

Saints in the Art of Medieval and Early Renaissance Florence

Arts in Context
Winter 2012

Dr. Gail E. Solberg

This course serves as an introduction to the making, placement, and use of images of divine figures and saints in Florence in the late medieval and early Renaissance period to about 1450. Preliminary discussion treats the contemporary world view in which saints were models and helpmates on earth, where life was, ideally, a prelude to bliss in eternity with the ranks of the elect. The premise was an all-powerful trinitarian God, sometimes benevolent, sometimes wrathful, and always in control of events on earth. This is the context for veneration of God and saints in the city which coalesced before images. Particularly important was the super-saint, Mary the Virgin. We will ask who the Florentine saints were, how they joined the canon, how they are depicted, and why images of them drew viewers. What was their utility? How did the saints and representations of them rank among themselves, and why were some more important than others? How were they categorized and controlled, and where were they venerated? What forces were at work in their presentation? A main goal is to delineate patterns in worship and images of saints. Our test case is Florence, which is exemplary of religious, social and civic life across Europe in the period. Following consideration of the nature of sainthood and the utility of saints in Florentine life, we examine holy figures in the public realm by looking to the heavenly patrons of the local church, of the city government, of the guilds, and of social service organizations. Some protectors of Florence worked miracles and we will consider how these figures and their images were protected and promoted. The founders of religious orders such as Francis and Dominic were relative late comers to the group, but they took a significant place in Florentine attentions. Family and personal patron saints introduce problems of micro history and in some instances gendered patterns of reception and appeal. Great artworks in painting and sculpture are the means for dealing with these issues.

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Academic Policies and Requirements

1. Attendance at all class meetings. One unexcused absence will affect borderline grades; additional unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your grade for each absence. Medical excuse is the only valid reason for absence. Prompt arrival is crucial-- class sessions will commence at the declared time. Late arrival negatively impacts your grade and you may have to pay your own admission fee to ticket sites.
2. Stamina: we will be on our feet for long sessions on site, and in this season the cold will be an important factor. Dress accordingly. Churches and some museums are not much warmer than outside temperature.
3. Sustained engagement with material presented in class and all assigned readings.
4. Timely completion of all written and oral work. (Late delivery of assignments results in incremental reduction of your grade.)
5. All written assignments must be consigned in hard copy, not by electronic attachment.
6. No electronic devices are allowed for exams in class.
7. Photographs during class sessions are allowed only before or after discussion begins and only where regulations permit.
8. No food or drink is allowed during class, whether in the classroom or on site.
9. Avoid bringing backpacks to on-site visits. Many museums require that you check them, and this is time consuming.
10. Remember that public bathrooms are scarce within the city. Finding one is problematic and not always possible during on-site visits.
11. Neither the midterm nor the final exam can be rescheduled except for reasons that originate with the instructor.
12. Communication with the instructor by email can be considered effective only when you receive return email confirmation of receipt. Please allow at least a half day for a response. Urgencies of any type must be communicated *viva voce* (by phone or in person).

Meetings will be on Monday morning 9-12, Wednesday afternoons from 14:45-16:30, and twice on Wednesday morning. There are some exceptions to this plan; on two occasions there will be both a morning and an afternoon

session on a single day, and once we meet on a Tuesday. Consult the program in advance to ensure prompt arrival. Usually we will meet on site, and the location will vary, but there will be some in-class sessions.

Readings

Materials will be distributed. Therefore, they must be returned, unmarked and in good condition at end term when you will be required to sort and consign them. A number of selections will be distributed in January, and you should make every effort to read them as background before the beginning of regular classes on January 30.

Notes

- Office hours are on Monday from 15:30 to 16:30, immediately before or after class, and at other times by appointment.
- You will be required to make site visits on your own.

Assignments

Walking tour of Florence with Worksheet	5%	Week I (Due February 3, on the way to Rome)
Oral report on an assigned article report and written synopsis	5%	Dates throughout the term
Written description of a panel from one of the Baptistery Doors	10%	Week II (Due February 9 at 12:30)
Midterm Examination (take home)	25%	Week IV (Due February 22, afternoon)
Paper	25%	Week VI (Due March 7 in class)
Final Examination	30%	(On March 14)

**Note that by judicious contributions to class sessions you create a personal profile within the class group and this presence weighs in an unquantifiable way in the calculation of your grade. Find your voice in this class but allow others to find theirs. Be neither overbearing nor a silent listener .

Midterm and Final Examinations

The exams will consist of shorter and longer essay questions and IDs. Command of the material both in assigned readings and in class meetings is one key to doing well. Personal reflection to assess this body of knowledge is essential. You will be asked to address general questions by citing the evidence of visual images, whether paintings, sculptures, architecture, or reliquaries, to support your conclusions. A complete identification of the works you mention should include their author, title, and date. Class by class you should review group discussion and reading assignments, and, most important, meditate on both in relation to the monuments studied.

