

Course Information Sheet for entry in 2024-25: MSt in History of Art and Visual Culture



Course facts

Mode of study	Full Time Only
Expected length	9 months

About the course

This nine-month programme offers a unique combination of methodological depth and access to excellent primary sources for students who wish to develop and extend their understanding of how visual styles at different times and in different places can be understood in relation to the aesthetic, intellectual and social facets of various cultures.

This course draws on the established strengths of the discipline of art history in formal, iconographic and contextual analysis in the Faculty of History's History of Art Department and links them to a rigorous approach to questions of theory and method.

The course will expose you to the ways in which the subjects of visual history are being redefined on a broad base to include a much wider range of artefacts and visual media, including images and objects produced in contexts ranging from the scientific to the popular.

Teaching comprises:

- a compulsory methodology paper, *Issues in Art History*, which is taught in a seminar series during Michaelmas and Hilary terms. There is also an associated lecture series, workshops on professional practice and object-handling sessions in Oxford collections.
- one option paper, normally taught in small classes during Michaelmas and Hilary terms.

You will also write a dissertation of up to 15,000 words, which will be submitted in Trinity term (see the *Assessment* section below for further details).

It is expected that about 25% of a student's time will be spent as self-directed research and study.

Example option papers

Some of the option papers will not be available every year, and new ones may be added.

As an example, the options papers for students enrolled in the 2021-22 academic year were:

The Politics of Modernism: Art in France, 1880-1914

Tutor: Professor Alastair Wright

The course examines modernist art produced in France in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, interrogating how diverse artistic practices engaged with the politics of class, gender, and race. Topics will include the relationship between art and mass culture; modernism's affiliations with both reactionary and revolutionary ideologies of the 'popular'; the gendering of modern art in period accounts and in later art historical narratives; the connections between modernism and French colonialism; and the encounter with African art and myths of the 'primitive'. To explore these issues, the writings of artists and their contemporaries will be examined alongside recent art-historical work and a range of theoretical texts on questions relevant to the materials of the course.

Gothic to Renaissance? Reframing Architecture in Europe and Beyond

Tutor: Dr Costanza Beltrami

The Gothic and the Renaissance have long been viewed as two distinct artistic periods or 'styles' in neat succession. But what are the chronological, geographical, and conceptual limits of Gothic and Renaissance architecture? What happens if we recast late-Gothic architecture as a global phenomenon of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries?

In addition to canonical examples from England, France, and Germany, late-Gothic buildings were erected (and decorated) in newly conquered territories such as the Canary Islands, Madeira, and Santo Domingo. In their materials and decorations, these new foundations responded to local contexts, in spite of being based on models brought from overseas. As the Gothic and other European traditions became global phenomena, they were increasingly in competition with new Renaissance designs. Architecture thus embodies a complex process of cultural interweaving: innovative late-Gothic buildings continued to appear at the height of the Renaissance; master masons constructed dynamic hybrids of different architectural modes; and linear conceptions of influence from the Italian 'centre' to global peripheries are dispelled by the intensity of artistic exchanges.

Challenging the perception of the Renaissance as a watershed in the emergence of architectural and cultural modernity, this course will place Gothic and Renaissance buildings not in opposition, but in dialogue. Uniquely, it will invite associations and conversations which are still relatively unexplored in architectural history. We will examine issues of reuse, communication, adaptation, exchange, and hybridisation on continental and intercontinental scales. Additionally, we will take into account the international trade networks where raw materials and luxury artworks were exported and imported, as well as the structures which enabled and enshrined commercial and territorial domination. Finally, we will study both religious and secular structures as lived-in, multi-media creations at the heart of networks of production and communication. This approach to architecture will enable students to develop personal research interests in other media, such as micro-architecture, sculpture or drawing.

Histories of Photography

Tutor: Professor Geoffrey Batchen, Professor of History of Art

Participants in this seminar class will be invited to write a version of their own history of photography. The class will begin by looking at the history of that history, and will then consider various alternatives to it. Attention will be paid to the problems of writing such a history, a quite particular challenge given the mobility and reproducibility of the photograph, and thus its reluctance to adhere to the usual art historical categories (originality, medium specificity, chronology, nationalism, biography, style, genre, and so on). Each of these ways of doing art history will nevertheless be considered, and equivalent photographic examples critically analysed. Case studies to be considered include histories of the photography produced in Africa and in the British Empire. Participants will be asked to write research essays that demonstrate their own approach to a particular kind of history of photography.

