

Course title:	History of European Art: Travelling Artists and Artworks
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:	48 (6 per day)
ECTS credits:	6
Prerequisites:	Students should be able to speak and read English at the upper intermediate level (B2) or higher.

Course description

This course explores European art from the 15th to the 20th century with a particular focus on the travels of artists between urban centers like Florence, Rome, Venice, Antwerp, Amsterdam, Paris, London, and Berlin. The aim is to analyze how mobility contributed through the centuries to shape local identities as well as European visual cultural traditions and styles common to different countries.

The course will present iconic moments of the history of the arts in Europe by drawing a special attention to episodes of cultural exchanges and hybridization that arose from travelling artworks as well as from artists' travels. From the impact of Flemish art in 15th century Italy, to the stays of artists like Raphael and Michelangelo in the early 16th-century papal Rome; from the rise of genre painting in the Flanders and the Dutch Republic during the Age of Explorations, to the 'painters of modern life' in 19th-century Paris, and the European network of the Avant-gardes in the 1910s-1920s, we will analyze the artworks and their authors in relation to the different historical contexts and the places of their creation. Recurrent will be the focus on the complex interplay between artists and patrons, between local traditions, individual creativity and the broader social, political and cultural contexts in which artworks and buildings were produced.

Students will gain understanding of the main art movements and relevant artists from the Renaissance to the postwar period and the special role played by travels in giving shape to a European cultural space. Visits to the outstanding collections of Berlin museums will allow the participants to study original artifacts and to learn how to look closely at works of art.

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 6 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 14 modules or more (unexcused), you will fail the class. Excused absences, such as those with medical documentation, do not count toward these totals.

Grading

Attendance & participation:	30%
Mid-term presentation:	30% (oral presentation of a work in Berlin museums)
Final Exam:	40%

Readings

A digital reader will be provided.

Course schedule

Date	Program*
Tuesday, July 21, 2026	<p>9:00-10:30 Course objectives and syllabus review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Some of) the questions art historians ask: authorship, subject, patronage, context and place, audience, time of creation, cultural significance, historical interpretations <p>11:00-12:30: Flanders in the 15th century (van Eyck, van der Weyden)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Court society and commercial cities in the Burgundian Netherlands The birth of the modern portrait <p>14:00-15:30: Early Renaissance Florence (Donatello, Brunelleschi, Masaccio, Botticelli)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Florentine artists and civic identity Travelling objects: Flemish artworks in Florence and their impact on Florentine art
Friday, July 24, 2026	<p>9:00-10:30: The 'High Renaissance' in Italy: Florence and Rome (da Vinci, Raphael)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leonardo da Vinci and the visible world: Science and Art in the Renaissance Raphael between Florence and Rome <p>11:00-12:30: From Renaissance to Mannerism in Italy (Michelangelo, Titian)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michelangelo as sculptor, painter and architect Titian between Venice and the International courts Mannerism and the court society <p>14:00-15:30: Excursion: Bode Museum Fifteenth and Sixteenth century European Sculpture.</p>
Tuesday, July 28, 2026	<p>9:00-10:30: The Northern Renaissance and the Netherlands (Dürer, Brueghel)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Albrecht Dürer: Between North and South Brueghel and the genre painting <p>11:00-12:30: Rome in the 17th century: from Classicism to Baroque (Caravaggio, Carracci; Bernini)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caravaggio and European Caravaggism Artemisia Gentileschi 'Artisti stranieri' (foreign artists) in Rome Class discussion: the status of female artists in the early modern time <p>Requested reading: Linda Nochlin, <i>Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?</i></p>

	<p>14:00-15:30: Flanders and the Dutch Republic of the Golden Age (Rubens, Vermeer, Rembrandt)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amsterdam as a 'global city'
Friday, July 31, 2026	<p>9:00-10:30: 17th century in France: Classicism (Poussin), Rococo (Fragonard), Neoclassicism. Neoclassicism and the cult of Antiquity (David, Canova)</p> <p>11:00-12:30: Romanticism and Realism in France and Germany (Delacroix, Friedrich, Courbet, Bonheur)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientalism: Western culture and the East <p>14:00-15:30: Painters 'of the modern life': French Impressionism, 1860-1880 (Manet, Monet)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the role of the en plein-air painting • Impressionist and the contemporary society
Tuesday, August 4, 2026	<p>10:00-13:00 Excursion: Gemäldegalerie I Painting in Northern Europe 15th-17th centuries, students' oral presentations in front of the artworks</p> <p>14:00-15:30: Excursion: Gemäldegalerie II Painting in Southern Europe 15th-17th centuries, students' oral presentations in front of the artworks</p>
Friday, August 7, 2026	<p>9:00-10:30: Postimpressionism: Van Gogh, Gauguin, Cézanne</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Van Gogh: from the Netherlands, to Paris, to the south of France • Gauguin in Brittany and Polynesia: local traditions and exoticism • Cézanne in Provence: the role of light <p>11:00-12:30: Picasso and Cubism; Matisse</p> <p>14:00-15:30: German Avant-garde in Munich, Berlin and Dresden; National socialism and the "Degenerate Art"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abstraction (Kandinsky), Expressionism (Kirchner), New Objectivity (Grosz, Dix); • Arts under National Socialism
Tuesday, August 11, 2026	<p>9:30-12:30 Excursion: Alte Nationalgalerie 19th century art, students' oral presentations in front of the artworks</p>

	14:00-15:30 Excursion: Neue Nationalgalerie (20th c. art), students' oral presentations in front of the artworks
Friday, August 14, 2026	9:00-10:30: Art in Europe post 1945 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final discussion and remarks 11:00-12:30: Final written exam FUBiS Farewell Ceremony

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