifteenth century Italian and Northern Sculpture
Tuesday, June 8, 2027	**9:00-10:30: The High Renaissance in Italy I: Florence and Rome (da Vinci, Raphael)** • Leonardo da Vinci and the visible world: Science and Art in the Renaissance • Raphael between Florence and Rome **Class discussion**: The 'High Renaissance paradox': Spiritual crisis, political instability and the flourishing of the Arts

	11:00-12:30: The High Renaissance in Italy II: Florence, Rome and Venice (Michelangelo, Titian) • Michelangelo as sculptor, painter and architect • Titian between Venice and the international courts • *Disegno* vs *Colore* (Drawing vs Colour): Florence and Venice in search of cultural and artistic identities **14:00-15:30: Patrons and Painters in the Italian Renaissance; The Print Culture: a European network of exchanges, 1400-1600** • The social history of picture-making in the Renaissance • Origins and functions of printmaking in Europe • **Class discussion:** The Printed Image as a mobile object and agent of cultural change Requested reading: M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in 15th century Italy*, 2nd edition, 1988, pp. 1-14.
Friday, June 11, 2027	**9:00-10:30: The Northern Renaissance (Dürer, Holbein)** • Albrecht Dürer: Between North and South • Hans Holbein: from Basel, to London **11:00-12:30: The Netherlands in the 16th century (Bosch, Brueghel)** • Bosch's fantastic imagery • Brueghel and the genre painting • **Class discussion:** Iconoclasm in 16th c. Netherlands. The 'power' of images, then and now **14:00-15:30: Excursion 2:** Gemäldegalerie Painting in Southern Europe 16th-17th centuries, students' oral presentations in front of the artworks
Tuesday, June 15, 2027	**9:00-10:30: Rome in the 17th century: from Classicism to Baroque (Caravaggio, Bernini)** • Foreign artists in Rome • Artemisia Gentileschi and the status of female artists in the early modern time

	• **Class discussion**: the status of female artists in the early modern time Requested reading: Linda Nochlin, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* **11:00-12:30: Flanders and the Dutch Republic of the Golden Age (Rubens, Vermeer, Rembrandt)** • Amsterdam as a 'global city'. **14:00-15:30: Excursion 3:** Gemäldegalerie Painting in Northern Europe 16th-17th centuries, students' oral presentations in front of the artworks
Friday, June 18, 2027	**9:00-10:30: Neoclassicism and the cult of Antiquity (David, Canova)** **11:00-12:30: Romanticism in Europe (Delacroix, Friedrich)** • The rise of national identities: the role of the Arts **14:00-15:30: Paris in the 19th century: Realism (Courbet) and the Academic art** • The role of the *Salon* (official art exhibition) as cultural and social event **Class discussion:** Public exhibitions and the formation of taste
Tuesday, June 22, 2027	**9:00-10:30: The Museum as a Western cultural institution: 19th-century and today** • The Louvre Museum in Paris and the British Museum in London: paradigms for the universal museum • The 'democratic' museum in the 20th century • **Class discussion:** The 'Restitution' of looted artworks: contemporary perspectives Requested reading: Savoy, B., Sarr E. 2018, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics,* 1-17 **11:00-12:30: Painters of the modern life. French Impressionism, 1860-1880 (Manet, Monet)** • The role of en-plein-air painting • Impressionists and the contemporary society **14:00-15:30**: **Excursion 4**: Alte Nationalgalerie

	19th century painting and sculpture, students' oral presentations in front of the artworks; • 19th century art in the German States: the Nazarene movement (Overbeck), Symbolism (Böcklin)
Friday, June 25, 2027	**9:00-10:30: Van Gogh and Cézanne** • Van Gogh: from the Netherlands, to Paris, to the south of France • Cézanne in Provence: the role of light **11:00-12:30: Gauguin and the Exotic in Western Art; French Postimpressionism** • Paul Gauguin: from Paris, to Bretagne and the Pacific • **Class discussion:** Depicting 'Otherness' in 19thc. art **14:00-15:30: Excursion 5**: Alte Nationalgalerie 19th century painting and sculpture, students' oral presentations in front of the artworks • The new German Nation (Menzel) • French Impressionism at the Alte Nationalgalerie
Tuesday, June 29, 2027	**9:00-10:30: Matisse and Fauvisme** • Line and color in Matisse **11:00-12:30: Picasso and Cubism** • Space in Braque and Picasso • Primitivism in early 20th-century European art **14:00-15:30: The Birth of Abstract Art: A European Network** • Vassily Kandinsky in Munich and Moscow • Malevich in Russia • Piet Mondrian in the Netherlands • **Class discussion:** The modern notion of Avant-garde art and its place in the society
Friday, July 2, 2027	**9:00-10:30: European avant-gardes** • The role of transnational networks of cultural exchange: Dada (Duchamp), Surrealism (Dalì) **11:00-12:30: German Avant-gardes in Dresden and Berlin; National socialism and the "Degenerate Art"**

	• Expressionism (Kirchner), New Objectivity (Grosz, Dix); • **Class discussion:** Arts and the myth of national identity Requested reading: H. Belting, *The German and their Art*, 1998, Chap. 5 - The Banning of German Expressionism and 'Degenerate Art', pp. 69-80. **14:00-15:30: Excursion 6**: Neue Nationalgalerie 20th century painting and sculpture, students' oral presentations in front of the artworks
Tuesday, July 6, 2027	**9:00-10:30: Bauhaus and the International Style** • Bauhaus in Weimar and Dessau: the rethinking of the object and the notion of design • Le Corbusier and 20th century architecture **11:00-12:30: Post-War European Art: 1950-1990 (Giacometti, Bacon, Richter)** • Local traditions in the times of globalization and the Cold War Requested reading: S. Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, 1985, Chap. 2, pp. 49-60. **14:00-15:30: Excursion 7**: Hamburger Bahnhof students' oral presentations of selected artworks • Beuys, Richter
Friday, July 9, 2027	**9:00-10:30: Arts in Europe, 15th-20th centuries: artists' mobility and local identities** • Sum-up and final remarks **11:00-12:30: Final written exam** FUBiS Farewell Ceremony
Saturday, July 10, 2027	Departure day / Move-out day (no classes)

*Field trips are subject to change depending on the availability of appointments and speakers. On field trip days, class hours may be adjusted.