'From Caesar to Corbusier': The history of Switzerland through its art and architecture

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Introduction
At the confluence of three major European cultures, French, German, and Italian, Switzerland is a small country which has managed to gain and guard its independence both politically and culturally. Despite the strength of its powerful neighbors and the great material poverty of a country with little arable land and no natural resources, it has managed to forge a distinct national character combining 4 language groups and two major religions to produce one of the wealthiest and most stable of all nations. Centuries of peaceful coexistence have produced an architectural heritage which is uniquely varied and also uniquely preserved. Not coincidentally, Switzerland also has nearly a thousand museums.

Course overview
This course covers the history of Switzerland through its art and architecture. It will give a through chronological grounding in the development of the Swiss confederation, from the Roman period to the early twentieth century, setting the country’s development in a wider European context. At the end of the course students should have a wide-ranging knowledge of the major events in Swiss history and a critical appreciation of the way in which they have shaped the built environment of the country and its artistic heritage. They should also have a general grasp of the main currents of Western art from antiquity to the early twentieth century.

There are no prerequisites for this class.

Methodology
In order to make the most of the many museums and historic monuments in the vicinity of Geneva, this class will be taught mainly on site, in museums, galleries, and historic buildings. Usually there will be a short lecture in the classroom to establish the basis of the day’s topic and cover any specialised terms, followed by a field-trip. There will be at least two city walks and two day-long trips out of Geneva. All entrance fees and fares will be covered by the program but students will be responsible for their own lunches!

All site visits are a mandatory part of the course, which will consists of at least 40 contact hours over 5 weeks. Most sessions are 2 or 2.30, hours long unless otherwise stipulated and run from 10 to 12 or 12.30, although there will be some exceptions. Longer sessions will be organized so that they do not clash with afternoon classes. Punctual attendance at all sessions is required. Students will lose 1% for every late arrival and 5% for any unexcused absence.
Assessment
Assessment will take the form of a quiz, at the start of the third week (10%), a research paper (30%) in week 4, a presentation in week 5 or 6 (30%), and a final exam in the last week (30%).

Reading
Students will be loaned textbooks and other material will be on Blackboard. There is required reading after each class, with suggested reading marked with an asterisk. All reading which is not from one of the set books (Binz, Kunz, Steinberg) can be found on Blackboard and in the office in photocopy form – just ask me.

For their research, students should use the wonderful resources of the specialised Bibliothèque d’art et d’archéologie, as well as the University of Geneva library at Unibastion. Note that if you can only read English it may be difficult to find information, so you need to start working on your research papers in good time.

Plagiarism
All students are responsible for having read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that the penalty against students on a Boston University program for cheating on examinations or for plagiarism may be “expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the dean.”
CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK TWO

Monday 5 September

**Introduction to the class: Looking at national history**

Meet Vollandes, 9.30: end Parc des Eaux-Vives, 12.00

The class will finish with a walk around the remains of a Roman villa, recently excavated in the local Parc des Eaux-Vives.

**Reading**

Jonathan Steinberg, *Why Switzerland?* Introduction (pp 1-7)

Chapter 1 *History*, pp 8-73, to be read over the course of the class.

Joelle Kuntz, *Switzerland: How an Alpine Pass became a country* Historiator, 2005  Chapter 1 *How we were Born*

* Aldo Benini, *Modern Switzerland*, chapter 1, *History and Geography*, pp 7 – 16

Wednesday 7 September

**Looking at urban history**

Meet Muzy, 10.00: end Maison Tavel, 12.30

Guided walk around the Old Town of Geneva and visit to the Maison Tavel, a fourteenth century house which is now the museum of the History of Geneva.

**Reading**


Thursday 8 September

**Looking at architecture**

Meet St Pierre, 10.00: end St Pierre, 12.30

Visit to Cathedral, where we will look at the Gothic structure of the building, the neoclassical façade, and the Roman archeological dig in the basement.

**Reading**


Ville de Genève 2005  St Peter’s Cathedral  pp.1– 20, copies in file in classroom

Friday 10 September

**Field trip to Bern**  Meet Gare Cornavin, TBA

Guided walk around the Old Town of Bern, to look at the sixteen and seventeenth century buildings, including the cathedral and clock-tower

Visit to the Historical Museum.

This will be a full day out.

**Reading**

Kuntz, *Bern: Playing Politics from the Centre* pp 162 – 171
WEEK THREE
Tuesday 13 September
Quick quiz 13.00-13.30 Vollandes

Wednesday 14 September
Looking at styles
Vollandes 16.30-18.00

Thursday 15 September
Looking at the artefacts of the past
Meet MAH 10.00, end MAH 12.30
Visit to the Geneva museum of art and history
Reading
Wolf Scott, Chapter 1, The Original Swiss, pp11-26
Museum of Art and History, Geneva  Annelise Nicoud Domestic Furnishings, José Gonod
Arms and Armour

Friday 16 September
Looking at People: figure painting
Meet MAH 10.00, finish MAH 12.30
Visit to the Museum of Art and History
Reading
Lapaire, Jean-Piere Saut-Loup to Ferdinand Hodler pp 87-105

