

## COURSE PROPOSAL

# Between Science and *Humanitates*. Classifications, Experimentation and modern Art History in the Europe of Antiquaries (16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries)

### Subject area

History, History of Science and History of Art.

### Brief syllabus

In the middle of the Seventeenth century a new figure appeared in the world of European scholarship: the Antiquary.

Whilst the Renaissance – especially in Italy – had produced scholars such as Pirro Ligorio and Bartolomeo Marliano who had dedicated their lives to the study of antiquity, these did not represent a particular class of scholarship.

The *Renaissance savant* had too many strings to his bow to allow himself to be restricted to one branch of knowledge – his thirst for learning was too great. In this sense Nicolas Fabri de Periesc and Ole Worm were still Renaissance men. Even if antiquity was their preferred domain, they were motivated by an equal enthusiasm for Medicine, Astronomy and Geography. By contrast, during the second half of the Seventeenth century there were men who set out explicitly to construct a Science of Antiquities as a discipline in itself.

After the age of the explorers came the age of the builders: where the men of the Sixteenth century had tried to construct a historical method, scholars throughout Europe now set out to establish a theory governing antiquities. It was no longer a case of simply describing the objects (including the monuments), but of explaining their use and function.

This raises a fundamental question: what was the nature of the learning of the Antiquaries? And further, how much value can be ascribed to the documents they produced?

Closely interrelated to these questions, issues far more complex, as: why did the men of the classical age find it so difficult to escape from biblical chronology, and why did the weight of Scripture continue to confine them to a short chronology – so short that they were forced into the most complicated contortions in order to conceptualize the ancient History of Man, and therefore the Earth?

This course would be a fascinating journey into the reports that joined between the Sixteenth and Eighteenth centuries, the systematic observation, explanation and analysis of the objects and their final musealization, in a close relationship between the History of Man, Geology, Botany, Archeology and modern Art History.

### Goals/Objectives

This course seeks to familiarize its participants with the relation between Science and *Humanitates*, particularly through the study of the birth of modern principles of classification, testing and description of physical phenomena, geology and natural, and their relationship with the birth of modern art history. These will be approached in light of the following themes:

- Familiarity with the emergence of the Scientific Method.

- Exploring the relations between the Scientific Method and Cultural History in the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- Understanding how the History of Art emerged also from the Scientific Method and Humanist Inquiry.

### **Proposed methods and materials**

As well as the first course, and which closely connected, this course will be based on analysis of material (imagines and documents) from the most important Libraries and Museums in the world.

Again, we will propose a number of interesting comparisons between literary sources, historical sources, travel reports and pictures, and more generally works of art.

Particularly, we will try to analyze many interesting imagines in which the taste for medals and other kind of *anticaglie* (ancient stone monuments, statues, bas-reliefs, bronze axes, ancient vases, funerary urns, fragments, etc.), is associated with the interest in excavation, geology and botany. In this way, studying the principle of sedimentation elaborated from some of the most important scholar-travellers of 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, we will know an particular taste for an artistic approach to archaeological and scientific finds.

At the beginning of each section of lessons will be distributed an topic Anthology - documents and literary works (always offered in English translation, for easy understanding) - necessary for a deeper understanding of art and archaeological monuments presented during the lesson. Other materials will be distributed through e-reserves and pdf.

At the end of each section will be discussions on the literature used in the classroom, on the Anthology distributed, with a student presentation of a subject or topic agreed with the professor.

### **Class Work**

As this class is a seminar, it is critical that all participants attend every class meeting having read the assigned readings and being prepared to discuss them. Two to three students will be in charge of leading the discussion (which will include a brief presentation and the introduction of discussion questions) each section.

### **Assessment:**

Attendance, participation, and final presentation: 50%

Papers (one) : 25%

Exam: 25%

### **Paper topics:**

Paper topics will be announced at the introductory seminar meeting.

### **Suggested background reading:**

Momigliano, A., *The classical foundations of modern historiography*, with a foreword by Riccardo Di Donato, Berkeley, University of California press, 1990.

Rossi, P., *The Birth of Modern Science (Making of Europe)*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 2001.

*Core Readings:*

Gould, S. J., *Time's arrow, time's cycle : myth and metaphor in the discovery of geological time*, Cambridge, Mass.; London, Harvard University Press, 1987.

*Additional Readings:*

Barrell, J (ed.), *Painting and the politics of Culture – New Essays on British Art 1700-1850*, Oxford and New York, 1992.

Momigliano, A., *Studies on modern scholarship*, edited by G. W. Bowersock and T. J. Cornell ; with new translations by T. J. Cornell, Berkeley , University of California Press, 1994.

Rossen, S.F., and Caroselli, S.L. (eds), *The Golden Age of Naples: Art and Civilization under the Bourbons 1734-1805*, exh. cat., 2 vols, Detroit Institute of Arts with Art Institute of Chicago, Detroit, 1981.

