

Dr. Christina Ferando  
Yale Summer Session Online 2024, Session A, May 27 - June 28  
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HSAR 207E: Classicism and Its Controversies

\*Syllabus subject to change\*

Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6-7:30 pm

Course Description for Course Search:

Far from an unchanging concept, classicism has proven revolutionary and controversial across the centuries. By examining the legacy of Greco-Roman art, architecture, and culture, this course will explore the ways that classical antiquity has impacted the modern artistic and political imagination. Topics of discussion will include representations of the body, expressions of political authority, and debates about cultural patrimony across time, place, and medium; (mis)understandings of classical sculpture, including its supposed white surface, and their impact on ideas about race and morality; the invocation of Greco-Roman models of government from Revolutionary America to Nazi Germany; and the role of classical ideals in shaping modern-day arguments about cultural patrimony.

Longer Course Description:

Classicism broadly invokes ideas of balance, harmony, order and beauty not just in art but in the political and moral spheres. Inseparable from the legacy of Greco-Roman art and culture, it has been used for centuries to invoke authority and power. And yet, classicism is not a staid or unchanging concept. It too has been revolutionary and controversial.

We will examine the modern legacy of classical art and architecture in three inter-related areas: the body, political authority, and cultural patrimony.

First, how did classicism define bodily ideals of beauty, health, and moral worth? How did representations of male and female, of “white” and “colored” skin, and of social standing convey ideas about what it was to be a “perfect” or “good” human?

Second, how did classical philosophy and aesthetics influence political authority? How were thousand-year old Greco-Roman ideals of government invoked by societies as diverse as Revolutionary America and Nazi Germany?

Third, how do classical ideals serve to inform modern-day arguments about cultural patrimony? Which works of art are deemed valuable, and who is responsible for assessing their worth? To whom do classical objects belong, and to whom should they belong?

Beginning with the eighteenth-century origins of art history and first definitions of “the classical,” the course will examine the way classicism has been conceived, utilized, represented, and modernized by artists for creative, cultural, and political purposes. By looking at works in different media throughout Europe and America, we will study the way classicism was a regenerative, revitalizing and sometimes divisive force that could have been used to many ends, both good and evil.

Office Hours: Via Zoom, after class and by appointment.

Teaching Assistant: Blair Betik, blair.betik@yale.edu

## **Requirements**

### Attendance:

Attendance to all classes is mandatory. Yale Summer Session courses have a condensed schedule, and no absences are allowed.

### Class Participation:

In a small seminar, preparation for class and attentive, active participation are fundamental for stimulating and engaging discussion. Among the goals of the course, therefore, is to help students learn how to engage in and lead discussion and to read productively. Students may be called upon to prepare questions for class discussion, to select works of art for discussion or as comparative images, to select key quotes for analysis, or to work individually or as a group on the formal analysis of selected objects.

### Optional Formal Analysis Workshop

We will hold two thirty-minute workshops after the first two class meetings so students can practice formal analysis—i.e. how to describe and analyze a work of art's visual and structural components. These meetings are optional but are highly recommended, particularly for students who do not have formal training in the history of art.

### Readings:

Readings have been selected not only to provide the context, history and background of classical art and architecture, but also to probe how these works and issues surrounding them have been thought about and shaped by scholarship. Readings must be done in preparation for class, rather than after.

All required readings will be available on CANVAS as PDFs.

### Weekly Assignments:

In addition to the regular course readings and assignments, each week there will be a larger assignment that deals with broad themes of the course. These assignments should take about 3 hours or so to complete. It is expected that students submit these assignments by the following Sunday at 11:59 pm. Details on the assignments and expectations will follow but a general outline is included below.

Dean's Extensions are not offered at YSS. If you run into difficulties with the on-time completion and submission of an assignment, please reach out to both me and Blair before the assignment is due.

### Images:

I will also make key images available on CANVAS as PowerPoints.

### Assignments and Evaluation:

Class Attendance and participation: 15 %

Mandatory weekly assignment: 10 % each assignment; 50% total

Reading Responses (one-two paragraphs, max, and 1 question for discussion per class, to be submitted the evening before): 1% each, 10% total

Exhibition proposal with checklist, wall text, gallery labels, and floor plan: 25%

### Academic Integrity:

Any form of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Executive Committee. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please read the resources available on the Center for Teaching and Learning's website at <http://ctl.yale.edu/writing/using-sources> or come speak with me.

