

Summer School Utrecht/
The Netherlands University Institute for Art History in Florence (NIKI)
The Art of Renaissance Florence and Rome
Florence: 6 July -17 July 2026

SYLLABUS

Course description

Florence, originally founded by the Romans, was governed by the Medici family for centuries. Most of them had a passionate interest in painting, sculpture, architecture, and literature. Still Florence keeps an exceptional artistic heritage, which is marvelous evidence of its aged culture. Florence is the most marked example of Renaissance cities in Italy. Nowhere else in Italy does one find this multitude of buildings and works of art from this period. Among the cultural highlights is the magnificent cathedral (Santa Maria del Fiore), churches that contain breathtaking frescoes, renowned museums (e.g. Uffizi, Bargello, Accademia), and impressive city-palaces (e.g. Palazzo Strozzi; Palazzo Rucellai; Palazzo Pitti, Palazzo Medici-Riccardi) and Palazzo Vecchio, the famous city hall. Apart from stimulating lectures the Summer School program also includes a day trip to Rome.*

Course director: Prof. Michael W. Kwakkelstein, Ph.D.

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Aim of the course

The fundamental goals are to introduce students to the art and architecture of Florence and Rome in its historical context, and in doing so, to make them familiar with the origins, nature, and development of the Renaissance in the visual arts. Mastery of basic concepts and terminology of art historical studies is another essential aspect of this course.

Class Format

Class meetings will be divided between illustrated lectures and discussions at the Institute, and guided visits on site in museums, churches, and palaces of Florence.

Docents are Prof. Michael W. Kwakkelstein, Prof. Gert Jan van der Sman, Klaas Tonckens, Stefano Corrazzini and Esther Millenaar.

Form of Assessment

Reading, class participation, and written work are all required of students. Grades will be composed of evaluations based on an assignment and a presentation.

Site visit attire

Appropriate attire must be observed when visiting churches: no bare shoulders or midriffs; no shorts, no minis.

Required Reading

Text for classroom meetings and lectures:

- Loren Partridge, *Art of Renaissance Florence 1400-1600*, Los Angeles & London 2009

- *History of Italian Renaissance Art*, 5th ed., by Frederick Hartt and David G. Wilkins, Abrams, 2003 Reading assignments will be specified in class.

Suggestions for extra reading (on reserve in the library)

Ch. Avery, *Florentine Renaissance Sculpture*

E. Borsook, *Companion Guide to Florence*.

S. Campbell and M. Cole, *A New History of Renaissance Art*

B. Cole, *Masaccio and the art of the Early Renaissance*
 B. Cole, *The Renaissance Artist at Work*.
 D. Franklin, *Leonardo, Michelangelo and the Renaissance in Florence*.
 S. Nethersole, *Art of Renaissance Florence: A City and Its Legacy*, London 2019
 J.T. Paoletti and G.M. Radke, *Art in Renaissance Italy*.
 C.M. Richardson (ed.), *Locating Renaissance Art*.
 G. J. van der Sman, *Lorenzo and Giovanna. Timeless Art and Fleeting Lives in Renaissance Florence*
 A.R. Turner, *The Renaissance in Florence. The Invention of a New Art*
 Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*. Ed. Peter Bondanella (Oxford World's Classics), 1998.
 K. Woods (ed.), *Making Renaissance Art*.

Note: For images you may wish to consult the material at the Web Gallery of Art (www.wga.hu)

ARRIVAL AND COURSE TIMETABLE*

Friday, July 3 Participants are welcome to settle in.

Saturday, July 4
 10:30 AM Florence-introduction walk with a visit to the basilica of San Miniato and basilica of Santa Croce (for those arriving on Saturday PM, there will be a second run)

WEEK 1

Monday, July 6
 9:15 AM - Aula **Michael Kwakkelstein**
Introduction to the course, use of the library
 Art in Context 1 - Defining the Renaissance and the artistic revolution of the 15th century: the sculptures of Donatello, Lorenzo Ghiberti, Nanno di Banco, Antonio del Pollaiuolo, Andrea del Verrocchio, and the young Michelangelo.

Site visit AM or PM **Klaas Tonckens/Stefano Corazzini**
 Visit to the Brancacci Chapel

PM - Site visit **Klaas Tonckens**
 Visit to Orsanmichele and the Bargello

Readings: Partridge, pp. 1-9; 22-27; 37-42; 47-50; 87-90; 116-117

Tuesday, July 7
 9:15 AM - Aula **Michael Kwakkelstein**
 Art in Context 2. The artistic revolution of the 15th century in painting and architecture: from Giotto, Gentile da Fabriano, Masaccio, Fra Angelico, Filippo Lippi, Andrea del Castagno, Botticelli, to Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael.

