HUAS 6315:

Leonardo da Vinci:

Man, Machine, Nature, Artifice

Course Information

HUAS 6315
Fall 2012
Wednesday, 10 am–12:45 pm

Professor Contact Information

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Office phone: 972-883-2367
Office hours: Thurs., 4–5 or by appointment

Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions

None, other than graduate-student standing

Course Description

We’re very familiar with the concept of the Renaissance Man who gracefully strides between disciplines without showing any strain. Leonardo da Vinci—painter, courtier, musician, scientist, military engineer, mapmaker, and restless experimenter—is often seen as the quintessential representative of the type. Yet his own career had remarkable ups and downs, and much of the image that we have of Leonardo was formed in modern times (via Freud and many others) rather than reflective of how he was esteemed in his own era. This graduate seminar will explore his culture of experiment, the context in which he worked, and the possibilities then available to the interdisciplinary mind.

We will begin by getting familiar with his biography, then discuss thematic topics: his depiction of nature; his conception of the human form; his treatment of war; his consideration of optics and
perspective; his engagement with the scientific community of his time; his use and development of technology; the way his image has been manipulated over the centuries.

Because this is a graduate class, we will have a fairly sizable amount of reading which all students are expected to complete. Some weeks will demand more reading time, especially early in the semester when we all will try to get up to speed on the general facts of Leonardo’s biography. Most weeks you will have a reading response due in class that addresses some question raised by the reading. Other weeks you will have some other written assignment that will develop your project into a finished seminar paper.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

- To develop the ability to read complex texts and study difficult objects closely and critically.
- To approach the subject from an interdisciplinary perspective, considering equally the artistic and scientific exigencies behind the making of the works under discussion.
- To engage in acceptable graduate-level research on material students were previously unfamiliar with, gaining an understanding of art-historical methodological practice.

Required Textbooks and Materials


There are many other readings on electronic reserve through McDermott Library’s website. Note also that you can compare prices for these textbooks online through www.addall.com, which searches a number of online retailers and compares prices for the books.

Assignments & Academic Calendar

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<th>Class</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td>29 Aug.</td>
<td>Intro</td>
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<td>Biographical Sketch 1: Training and the Context of Laurentian Florence</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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| 5 Sept.  | Biographical Sketch 2: Milan, Florence (again), Milan (again), France | - Vasari, “Life of Leonardo” (any edition is fine; on electronic reserve you can read translation by Julia and Peter Bondanella)  
- Various, “Beauty and Love: Leonardo’s Portraits of Women,” In LdV: Painter at the Court of Milan, 103–133 |
- Kemp and Walker, Leonardo on Painting, 1–46, 191–280 |
| 26 Sept. | No class—Jewish Holiday                                | - Read all the material on Robert Simon’s Salvator Mundi website (http://goo.gl/F5oD9), making sure to watch the BBC video (http://goo.gl/cbJii) and listen to radio program (http://goo.gl/r4jfa) about the work. |
| 3 Oct.   | Religious Works and Interpretation                      | - Leo Steinberg, Leonardo’s Incessant ‘Last Supper’ (whole book)  
- Review materials on Salvator Mundi from last week |
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<td>Reading response due</td>
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<td>Research Project abstract due</td>
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<td>Reading response due</td>
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<td>Reading response due</td>
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<td>7 Nov.</td>
<td>Presentations, part 1</td>
<td>Annotated Bibliography Due</td>
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<td>14 Nov.</td>
<td>Presentations, part 2</td>
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<td>21 Nov.</td>
<td>Thanksgiving break</td>
<td>No class</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 Nov.</td>
<td>WRITING WORKSHOP DAY</td>
<td>Bring 2 copies of a 10-page draft of your final paper. This is an important part of the overall grade for the paper—you must be nearly done with it.</td>
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<td>Bring two copies of your research paper’s bibliography to class. We are going to make sure it is ready to be in final form when turned in next week.</td>
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<td>14 Dec.</td>
<td><strong>FINAL PAPER DUE BY 2 PM IN MY OFFICE</strong></td>
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**Course Requirements**

The final grade will be broken down approximately like this:

- Short reading responses: 40%
- Final research essay: 40%
- In-Class Presentation: 10%
- Participation: 10%

1. **Reading Responses**—Everyone will turn in one-to-two-page reading responses on the days signaled above in the syllabus. There will be 8 of these.
2. **Research Essay**—12 to 15 pages long (due 14 December) plus a three-page abstract (due 17 October) and a five-page annotated bibliography (due 7 November). You will bring a 10-page draft to class on 28 Nov. and we will workshop it together.
3. **In-class presentations on a work of art related to a research project** (7 and 14 November)
4. **Participation**: You will come to class on time, having done your reading and ready to speak about it to the group.

**Details about the Research Essay**

You should formulate a topic related to the subject matter of this course, that is, some aspect of the history and imagery of Leonardo or the art, science, or historiography of the period. Select one of the following types of projects:

a. A **research paper** in which you investigate a particular topic or question of interest to you, using both primary and secondary sources. Such a paper would be appropriate for future reworking and submission to an M.A. portfolio.

b. A **historiographic paper** on a topic or issue, in which you analyze and compare the approaches and conclusions of three or more different scholars to a similar topic. This could potentially also concern what you see as a significant gap in scholarship on a specific topic, or an approach that you think would yield further insight.

c. An in-depth **visual or textual analysis**. If you wish to closely delve into Leonardo’s thoughts on anatomy, for example, you can examine his drawings and writings on the subject with great detail. You’ll still need to do secondary research on the material.

In all cases, your final paper will be preceded by an abstract, an annotated bibliography, and a rough draft, and a final bibliography. In the abstract, you should present as clearly and as fully as possible your chosen topic for the written work. It should include your theme and your proposed method of approach. Your proposal must be satisfactory before you proceed on your paper.

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*These descriptions and timelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.*