

Humanities 1: Art and Music

Fall 2013

Section A: MWF, 10:00-11:20

Section B: MWF, 11:30-12:50

Section C: MWF, 1:45-3:05

Hutchins Classroom

Instructor for A&B: Adam Kotsko, a.kotsko@shimer.edu

Instructor for C: Aron Dunlap, a.dunlap@shimer.edu

Course Introduction

This class investigates basic elements of the musical and visual arts to develop skills of active listening and viewing. No previous training in music or facility at drawing is presumed; through class discussion and writing assignments, students will express and analyze their responses to works of art and music. We will investigate fundamental elements of the fine arts, such as rhythm, melody, harmony, line, color, and shape. You will be expected, sometimes with the class, sometimes on your own to attend concerts, museums, art galleries, and to discover pieces of public art. We will also read essays on aesthetics that consider the nature of beauty and its relation to some of the formal properties of art.

We will use Ovid's epic poem *Metamorphoses* as the scaffolding for our study of art and music. Ovid's work is known for its retelling of Greek and Roman myths, but as you will discover, a major theme of his narrative is its praise of humanity's creations in all the fields of the fine arts.

Course Goals

After successfully completing this course, students should be able to do the following:

Knowledge/Communication:

- Retell important Greco-Roman myths as presented by Ovid and later artists.
- Demonstrate the mathematical foundations of musical harmony and rhythm and the geometrical basis for single-point perspective.
- Perform experiments with color and the perception of color.
- Examine the contribution made to Ovid's stories by composers and artists such as Michelangelo, Monteverdi, Velazquez, Handel, and Picasso.
- Demonstrate facility with basic aesthetic vocabulary and a context relevant to describe the expressive content of visual art and music.
- Describe, analyze and contextualize Ovidian stories and artistic responses to them in speech and writing.
- Communicate accurately what is represented in an artistic work.

Critical Thinking/Application:

- Integrate the relationship between the form and content in Ovid's poem with related works in the visual arts and music.
- Select evidence taken from works of art and musical compositions to support an interpretation.
- Weigh competing interpretative strategies.
- Generate productive comparisons across disciplines and art forms.

- Identifies patterns, parodies, inversions and subversive content in rich narratives and representations.

Collaboration/Ethics:

- Participate effectively in discussion by contributing carefully considered comments, asking genuine questions, listening carefully to answers, and answering others' questions with critical open-mindedness.
- Demonstrate critically open-minded listening and focused questioning.
- Discern the ethical issues at stake in artistic representations of ugliness, violence and sexuality.
- Recognize that ambiguity is not necessarily deceit.

Required Readings

In addition to the required textbooks, students will receive a course packet with selected shorter readings and opera librettos will be distributed via e-mail. Readings in the packet or for e-mail distribution are marked as follows: (**).

Albers, *The Interaction of Color*

Alberti, *On Painting*

Alpers, *The Vexation of Art*

Bach, *Goldberg Variations* (CD recording by Glenn Gould)

Balzac, "The Unknown Masterpiece" and "Pierre Grassou" (**)

Barnes and Noble Spark Chart of Music History and Theory

Boralsky, Paul, *A Brief History of the Artist from God to Picasso*

Glück, libretto of *Orpheus* (**)

Handel, libretto of *Acis and Gaitea* (**)

Handel, libretto of *Apollo and Daphne* (**)

Helmholtz, "The Physiological Causes of Harmony in Music" (**)

Helmholtz, "The Relation of Optics to Painting" (**)

Kafka, "The Hunger Artist" (**)

Mozart, "Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman?" (**)

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*

Plato, *Ion* (**)

Rilke, Rainer Maria, *Letters on Cézanne*

Taylor, *Learning to Look: A Handbook for the Visual Arts*

Tolstoy, *What is Art?*

Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*

Assessment Methods

Attendance/Participation	50%
Short paper over music	15%
Short paper over Ovid and artworks	20%
Presentation over a piece of public art	15%

Class Participation

A high participation grade starts with consistent attendance. Expect to come to every class. You should only miss class or be tardy because of unavoidable emergencies. *More than 4 absences is sufficient reason to fail the class*, and all absences affect your class participation grade. Each lateness to class counts as a partial absence. If you need to use the bathroom during the class or step outside for some important reason you do not need to ask permission; however, this should be a very rare occurrence. Part of coming to class on time is making sure you've visited the restroom and procured your caffeine before the class begins. Any issue that causes you to miss class or be late should be addressed with me as soon as possible. Phones should be on silent mode during class and placed out of sight.