PM **Klaas Tonckens**
 Visit to Casa Vasari

PM late- Site visit **Klaas Tonckens - Esther Millenaar**
 Evening visit to the Galleria degli Uffizi

Readings: Partridge, pp. 44-45; 58; 78-80; 94-97; 108-109; 123-126;

Wednesday, July 8

9:15 AM - Aula

Michael Kwakkelstein

Revolution in architecture: Filippo Brunelleschi and Leon Battista Alberti;

Site Visit

Klaas Tonckens

Palazzo Rucellai, Palazzo Strozzi, Duomo, Palazzo Medici, Piazza Santissima Annunziata and Ospedale degli Innocenti

Readings:

Partridge, pp.10-15; 19-21; 28-29; 32-36; 73-77;

Thursday, July 9

9:15 AM - Site visit

Klaas Tonckens

Visit to the Basilica di San Lorenzo and the Cappelle Medicee

1 PM - lunchbreak

PM - Site visit

Klaas Tonckens - Esther Millenaar

Visit to the Cappella dei Magi in Palazzo Medici-Riccardi
Galleria dell'Accademia - the "David" by Michelangelo

Readings:

Partridge, pp. 29-32; 53-56; 60-64; 83-86; 116-117; 119-120;132-138

Friday, July 10

Site visit AM

Klaas Tonckens - Stefano Corazzini

Visit church of Santo Spirito and Palazzo Vecchio

PM

Ad lib.

Readings:

Partridge: pp. 33-35; 80-82; 89-90; 113-115; 173-179;

Saturday, July 11

9:00 AM - Site visit

Gert Jan van der Sman

Lecture on site and visits to the Church of Santa Trinita and the Church of Santa Maria Novella.

PM - in Aula

Gert Jan van der Sman

Art and Patronage in Medici Florence

Readings:

Partridge: pp. 29-32; 45-46; 65-69; 94-100; 132-138;

Sunday, July 12

Ad lib. (highly) Recommended: visit to the Monastery of San Marco

WEEK 2

Monday, July 13

9:15 AM - Aula

Michael Kwakkelstein

Renaissance Rome: Michelangelo, Bramante, and Raphael

PM

Ad lib.

Readings:

Hartt, pp. 502-529.

Tuesday, July 14**7:00 AM - 11:30 PM Klaas Tonckens - Esther Millenaar**

Day trip Rome

Visits to the Vatican Museums, Sistine Chapel, St Peter's basilica, faculty visit to Pantheon, Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, St Pietro in Vincoli (Michelangelo's Moses) and Palazzo Massimo

Wednesday, July 15

11:30 - Aula

Gert Jan van der Sman

The rise of Botticelli

Readings:

Partridge, pp. 32-33; 53-56; 94-97; 108-109;

Thursday, July 16

AM and PM - Aula

Michael Kwakkelstein

Student presentations

PM

Pizza party

Friday, July 17

9:15 AM - Site visit Visit to the church of Santa Felicita (optional)

Indicated times of the site-visits are subject to minor changes

Assignment

Chapel Report

6 pages of text (not including images)

Please follow the formatting outlines given for the research paper

1: Read Turner's "A Family Chapel", pp. 36-40

2: Choose a chapel in any church in Florence as the subject of this 6 pages report.

"How do I choose my chapel?" Let your choice be guided by your curiosity and your interest – those who choose to treat a chapel simply because it is covered well in a book rarely get a good grade. This project is very much about developing a critical, enquiring eye by carefully looking at and analysing space, and doing some basic research combined with some educated guesswork. Spend time at your chapel, not just in the books, and visit your chapel on more than one occasion in order to study it well and to see it under varying conditions.

3: Research in a basic way the name, history and function of the chapel, and the identity of as many of its components as you can manage. The objective is to write a 6 page report giving a descriptive account not just of the chapel's decoration (including any painting, sculpture, stained glass, furnishings, tomb slabs, etc) but more importantly to give a sense of how all of those components fit together in a single context.

What kinds of spatial and visual relationships exist between the various components of the chapel, and how do these relate to the requirements of the church and the patrons?

4: Illustrate your report with:

- photos of or copied images of the chapel
- a hand-drawn diagram of the chapel
- a hand-drawn plan/map of the chapel

Annotate these where appropriate.

Here's a checklist of just some of the things to look out for, and remember that your chapel has probably been altered a great deal since the Renaissance, and so some detective work and a keen eye will serve you well:

- Steps, arches, doors, doorways, gates, grills...
- Frescoes (walls and ceilings), panel paintings, stained glass windows and statues...
- Funerary items like tomb slabs, commemorative plaques...
- Tabernacles, recesses, niches, shelves...
- Coats of arms, shields, portraits, text...
- Benches, tables, chairs, kneelers...
- Banners, drapes, flags, lamps, candle holders...
- Signs of restoration and/or renovation...

Look out too for leaflets and brochures in the church where you found your chapel.