## **Week 1**

### **Introduction: Rome, the capital of History**

- *The birth of the Antiquaries. The Roman obsession with ancient remains.*
- *Surveying the monuments. Pirro Ligorio, artist, architect and scholar.*
- *The lost Antiquity of the Gauls. Nicolas Fabri de Peiresc (1580-1637): philologist, mathematician, astronomer, lawyer, naturalist and antiquary.*
- *Assignment Paper topics.*

#### Anthology:

- Contemplation of the remains. An excursion to Lake Garda by Felice Feliciano, fifteenth century.

- Description of the city of Rome. Project for mapping Rome, Leon Battista Alberti, fifteenth century.
- The power of the past. A letter from Pope Pius II concerning the protection of ancient buildings, fifteenth century.
- Letter from Raphael to Pope Leo X. A letter concerning the protection of the antiquities of Rome, sixteenth century.
- The plans of Bufalini. A topographical survey of Rome, sixteenth century.
- Rubens writes to Peiresc. Ruben's commentary on Peiresc's tripod, seventeenth century.

## Week 2

### **The Archaeology of Archaeology. The Wunderkammer.**

- *English scholar-travellers and German diggers. Geography and Antiquity in the British Isles. William Camden and the exploration of British antiquities.*
- *Excavators in Germany. Nicolaus Marschalk.*
- *The Scandinavians. The bird of landscape Archaeology. The synthesis of archaeological knowledge of the Renaissance.*
- *Travelling though time. Ole Worm.*

#### Anthology:

- Preface by François Rabelais. Rabelais provides a commentary on the work of Marliano, sixteenth century.
- The plans of Bufalini. A topographical survey of Rome, sixteenth century.
- Pots that grow in the ground. The discovery of vases in Poland, fifteenth century.
- The thunderbolts. Michele Mercati explains the origin of 'thunderbolts', sixteenth century.

### Week 3

#### **Collection and Classification.**

#### **An instrument of learning and experimentation: from Antiquary to Archaeologist.**

- *The earth is a history book. Arranging objects as text, making history readable. Spon, Spanheim and the invention of numismatics; Bianchini and comparative iconography.*
- *The surveyors of the past. John Aubrey and comparative archaeology; Thomas Browne and the resurrection of history.*

#### Anthology:

- On the childhood of man. Bacon and Pascal, seventeenth century.
- The taste for travel. Jacob Spon visits Greece, seventeenth century.
- On immortality. Men confronted by memory, by Thomas Browne, seventeenth century.

### Week 4

#### **The anatomists of the landscape. ‘Anatomical dissection’ and the discovery of Childeric’s treasure.**

- *The era of systematic description. Bringing History to life. German in search of its origins.*
- *The Druids: at the wellspring of History. Stukeley and the role of the Celts in the origins of Europe.*

#### Anthology:

- Archaeological stratigraphy. The studies of Olof Rudbeck, seventeenth century.
- Treasure-hunting. The discovery of the grave of Childeric, seventeenth century.
- The Cocherel discovery. A description of the megalithic grave at Cocherel, seventeenth century.

### Week 5

#### **On the rejection of the Natural History of Man**

- *The Antiquity of Man and the Antiquity of the Earth. The Bible Questioned, Isaac Lapeyrère and Judah Halevi*
- *Students presentation.*
- *Paper n. 1.*

Anthology:

- *Anatomy of the earth. Stukeley describes the megaliths of Great Britain, eighteenth century.*
- *The long history of mankind. The origin of the peopling of America by Isaac de Lapeyrère, seventeenth century.*

**Week 6**

**Secrets of the free-thinking Salons. The contemplation of man's place in history.**

- *The establishment of Archaeology. The collapse of the Graeco-Roman model and the Crisis of History. The era of hagiographers.*
- *Bernard de Montfaucon.*

Anthology:

- *A letter from Voltaire. On the origin of shells, eighteenth century.*
- *Diderot's preface. In praise of Nicholas Antoine Boulanger, eighteenth century.*

**Week 7**

**The foundation of a Science of Objects and Monuments.**

- *The Comte de Caylus.*

**Week 8**

- *The Buried cities of Vesuvius. Pompeii and Herculaneum.*

Anthology:

## Week 9

### Systematic excavations. Observation, survey and explanations.

- *Winckelmann. The crisis in Mediterranean Archaeology. Johann Joachim*
- *The History of Art and the History of Nature. Contradictions in the Archaeology of the Age of Enlightenment.*

Anthology:

- On the origin of art. Winckelmann and the birth of art history, eighteenth century.
- The excavation of Martin Mushard. A method for excavating urns, eighteenth century.
- Jefferson's excavations. The discovery of a borrow in Virginia, eighteenth century.
- The first inhabitants of Gaul. The stratigraphic studies of Boucher de Perthes, nineteenth century.

## Week 10

- *Students presentation*
- *Paper n 2.*
- *Exams*