Article report

Each student will be assigned a specialized article on some object having to do with the visual representation of a saint relevant to us. The assignment has two parts. First is an oral presentation to the class. In a brief synopsis (5-7 minutes maximum) you are to teach the class what you have learned. Second, in a written summary (2 page maximum) you are to make your material available to the group. Outline or list form is acceptable. This document must be sent by email to all class members within a week of your report, but first submit it to the instructor for review. Guidelines forthcoming.

Paper (5 pages)

Select one of these options:

1. Take the object(s) treated in your assigned article as the foundation for an assessment of a broader range of visual evidence. Your task is to find conceptual, programmatic, material, and formal similarities and differences between what your article treats and the body of imagery the class has studied. Meet with the instructor for additional clarification if need be. Each student exercising this option should in any case meet with the instructor to formulate a plan.
2. Select any two paintings or sculptures of the Virgin Mary and make a careful comparison. Details forthcoming. Clear your pair of images with the instructor before writing your paper.

PROGRAM

**Afternoon sessions before January 29 Mandatory for class members

January 24, 14:00 Cathedral and Santa Reparata

January 26, 14:00 Baptistery

Week I Christ and St John Baptist; Zenobius, Reparata, and Mary

Monday, January 30 9:00-12:00 Meet on the Cathedral Steps

Civic and Sacred Patron Saints

Cathedral, Baptistery, and Opera del Duomo Museum : St John the Baptist and Christ, Sts Zenobius, Reparata, and Mary

Walking Medieval Florence Assignment Due February 3, on the way to Rome

Short Paper Assignment: Describe one panel from a Baptistery door Due February 9 at 12:30

Wednesday, February 1 14:45-16:30 Aula 3

Key Images to Understanding the Devotion to Saints

Lorenzo Monaco Madonna of Intercession, Madonna of Bagnolo, Bardi di Vernio Tomb Frescoes, Masaccio *Trinity*

February 3, at departure for Rome **Walking Tour assignment due**

February 3-5 ROME FIELDTRIP

Week II Mary: Virgin, Mother, Bride

Monday, February 6 9:00-12:00 Meet on Via Calzaiuoli side of Orsanmichele

Miraculous and Healing Images of Mary

Orsanmichele/Bigallo/ SS Annunziata

Wednesday, February 8 9:00-12:00 Meet at the Reserved door of the Uffizi

Narrative and Icon: Marian Images for the Altar and Domestic Settings

The Uffizi: Cimabue, Giotto, Bernardo Daddi, Lorenzo Monaco, Gentile da Fabriano, Masaccio, Domenico Veneziano, Filippo Lippi

February 9 at 12:30 **Paper on baptistery door panel due**

Week III Order Saints: Francis, Precursors, Followers, and Emulators

Monday, February 13 9:00-12:00 Meet on the steps of Santa Croce

Santa Croce: Francis and the Franciscan Ideals through Images

Bardi, Baroncelli, Alberti, and Rinuccini chapels, and the Refectory

Wednesday, February 15 14:45-16:00 Meet in Aula 3

Classroom session to review and connect

February 17 ASSISI FIELDTRIP

Week IV	Order Saints: Dominican Conventuals and Observants, and Benedictine Women
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Monday, February 20 9:00-12:00 Meet on the steps of Santa Maria Novella
Santa Maria Novella Church and Cloister: Dominican Ideals through Images
Saints Dominic, Thomas Aquinas, and Peter Martyr in a Conventual Setting

Wednesday February 22 9:00-12:00 Meet at San Marco
Saints in the Cloister: Observant Dominican Men and Benedictine Women
San Marco and Sant' Apollonia

Midterm Take Home Test due at beginning of morning class

Wednesday February 22 14:45-16:30 Meet at the Accademia
All sorts of saints in all sorts of panel paintings
The Accademia: Marian, Franciscan, and Dominican Images and the Coronation of the Virgin

Week V	Saints and other Heroic Exemplars in Civic Settings
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Monday, February 27 9:00-12:00 Meet in Piazza della Repubblica at the column
Ideals in Sculptures and Images in the Piazza and Palazzo Signoria
Abundance, Marzocco, Judith, David, Hercules, Neptune, Romans, Battles, and Literary Heroes

Monday February 27 14:45-16:30 Meet at Via Calzaiuoli door of Orsanmichele
Guild Saints
Niches and Upstairs at Orsanmichele

March 2-4 VENICE FIELDTRIP

Week VI	More Saints and other Heroic Exemplars for Civic Settings
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**Tuesday, March 6 9:00-12:00 Meet at the Bargello
Deracinated Sculptures, Paintings, and Reliquaries
The Bargello

Wednesday, March 7 14:45-16:30 Meet at the Brancacci Chapel
A Civic, Papal and Patron Saint in Action
The Brancacci Chapel

Paper due at the beginning of class

Week VII	Conclusion
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Monday, March 12 9:00-12:00 Meet in Aula 3
Review

Wednesday, March 14 14:45-16:30 Meet in Aula 3
Final Examination