Come to class prepared. This means that you've not only read the assigned text but that you've marked important passages, jotted down questions and prepared some notes from which to initiate a discussion. Keep in mind that a fruitful discussion must go beyond individual achievements to develop into a cohesive group activity. In any group there are those who jump energetically into the conversation and those who need time for deliberation. If you have a tendency to answer a question immediately after it is asked, it may be necessary to periodically keep silence in order to make a space where multiple voices can be heard. Instead of thinking about how you can boost your own participation grade, think about how the class as a whole can have an enlivening discussion. This will make our time much more enjoyable, and will take care of your grade as well.

Class trips

Since Chicago is our campus, several class sessions will be meeting outside the classroom, both at the Art Institute of Chicago and for an architectural tour of downtown Chicago. The professor will remind you in the preceding class, but it is your responsibility to make sure you arrive in a timely fashion; absences from trip days count toward your total number of absences for the course.

Access to visual and musical materials

The professor will make artworks available via Google Drive, arranged into folders to correspond to the applicable class day. Musical materials will also be made available via Spotify playlists and e-mailed YouTube links.

Overall guidelines for written work

All written work must be submitted via e-mail by the deadline stated in the class schedule below. Papers submitted by the deadline may be rewritten for a higher grade. If you submit a printed copy on time, your paper will count as being on time, but you must submit an e-mail copy as soon as possible—the professor will not grade or respond to any printed work. All papers should be submitted in *a format compatible with Microsoft Word or Libre Office* (.doc, .docx, .rtf., or .odt); please **do not** submit papers in Pages or PDF format.

Short papers over music

Students will be required to write one short paper one over a musical piece. The goal of this paper is to develop the skill of rich, precise description of the expressive content of the work of music, a skill that we will be actively cultivating in class discussion as well. This may include

representational content (if applicable), but is not limited to it. Papers should discuss the artist or composer's likely intended emotional response, drawing on evidence within the work itself; in no case, however, should papers dwell on purely personal impressions or associations.

Topics to discuss for a musical work might include the relative priority of melody or harmony, the balance between consonance and dissonance, the use of repetition and variation, and the effect of instrumentation choices. The language used to describe the works need not be "technical" in any narrow sense, but they should be clear and precise enough that you can be confident that an attentive reader or listener would be able to identify the particular aspects of the work that you are describing.

The chosen musical work must be approved ahead of time by the professor and may (but need not) draw on works discussed in class. ***Papers must be between 750 and 1000 words*** (approximately 3-4 pages of double-spaced text using standard fonts and margins).

Short paper over Ovid and artworks

Students will also be required to write a short paper discussing a myth from Ovid, together with two works of visual art depicting the same story. Students may draw on critical work discussed in class, such as the Alpers reading, but need not. Papers should focus on the specifically painterly or sculptural character of the artworks discussed, including but not limited to the representational content or narrative portrayed. Possible items for discussion in a painting include the use of color, the use or absence of perspective, and the ways the painter may be guiding the viewer's eye across the surface of the painting in specific directions.

The chosen musical work must be approved ahead of time by the professor and may (but need not) draw on works discussed in class. ***Papers must be between 1000 and 1250 words*** (approximately 4-5 pages of double-spaced text using standard fonts and margins).

Presentation over a Piece of Public Art

For this assignments, students will select an architecturally important building or work of public art in the greater Chicago area to present to their classmates. These presentations include a written and a visual component. For the written component, students need to write ***a paper of between 400 and 600 words*** (approximately two pages of double-spaced text using standard fonts and margins) describing the chosen artwork along the same lines as in the short papers. Students may choose to read their paper aloud in class or present the content in a more extemporaneous manner; in either case, papers must be submitted via e-mail before class on the day the student presents, following the formatting guidelines given above.

For the visual component, students should find or take photographs of ***all significant aspects of the artwork*** that they wish to discuss in their presentation. The format for this segment is flexible—good solutions include a PowerPoint or Google Docs presentation e-mailed to the professor or else a USB drive full of images. The professor is available to discuss and test various presentation methods ahead of time.

Tentative Course Schedule and Readings

In-class activities are listed in boldface and readings in normal type. Readings from the packet are marked as follows: (**). Themes highlighted in Ovid readings are for reference only; you should read the entirety of the sections listed for each day.