### Students Requiring Accommodations

I am happy to make academic adjustments for students registered with Student Accessibility Services who require accommodations. Please contact me as soon as possible to ensure your needs are met in a timely manner.

### **MANDATORY WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS, due each Sunday, 11:59 pm.**

Additional assignment details to follow.

#### **Week 1. Classicism as Power**

Walking tour\* of your current environment: what classical references can you find in the architecture and public spaces? Where are those features located and what is the purpose of the classical reference? Write up a 2-3 page response, including photos, and be prepared to share with the class.

\*Students in areas where a walking tour is not feasible can drive or can substitute a Google Street tour.

#### **Week 2: Classicism as Cultural Patrimony**

Rhetoric Exercise, the Parthenon Marbles: Take a stance for or against the repatriation of the Parthenon marbles. You are making a claim for the Parthenon marbles, either as a museum director or the president of the Greece. Record a 5-minute speech, with video, as though you are delivering it to an audience. Your goal is to convince your viewers that you have a claim—

ethical, legal, political, etc.—to the objects. (A 5-minute speech is the equivalent of ca. 2 pages of double-spaced, 12-font text).

The following readings will be useful for historical background and conceptual framing:

Thucydides Funeral Oration

Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Whose Culture is It?,” *New York Review of Books* 53, no. 2 (February 9, 2006). <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2006/02/09/whose-culture-is-it/>

Nicoletta Divari-Valakou, "Revisiting the Parthenon: National Heritage in the Age of Globalism" in *Utimit: Past Heritage — Future Partnerships, Discussions on Repatriation in the 21st Century*, eds. Mille Gabriel & Jens Dahl, (Copenhagen: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs and Greenland National Museum & Archives, 2008), 116-133.

Christopher Hitchens, *The Elgin Marbles: Should They Be Returned to Greece?* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1987), 84-104.

Michael Kimmelman, “Who Draws the Borders of Culture?” *The New York Times* (May 4, 2010). <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/09/arts/09abroad.html>

John Henry Merryman, “Who Owns the Elgin Marbles?” *ARTNEWS* 85:7 (September 1986): 100-109.

Alex Marshall, “After 220 Years, the Fate of the Parthenon Marbles Rests in Secret Talks,” *New York Times* (Jan. 17, 2023). <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/17/arts/designsculptures-elgin-marbles-negotiations.html>

### **Week 3: “White” Classicism**

Watch the BBC Series: “History of Art in Three Colors: Part 3: White”.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkrsM5Pul34>

Watch: APES\*\*T - THE CARTERS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbMqWXnpXcA>

Select one tableaux or scene from APES\*\*T. Explore which work of art is selected and why. How do the actors in the video respond and relate to the object selected? Consider this in relation to some of the information you learned in the BBC series on the color “white”. What is the overall effect on our understanding of the actors, the work of art, and of the Louvre itself? (2-3 pages).

### **Week 4: Classicism and the Athletic Body**

Watch: The opening sequences (the first 24 minutes) of Leni Riefenstahl’s *Olympia: Part I, The Festival of Nations* (1938)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3LOPhRq3Es>

How is the body depicted in contemporary sports culture? Do contemporary images (advertisements, commercials, videos, etc.) associate the athletic body with classical antiquity and beauty? Find an example (or counter-example) and compare it to one of the scenes in Reifenstahl’s film. (2-3 pages).

## **Week 5. Contemporary Classicism**

Through galleries and auction house sales, explore contemporary art (art made in the past 20 years or so). Are there works that make use of classical references? Compare and contrast them to each other and works of art you have seen in class. (2-3 pages)

### **CLASS SCHEDULE**

#### **Class 1. May 28. Introduction**

No Readings. Students will be asked to email one or two examples of classical/modern works of art for discussion prior to the first class meeting. An email will be sent to students prior to class meeting with instructions.

Watch: Videos on classical art/formal analysis TBD.

Syllabus and Class Expectations.

