Art History BA

Art History is the study of art and visual culture as instruments of knowledge and methods of human expression that operate in many arenas of history, tradition and the contemporary environment.

The School’s Art History faculty are engaged in the study of a broad geographical, temporal, and ethnic range of cultures, and alert to the variety of ways in which visual artifacts are used to express and convey the diverse values of society.

The Art History program’s teaching goal is to develop students’ ability to comprehend the social, historical, ethical, and aesthetic significance of the visual realm that is our present environment and the heritage of many cultures. This is critical to students’ ability to contribute knowledgeably to the visual traditions of which they represent the latest phase.

Art History’s goal as a community of scholars is to continue to play a major role nationally and internationally in defining and redefining the dynamic practices of the discipline.

More information

- Admission to the Major
- Degree Requirements
- Honors in Art History
- About the Minor

Art History Learning Goals

- Develop skills that provide the basis for life-long use of visual, verbal and written literacy, analytical insight and investigation, critical reading and reasoning, synthesizing of information and material, visual observation and research, writing and persuasive presentation.
- Examine conceptions of human creativity and ways in which diverse cultures define art, the artist, and creative practice.
- Understand and articulate how visual images and material culture communicate information, define cultures, and contribute to new and innovative ways to understand the past and present.
- Learn and use key concepts, vocabularies, methodologies, and problem-solving techniques central to analyzing and articulating the technologies, traditions, and values of understanding and giving meaning to art and visual culture.
- Examine and understand art and visual culture through the observation and investigation of formal and stylistic qualities, iconography and iconology, provenance and patronage, theory and criticism, historical context and influence.
- Use the interdisciplinary reach of art history to intersect with other areas of study such as history, philosophy, literature, music, gender studies, languages, cultural studies, anthropology, comparative religion and new technologies, among others.
- Learn how understanding of visual art changes when the objects are removed from their original environment and placed in a collection, gallery, or museum.
- Explain the implications involved in the idea that meaning or historical intention in art and visual culture is not static or immutable.
- Work directly with original art objects, archival materials and architectural sites.
- Become an acute observer and astute interpreter of the visual environment.

Art History Assessment and Outcomes

- Students at all levels complete writing assignments that measure facility with the concepts, methodologies, vocabulary and problem-solving techniques widely utilized by artists and art historians.
- Majors complete three 400-level senior capstone classes that test the writing, research, presentation, and observational skills of all majors. These classes are selected by students based on a specific area of interest they have developed in the field.
- Honors students complete two 20-page research papers and a graduate level seminar with an additional research paper and presentation.
- Students work one-on-one with faculty and advisers as they apply to graduate school and work toward a career in the