Monday	August 25	Plato, <i>Ion</i> (**); Boralsky, preface and ch. 1
Wednesday	August 27	Tolstoy, <i>What is Art?</i> , chs. 1, 4-9
Friday	August 31	Taylor, <i>Learning to Look</i> , chs. 1 and 2
Monday	September 1	Labor Day—NO CLASS
Wednesday	September 3	Alberti, <i>On Painting</i> , Book 1
Friday	September 5	Alberti, <i>On Painting</i> , Books 2 and 3
Monday	September 8	Vasari, “Life of Paolo Uccello”; Boralsky, ch. 5
Wednesday	September 10	Helmholtz, “The Relation of Optics to Painting” (**); Alpers, ch. 1
Friday	September 12	Albers, <i>Interaction of Colors</i> (scan whole text, focusing on color exercises). Exercises with color.
Monday	September 15	Taylor, <i>Learning to Look</i> , pp. 77-87, 97-109. Art Institute Visit: Impressionists and Cézanne
Wednesday	September 17	Rilke, <i>Letters on Cézanne</i>
Friday	September 19	Vasari, “Life of Michelangelo” (read first 30 pages closely, scan the remainder); Boralsky, ch. 7
Monday	September 22	Taylor, <i>Learning to Look</i> , pp. 87-90, 123-129. Art Institute Visit: Sculpture
Wednesday	September 24	Discussion of harmony: consonance and dissonance, major and minor chords.
Friday	September 26	Helmholtz, “On the Physiological Causes of Harmony in Music” (**). Experiments with monochord.
Monday	September 29	Melody and rhythm—in-class exercises.
Wednesday	October 1	Instrumentation—YouTube videos on various sections of the orchestra; Mussorgsky, <i>Pictures at an Exhibition</i> (piano and orchestrated versions)
Friday	October 3	Repetition and variation—Mozart, “12 Variations on ‘Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman?’” (**)
Monday	October 6	Creation theme: Ovid, Book 1. Music of Rebel, Schoenberg, etc.
Wednesday	October 8	Apollo and Dafne theme: Listen to Handel ahead of time, following along with libretto (**). Sculpture by Bernini.
Friday	October 10	Argus and Mercury theme: Alpers, ch. 5, “Waiting for Death: Valázquez’s <i>Mercury and Argus</i> .”
Monday	October 13	Dean’s Break—NO CLASS

Wednesday	October 15	Ovid, Books 2 and 3. Artwork over Europa, Actaeon and Diana, Echo and Narcissus
Friday	October 17	Palaces: Taylor, <i>Learning to Look</i> , pp. 90-97, 129-138.
Monday	October 20	Walking tour in Loop. Paper over musical piece due via e-mail by the beginning of class
Wednesday	October 22	Semele: Read full libretto (**) to Handel's <i>Semele</i> ; we will listen to selections in class.
Friday	October 24	Ovid, Books 4 and 5. Paintings on Danae; Telemann's Ino
Monday	October 27	Nudity and sexuality: Alpers, ch. 2, "Not Bathsheba"; Bernini's Rape of Persephone
Wednesday	October 29	Ovid, Books 6 and 7; Music and art on Medea
Friday	October 31	Arachne theme: Alpers, ch. 6
Monday	November 3	Student presentations over public art.
Wednesday	November 5	Student presentations over public art.
Friday	November 7	Ovid, Books 8 and 9; Picasso's minotaurs
Monday	November 10	Ovid, Books 10 and 11. Selections from Monteverdi
Wednesday	November 12	Orpheus: Read full Glück libretto (**), musical selections in class.
Friday	November 14	Ovid, Books 12 and 13: Visual art on the Battle of the Centaurs. Acis and Galetea statue in Paris Luxembourg Gardens.
Monday	November 17	Acis and Galetea: Read full Handel libretto (**), musical selections in class.
Wednesday	November 19	Ovid, Books 14-15. Boralsky, ch. 3.
Friday	November 21	Stravinsky, Apollo (in class). Student papers over Ovid and artworks due via e-mail by the beginning of class time.
Monday	November 24	Balzac, "The Unfinished Masterpiece" (**); Boralsky, ch. 8
Tuesday	November 25	Balzac, "Pierre Grassou" (**), Kafka "The Hunger Artist" (**); Boralsky, ch. 10
		N.B.—All classes meet on Monday schedule. All written work due by The Absolute Deadline.