7:30-8: Optional Formal Analysis Workshop

#### **Class 2: May 30. What is Classicism?**

Read:

Henri Zerner, "Classicism as Power," *Art Journal*, 47:1 (1988): 35-36, DOI: [10.1080/00043249.1988.10792390](https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.1988.10792390)

Larry F. Norman, "Multiple Classicisms," in *Classicisms*, eds. Larry F. Norman and Anne Leonard (Chicago: Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, 2017), 15-24.

Seth L. Schein, "'Our Debt to Greece And Rome': Canon, Class and Ideology," in *A Companion to Classical Receptions*, eds. Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 102-112.

Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2000), chapter 1, "Inventing a History of Art," 11-46.

Helen Wong. "Classics Makes Me Happy. Is that Enough?: An Undergraduate Student of Color Examines Feelings of Guilt." <https://eidolon.pub/classics-makes-me-happy-is-that-enough-a5a9f19a63af>

7:30-8: Optional Formal Analysis Workshop

**Sunday June 2: Weekly Assignment no. 1 due, 11:59 pm.**

#### **Class 3: June 4. Enlightenment Assumptions: Whiteness and the Beautiful (Male) Body**

Read:

Johann Joachim Winckelmann, Winckelmann, Excerpts about the *Apollo Belvedere*, *Laocoön*, *Venus de' Medici*, and other sculptures.

Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*, trans. Elfriede Heyer and Roger C. Norton (1755; La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Classics, 1987), 3-43.

Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave, ed. Alex Potts (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2006), selections from chapter 1, "Origin of Art and Reasons for its Diversity Among Peoples," 111-127, and chapter 4, Chapter 4, "Art of the Greeks," pp. 186- 215, 227, 232, 234-237.

Sarah Bond, "Why We Need to Start Seeing the Classical World in Color," *Hyperallergic* (7 June 2017): <https://hyperallergic.com/383776/why-we-need-to-start-seeing-the-classical-world-in-color/>

#### **Class 4: June 6. Enlightenment Assumptions II: Classical Collections as Power**

Discussion of the Vatican and the Louvre

Ideas for exhibition proposal due

Read:

Jeffrey Laird Collins, "Museo Pio-Clementino, Vatican City: Ideology and Aesthetics in the age of the Grand Tour," in *The First Modern Museums of Art: The Birth of an Institution in 18th- and Early-19th-Century Europe*, ed. Carole Paul (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2012), 112-143.

Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex," in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Breenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 81-111.

Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy, *Letters to Miranda and Canova on the Abduction of Antiquities from Rome and Athens*, trans. Chris Miller and David Gilks (1796; Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2012) "Letters on the Plan to Abduct the Monuments of Italy," letters 2 and 3, 97-104.

Andrew McClellan, "Musée du Louvre, Paris: Paris of the People, Art for All" in in *The First Modern Museums of Art: The Birth of an Institution in 18th- and Early-19th-Century Europe*, ed. Carole Paul (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2012), 234-257.

Sunday, June 9: Weekly Assignment no. 2 due, 11:59 pm.

#### **Class 5: June 11. Classicism and Democracy**

Discussion of Thomas Jefferson and George Washington

Read:

Mabel O. Wilson, "Race, Reason, and the Architecture of Virginia's Statehouse," in *Thomas Jefferson, Architect: Palladian Models, Democratic Principles, and the Conflict of Ideals*, eds. Lloyd DeWitt and Corey Piper (Norfolk: Chrysler Museum of Art; New Haven: in association with Yale University Press, 2019) 80-97.

Sylvia Crane, *White Silence: Greenough, Powers, and Crawford, American Sculptors in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Coral Gables [Fla.] University of Miami Press, 1972), chapter 4, “George Jupiter Washington,” 68-85; 416-418.

Xavier F. Salomon, “‘The Boast and Pride of North America’: Antonio Canova’s ‘George Washington,’” in *Canova’s ‘George Washington’* (New York: The Frick Collection; London: in association with D. Giles Limited, 2018), 13-87.

### **CLASS 6: June 13. “Venus” in Color**

David Bindman, *Warm Flesh, Cold Marble: Canova, Thorvaldsen, and Their Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), chapter 4, “The Colour of Sculpture,” 128-136.

