

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

VISUAL ARTS HISTORY 9551A, FALL 2017  
SEMINAR IN MEDIEVAL ART

MEDIEVAL ART IN NORTH AMERICAN CONTEXTS:  
COLLECTING, DISPLAY, REPRESENTATION

Thursdays, 11:30 to 2:20 p.m., John Labatt Visual Arts Centre, Rm. 247

Professor Kathryn Brush

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Office Hour: Thursdays, 3 to 4:00 p.m., or by appointment

Prerequisites:

For undergraduate students: VAH 2251E/251E or VAH 2252F/G (Early Medieval Art) or VAH 2253E/253E (Romanesque and Gothic Art) or VAH 2254F (Romanesque Art); priority will be given to fourth-year students. For graduate students: previous course work in medieval art and/or modern art, museum history, historiography, and intellectual history would be helpful. Reading knowledge of a language other than English would be useful for all seminar participants.

You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that you have not taken an antirequisite course. Enrolment in this course without the normal prerequisite may not be used as the basis of an appeal. If you are not eligible for this course, you will be removed from it at any time, and you will receive no adjustment to your fees. These decisions cannot be appealed.

Course Description

This seminar explores the collecting, display, and representation of medieval art in the USA and Canada during the past century. In 1914, less than a year after the Armory Show introduced North Americans to the art of the European avant-garde, Europe's Middle Ages "arrived" in New York in a Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition that featured the collection of the banker-philanthropist J. Pierpont Morgan. In Manhattan that same year the sculptor George Gray Barnard opened his "Cloisters," an evocatively staged collection of medieval architectural and sculptural fragments which the artist believed would demonstrate "the power of the medieval chisel" to Americans. These early public displays of medieval objects did much to promote the appreciation, collecting, and study of medieval art and visual culture on this side of the Atlantic.

The seminar analyzes a wide range of ideologies and tensions that have animated the display and representation of displaced objects from medieval Europe in North American contexts. In addition to evaluating the idiosyncracies of collecting at individual institutions, the seminar will focus on issues of cultural transfer,

reappropriation, and reinterpretation. How, for example, has the public (visual) consumption of medieval art been valued and positioned in relation to objects and ideas from other historical eras and geographies, including those of non-Western cultures and the modern age? How and why have collections of medieval art been employed in the past and present to articulate distinctly American and/or Canadian concerns and identities, whether public, private, individual, or collective? Strategies of arrangement and display, both historical and contemporary, at selected institutions will be given critical consideration. In 2017 the Middle Ages continue to figure prominently in the North American popular imagination: in what ways might exhibitions of “authentic” medieval objects build on and complicate such popular culture projections? How can museums and educational institutions employ new technologies to help interpret medieval visual culture in more accessible and “experienceable” ways?

An October field trip to the Malcove Collection (Art Museum at the University of Toronto), one of Canada's largest and most important collections of medieval objects, will offer seminar participants real-life insight into current debates about the collecting, display, and representation of medieval visual culture.

#### Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

Recognize the diverse relationships that exist between medieval cultural objects and the contexts of their production, presentation, and reception in the Middle Ages and during the modern era

Engage critically with the histories of major North American art collections and analyze diverse ways in which these collections have been assembled, displayed, and interpreted by a wide range of patrons, users, and audiences

Analyze and compare characteristics of art and cultural production from different geographic areas of Europe and North America

Apply appropriate terminology to carry out sophisticated visual analyses of works of art, architecture, and media, and gain knowledge of key critical and theoretical frameworks employed in the study and analysis of art history and visual culture

Participate constructively in group discussions and present findings that demonstrate an advanced level of visual literacy and research ability

Enrich their understanding of twenty-first century art and society via engagement with cultural forms and practices of the past.

## Evaluation

Class Participation	20%
Short Presentations (2, with written components)	20%
Seminar Presentation (with annotated bibliography and abstract)	25%
Research Paper	35%

## Requirements

### 1) Attendance

Students are expected to attend all class sessions and be prepared for and participate in all meetings, discussions and/or critiques. Under University regulations, if a student misses 15% of his/her classes without written corroboration for health or bereavement, he/she can be debarred from participation in final tests, evaluations, assignments, and/or critiques. If a student is consistently absent from a 3-hour class for one hour, he/she will exceed the 15% cut-off.

Please know that atten

putting forward independent observations and hypotheses. Critical reading and looking, as well as the ability to develop and present clearly articulated analyses (written and verbal), are fundamental to advanced work in art history.

It will be important to bring along images (a brief Powerpoint presentation; YouTube videos; maps; books; pamphlets) in order to help your classmates envision the ideas and/or objects/buildings you are examining.

4) Major Seminar Presentation

Plagiarism and Citation:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. The Department of Visual Arts uses the Chicago Manual

require members of those religions to be absent from the University; this list is updated annually and is available at departmental, Deans' and Faculty advising Offices." For Western's Policy on Religious Holidays see [www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2017/pg119.html](http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2017/pg119.html)

3. **Electronic Devices:** You may use a computer or tablet to take notes in class. Please know, however, that it is tremendously distracting (not just for you, but for me and your fellow students) when you use your computer or tablet during class time for such other activities as checking e-mails, surfing the web, and visiting social media websites (among other things). Thus such activities are prohibited. Students must turn off all cell phones, PDAs, cameras, or similar electronic devices while in the classroom so as to avoid disruptions caused by ringing and vibrating phones. Should you need to receive an urgent phone call during class time, I ask that you





**Building Access:**

The John Labatt Visual Arts Centre will be closed at 10:00 pm each night. There will be no after-hour access for undergraduate students. The Centre is open weekends 12:00pm-5:00pm unless otherwise posted; access by side entrances only. Undergraduate students should be prepared to vacate the building promptly at 10:00pm and 5:00pm. You must also sign-in with the building monitors when working in the workshop areas outside of regular office hours.

**Permission re: Promotion**

You grant permission for Western University to reproduce your name, information describing your artwork, representations of your work and any other information you have provided for the purpose of display, promotion and publicity either now or in the future.

By installing your artwork in the John Labatt Visual Arts Centre, you grant Western University an irrevocable, perpetual, royalty-free world-wide licence to photograph your artwork and use such photograph(s) for the promotion of your artwork and/or Western University, including, without limitation, advertising, display, editorial, packaging, promotion, television, social media, the Department of Visual Arts website, flickr, Twitter, Instagram etc.). Students wishing to not have their work photographed should not exhibit it in the Visual Arts Centre, Artlab Gallery or Cohen Commons. As the area is open to the public, students, faculty, staff and other visitors will not be prohibited from photographing your artwork while on exhibit at the John Labatt Visual Arts Centre.

You otherwise retain all ownership in your artwork.

**Artwork Installation Liability Release**

You understand that the area where your artwork will be hanging or displayed is unsupervised and is in a part of the building that may be open to the public, day and evening, whether or not the building is open. Western University accepts no responsibility for damage to, or loss of, artwork at any time while on display or on 6.6 (t46.6 (he bui)(i)2 (s)-2 (ual)2.7 ( A)26(r)-5.9 (t46.6 (er)-6 ( o)10.6 5.30-

your Faculty. The Academic Counselors for the Faculty of Arts and Humanities are located in IGA Building, Room 1N20 (Mr. Ben Hakala and Ms. Amanda Green are the counselors for Arts and Humanities).

The Student Development Centre (WSS room 4111; tel: 519-661-3031; [www.sdc.uwo.ca](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca)) offers a wide range of useful services, including workshops on learning skills, career and employment services, and an effective writing program, among many more.

The D.B. Weldon Library offers orientation tours from the first week of classes until