Global Perspectives on American Art: Latinx Art and Activism

Tutor: Charlene Villaseñor Black, Terra Foundation Visiting Professor of American Art

This course expands the definition of "American" art by examining art created by minoritized populations in the US, with a particular focus on Latinx art in the 20th Century. The class begins by querying the definition of "American" art, the inclusion of Latinx art in the canon, and the evolving terminology employed in its study (including the "x" as indicative of both gender inclusivity and indigeneity). Latinx art has always manifested an uneasy relationship with mainstream artistic institutions - the museum, art history, art criticism. As a public art created in opposition to established elite institutions such as the museum, as well as a popular art that admits low riders and home altars as the objects of scholarly study, Latinx art raises important questions about the very nature of art history and criticism. This class will focus on 20th-century Latinx cultural production and its relationship to activism, with a particular focus on alternative cultural spaces. Topics to be considered include prints, murals, photography, sculpture, and performance in light of theories of decoloniality, feminism, the Neobaroque, rasquache aesthetics, and global modernisms/postmodernisms.

Supervision

The allocation of graduate supervision for this course is the responsibility of the Department of History of Art and it is not always possible to accommodate the preferences of incoming graduate students to work with a particular member of staff. Under some circumstances a supervisor outside the Department of History of Art may be nominated.

Supervisors will meet with their students weekly in Michaelmas and Hilary terms to teach the option paper, and will also offer at least five hours dedicated supervision for the dissertation.

An Oxford academic's pre-application indication of willingness to supervise an enquiring applicant is not a guarantee that the applicant will be offered a place, or that the supervisor in question has capacity in that particular year.

Assessment

You will write a dissertation under the guidance of an expert supervisor, on a topic of your choice and approved by the supervisor and the chair of examiners for the programme. The dissertation is submitted in Trinity term.

In addition to the dissertation, assessment will take the form of exams and assessed essays. For the compulsory methodology paper you will write three short essays in an examination.

The option paper is assessed through one short methodological or historiographic essay and one research project. Students receive one-on-one supervision when preparing their essays.

If you wish to apply for a doctoral programme, at Oxford or elsewhere, you will be encouraged to develop your doctoral proposal during the first few months of the course so that you will be well placed to make doctoral applications during or soon after completing the course.

Changes to this course

The University will seek to deliver this course in accordance with the description set out above. However, there may be situations in which it is desirable or necessary for the University to make changes in course provision, either before or after you commence your course. These might include significant changes made necessary by any pandemic, epidemic or local health emergency. For further information, please see the University's Terms and Conditions (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/terms>) and our page on changes to courses (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges>).

Costs

Annual fees for entry in 2024-25

Fee status	Annual Course fees
Home	£14,890
Overseas	£33,970

Information about course fees

Course fees are payable each year, for the duration of your fee liability (your fee liability is the length of time for which you are required to pay course fees). For courses lasting longer than one year, please be aware that fees will usually increase annually. Information about how much fees and other costs may increase is set out in the University's Terms and Conditions (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/terms>).

Course fees cover your teaching as well as other academic services and facilities provided to support your studies. Unless specified in the additional cost information (below), course fees do not cover your accommodation, residential costs or other living costs. They also don't cover any additional costs and charges that are outlined in the additional cost information.

Additional cost information

There are no compulsory elements of this course that entail additional costs beyond fees and living costs. However, as part of your course requirements, you may need to choose a dissertation, a project or a thesis topic. Please note that, depending on your choice of topic and the research required to complete it, you may incur additional expenses, such as travel expenses, research expenses, and field trips. You will need to meet these additional costs, although you may be able to apply for small grants from your department and/or college to help you cover some of these expenses.

Living costs

In addition to your course fees, you will need to ensure that you have adequate funds to support your living costs for the duration of your course.

The likely living costs for 2024-25 are published below. These costs are based on a single, full-time graduate student, with no dependants, living in Oxford. We provide the cost per month so you can multiply up by the number of months you expect to live in Oxford.

Likely living costs for one month

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£315	£495
Accommodation	£745	£925
Personal items	£190	£320
Social activities	£40	£95
Study costs	£35	£85
Other	£20	£35
Total	£1,345	£1,955

Likely living costs for nine months

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£2,835	£4,445
Accommodation	£6,705	£8,325
Personal items	£1,710	£2,880
Social activities	£360	£855
Study costs	£315	£765
Other	£180	£315
Total	£12,105	£17,595

Likely living costs for twelve months

	Lower range	Upper range
Food	£3,780	£5,940
Accommodation	£8,940	£11,100
Personal items	£2,280	£3,840
Social activities	£480	£1,140
Study costs	£420	£1,020
Other	£240	£420
Total	£16,140	£23,460

When planning your finances for any future years of study at Oxford beyond 2024-25, it is suggested that you allow for potential increases in living expenses of 5% or more each year – although this rate may vary depending on the national economic situation.

More information about how these figures have been calculated is available at www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/livingcosts.

Document accessibility

If you require an accessible version of this document please contact Graduate Admissions and Recruitment by email (graduate.admissions@admin.ox.ac.uk) or via the online form (<http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/ask>).