Martina Droth and Michael Hatt, “‘The Greek Slave’ by Hiram Powers: A Transatlantic Object,” *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 15, no. 2 (Summer 2016), <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/summer16/droth-hatt-intro-to-the-greek-slave-by-hiram-powers-a-transatlantic-object> (accessed January 11, 2020).

Michael Hatt, “Sculpture, Chains, and the Armstrong Gun: John Bell’s ‘American Slave,’” *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 15, no. 2 (Summer 2016), <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/summer16/hatt-on-sculpture-chains-and-the-armstrong-gun-john-bell-american-slave> (accessed January 11, 2020).

Charmaine Nelson, “‘Venus Africaine’: Race, Beauty and African-ness,” in *Black Victorians: Black People in British Art, 1800-1900*, ed. Jan Marsh (Aldershot [England]; Burlington, VT: Lund Humphries, 2005), 46-56.

**Sunday, June 16, Weekly Assignment no. 3 due, 11:59 pm.**

### **Class 7. June 18. Classicism Between the Wars: A Return to Order**

**Draft of Exhibition Proposal and longer wall texts due**

Read:

Ana Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War* (Oxford; New York : Oxford University Press, 2009), Introduction, 1-4, and chapter 4, “The Sexual Reconstruction of Men,” 160-212.

Fabiola López-Durán, *Eugenics in the Garden: Transatlantic Architecture and the Crafting of Modernity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), chapter four, “Picturing Evolution: Le Corbusier and the Remaking of Man,” 144-188.

Strongly Recommended: Ana Carden-Coyne, *Reconstructing the Body: Classicism, Modernism, and the First World War* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), chapter 5, “The ‘Golden Age of Woman,’” 212-264. (skim)

### **Class 8. June 20. Classicism in the Service of Fascism**

Discussion: Hitler and “Degenerate Art” and Mussolini’s Rome

Read:

Clement Greenberg, "Art versus Kitsch," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 3-21.

Ann Thomas Wilkens, "Augustus, Mussolini, and the Parallel Imagery of Empire" in *Donatello and the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*, ed. Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 53-65.

Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) chapter 3, "The Politics of Symbols: From Content to Form," 89-118.

Adolph Hitler, "Speech Inaugurating the Great Exhibition of German Art," in Harrison, pp. 439-441.

Ines Schlenker, "Defining National Socialist Art: The First 'Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung' in 1937," in *Degenerate Art: The Attack on Modern Art in Nazi Germany, 1937*, ed. Olaf Peters (New York: Prestel, 2014), 90-105.

Recommended: Toon Van Houdt, "The Imperfect Body in Nazi German: Ancient Concepts, Modern Technologies," in *Disability in Antiquity*, Edited by Christian Laes, 468-479. New York: Routledge, 2017.

**Sunday, June 23, Weekly Assignment no. 4 due, 11:59 pm.**

**Class 9: June 25. Classicism Contested: Reclamations and Repatriation**

Read:

John Levi Barnard, *Empire of Ruin: Black Classicism and American Imperial Culture* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), Introduction, "Black Classicism in the American Empire," 1-22 and chapter 5, "National Monuments and the Residue of History", 170-186.

Lisa Benton-Short, "Extending the National Narrative: the MLK Memorial and the Museum of African American History and Culture," in *US Public Memory, Rhetoric, and the National Mall*, ed. Roger C. Aiden (New York: Lexington Books, 2018), 171-188.

Recommended: Timothy J. Brown, "Public Memory as Contested Site: The Struggle for Existence at the National Museum of African American History and Culture," in *US Public Memory, Rhetoric, and the National Mall*, ed. Roger C. Aiden (New York: Lexington Books, 2018), 155-170.

**Class 10: June 27. Contemporary Classicism?**

Read:

Caroline Vout, *Classical Art: A Life History from Antiquity to the Present* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2018), chapter 9, "The Death of Classical Art?," 220-242 and chapter 10, "And the Moral of the Story," 243-245.



Friday, June 28, 11:59 pm, Weekly Assignment no. 5 due.

Sunday, June 30, 11:59 pm, Final Project due. **No extensions on work beyond this date.**