WEEK FOUR
Tuesday 20 September 10.00-12.30
Looking at beliefs 1: the visual cultures of Catholicism and the Reformation
Meet at Museum of the Reformation, 10.00-12.00
Reading
Jonathan Steinberg, Why Switzerland? Chapter 6, Religion, pp 206 - 234, to be read over the fourth week
Isabell Graeslé Reminiscences International Museum of the Reformation, 2006 Introduction pp 5-17
Wolf Scott, Pictures at an Exhibition: An Introduction to Swiss History and Art, Geneva 2007 ch.3, The Reforming Swiss, pp 51-66

Research paper in by Tuesday evening

Wednesday 22 September
Looking at beliefs 2: Enlightenment to Revolution
Vollandes 16.30-18.00
Reading
Mavis Guinand Petit Guide de la Suisse Insolite /Made in Switzerland Editions Insolite 2007
Bilingual French and English,Section 1, ‘C'est la faute aux romantiques, ils ont inventé le décor ‘Blame the Romantics, they invented the setting’ pp.33 – 70, especially ‘Early travellers in Switzerland’ and ‘Why Frankenstein was born in Geneva’, pp.41– 47, and pp. 61-69
Friday 24 September  
**Looking at People: landscape painting**  
Meet MAH 10.00, finish MAH 12.30  
Visit to the Museum of Art and History  
**Reading**  
Lapaire, *Jean-Pierre Saut-Loup to Ferdinand Hodler* pp 87-105

**WEEK FIVE**  
Tuesday 27 September  
**Student presentations**  
Vollandes 10.00 - 12.30

Wednesday 29 September  
**Looking at Industry 2: Mechanisation**  
Vollandes 16.30-18.00  
**Reading**  
*Forty Chapter.3 Design and Mechanisation* pp. 42 – 60  
*Guinard ‘Setting up the Props / Mise en place du décor’, pp 85 - 152  
Wolf Scott  
Chapter 6, *The Homely Swiss*, pp117 – 122

Thursday  28 September  
**Student presentations**  
Vollandes 10.00-12.30

Friday  29 September  
**Student presentations**  
Vollandes 10.00-12.30

**WEEK SIX**  
Monday 3 October  
**Mechanisation and Modernism: the work of Le Corbusier and his heritage.**  
Meet Muzy 10.00, finish Place des Nations  12.30  
**Reading**  
*Aldo Benini  Modern Switzerland, chapter 1, Switzerland in the World Economy, pp.98-114  
Le Corbusier Towards an Architecture 1927  pp. 4-28  
The City of Tomorrow 1929  Chapter 2, *Order*, pp15-26  

Tuesday 4 October  
**Student presentations**  
Vollandes 10.00-12.30

Wednesday 5 October  
**Looking at industry 1: The Great Watchmaker**
Meet Patek Philippe 14.00, finish PP 16.00
Visit to the Musée Patek Philippe, the watchmaking museum

Reading
Musée Patek Philippe 2007 The Essence of Genevan Watchmaking, pp.10-51

Friday 7 October Final exam, Vollandes 10.00 – 12.00

Bibliography

All students will be loaned shared copies of Louis Bintz, A Brief History of Geneva (Geneva 1985), Wolf Scott, Pictures at an Exhibition: An Introduction to Swiss History and Art, Joelle Kunz Switzerland: How an Alpine Pass became a Country, Jonathan Steinberg, Why Switzerland, and Grégoire Nappey, Swiss History in a Nutshell.

On Blackboard or in the office files there will also be extracts from the following:
Aldo Benini, Modern Switzerland McGraw Hill, 1999
Michael Camille, Gothic Art, Everyman, 1996
Le Corbusier Towards an Architecture 1927 Francis Lincoln edn., 2008
Adrian Forty Objects of Desire, Thames and Hudson, 1987
Isabell Graeslé Reminiscences Museum of the Reformation, 2006
Mavis Guinard Petit Guide de la Suisse Insolite /Made in Switzerland Editions Insolite 2007
Peter Hall Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century City Wiley Blackwell, 2002
Spiro Kostof The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History Thames and Hudson 2006 (2nd edition)
Kunstumuseum Bern The Museum of Fine Arts Bern, 2002
Kunstmuseum Luzern Swiss Masters Benteli 2008
Joelle Kuntz Switzerland: How an Alpine Pass became a country Historiator, 2005
Claude Lapaire Museum of Art and History, Geneva The Swiss Institute for Art Research, 1991
Musée Suisse, Prangins, Discovering History Swiss Federal Office of Culture, 1988
Wolf Scott, Pictures at an Exhibition: An Introduction to Swiss History and Art Geneva, 2007
William Vaughan Romanticism Thames and Hudson, 1978
Ville de Genève St Peter’s Cathedral Geneva, 2005
Zetrum Paul Klee In the Enchanted Garden, exhibition catalogue Bern, 2008

I have the orginals of all these books, and others, for loan to interested students – just ask.