‘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 the Romanesque period to the early twentieth century. With these tools, they should be able to better understand and interrogate the visual heritage and culture of their host country and also of other European destinations, as well as their own country of origin.

There are no prerequisites for this class, but a background in history, philosophy, politics, literature or religion will be useful both for the individual student and for the group as a whole. The ability to read in French and/or German will also aid with the research paper.

Methodology
Switzerland is our classroom.
This class will be taught mainly on site, in museums, galleries, and historic buildings. All entrance fees and fares will be covered by the program.

The exact content will vary from one semester to the next depending on what is currently available in terms of temporary exhibitions, museum display (and closures), special seasonal events and so on. Sometimes trips will be changed at short notice, but only in consultation with the group.

There will be 16 class meetings, making up 42 hours in total, and students are also required to take the program tour of the Old Town on the first weekend in Geneva, to attend the 2 program field trips to Gruyères and Chillon, to travel to another town in Switzerland to write a presentation on it, and to post on the What’s App group every weekend that the course is running.

All site visits are a mandatory part of the course. 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 in the third week (10%), a research paper (25%) in week 4, a presentation in week 5 (25%), and a final exam week 6, consisting of both short answers (10%), and essay questions. The essay questions will be sent out the weekend before to give students a chance to prepare them (20%). All assessed work will be returned with grades and feedback by the Friday of the week in which it is submitted. The remaining 10% is for participation.
Student participation during class, in the form of questions and comments is strongly encouraged, as it makes the class livelier and more engaging. However, the participation grade will be based not on class comments but on the use of the What'sApp group where students will be asked to post images and written questions or comments every weekend. This gives those who are uncomfortable with speaking out in class a chance to put forward their ideas and observations and allows students to share the works of art, buildings, and other cultural manifestations they have seen on their travels, thus widening the collective knowledge of the class.

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. The reading will change from one semester to another as it is based on current developments and also on the interest of the class, which will vary from one group to another.

For their research, students are able to use the wonderful resources of the specialised Bibliothèque d’art et d’archéologie, as well as the University of Geneva library at Unibastion.

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 ONE
1. **Introduction to the class: Looking at national history**  30.08.2018
Meet Vollandes 10: end Parc des Eaux-Vives, 12.30
The class will finish with a walk around the local Parc des Eaux-Vives and its buildings, including two Neo-Classical manors, a three hundred year old chalet, and the site of a Roman villa.
Reading
Aldo Benini, *Modern Switzerland*, chapter 1, *History and Geography*, pp 7 – 16
Joelle Kuntz  Switzerland: How an Alpine Pass became a country  Chapter 1 *How we were Born*  Grégoire Nappey  Swiss History in a Nutshell  Bern 2010  Chapter 1, *Before Switzerland*, pp 1-17
Jonathan Steinberg,  *Why Switzerland?*  Introduction (pp 1-7)
Chapter 1 *History*, pp 8 - 73, to be read over the duration of the course

2. **Looking at styles: from Romanesque to Renaissance**  31.08.2018
Vollandes 10.00-12.30
Reading
Claude, Stefanon and Zaballos,  *Principles and Elements of Medieval Church Architecture in Western Europe*,  text and diagrams, pages 6, 16, 17, 20, 21

WEEK TWO
3. **Looking at urban history**  04.09.2018
Meet Muzy, 10 end Maison Tavel, 12.30
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
Kuntz  *Geneva: A republic plugged into the world*, pp.115 – 135
Nappey ch.2,  pp 20-27

4. **Looking at architecture**  05.09.2018
Meet St Pierre, 10.00-12.30
Visit to Cathedral, where we will look at the Gothic structure of the building, the neoclassical façade, and the archeological dig in the basement. Weather permitting we will also climb the tower.
Reading

5. **Looking at the artefacts of the past**  06.09.2018
MAH 11.00-13.30
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*  Nappey Ch.3,  *An Independent Country* pp 30-39
WEEK THREE

6. Looking at Styles: Renaissance to Rococo  11.09.2018
   Vollandes 10-12.30
   Lecture, followed by quick quiz (10%),
   Reading
   Anna Jackson, Period Styles, Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo, Neoclassicism

7. Looking at beliefs 1: Catholicism and the Reformation  12.09.2018
   Meet at Museum of the Reformation, 10-12.30
   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

8. Looking at People: figure painting  13.09.2018
   MAH 11.00-13.30
   Visit to the Museum of Art and History
   Reading
   Alexander Sturgis  A Closer Look: Faces pp13-20, How Painters Paint Faces

WEEK FOUR

Papers in by 10pm on Monday evening, 17.09.2018

9. Looking at beliefs 2: Enlightenment to Revolution  17.09.2018
   Vollandes, 10-12.30
   Reading
   Nappey ch.4, Transition to Modern Switzerland, pp42-50
   Lake Geneva as Shelley and Byron knew it
   Romanticism: Problem Child of the Enlightenment'

10. Looking at Nature: landscape painting 18.09.2018
    MAH 11.00-13.30
    Visit to the Museum of Art and History
    Reading
    Eighteenth century reading, MAH
    Wolff Scott, Chapter 5, The Alpine Swiss, pp89 –115

11. Student Presentations  20.09.2018
    Vollandes 10-13.00
WEEK FIVE
12. Student Presentations 25.09.2018
Vollandes 10-13.00

13. Looking at Industry: Mechanisation 26.09.2018
Vollandes 10-12.30
Reading
Wolf Scott  Chapter 6, The Homely Swiss, pp117 – 122
Nappey ch.5 The establishment of the federal state, pp54-62

Visit to Patek Philippe watch museum 2-4
Meet outside the museum (see instructions on BB)

All students should go on the program field trip to Gruyères this weekend

WEEK SIX
15. Looking at Industry 2: Modernism 01.10.2018
Meet Place des Nations, 10-12.30
Reading
Le Corbusier  Towards an Architecture 1927  pp. 4-28
The City of Tomorrow 1929 Chapter 2, Order, pp15-26

16. Final exam 04.10.2018
Vollandes, 10–12.30
READING
Students will be loaned copies of:
Louis Bintz, A Brief History of Geneva (Geneva 1985)
Grégoire Nappey, Swiss History in a Nutshell
Jonathan Steinberg, Why Switzerland
Wolf Scott, Pictures at an Exhibition: An Introduction to Swiss History and Art

On Blackboard, or as handouts, there will also be extracts from the following:
Aldo Benini, Modern Switzerland, McGraw Hill, 1999
Michael Camille, Gothic Art, Everyman, 1996
Claude, Stefanon and Zabaloos, Principles and Elements of Medieval Church Architecture in Western Europe, Paris 2007
Le Corbusier Towards an Architecture 1927 Francis Lincoln edn., 2008
The City of Tomorrow 1929 Dover edn., 1987
Davies and Kennedy Medieval and Renaissance Art, V&A publications, 2009
Adrian Forty Objects of Desire, Thames and Hudson, 1987
Isabell Graeslié Reminiscences International 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
RESEARCH PAPER AH 308

For this paper, you should choose a work of art or architecture that interests you and that you have seen first-hand.

It may date from any period but it must have been made in present-day Switzerland and be on view in this country.

The paper should have the following components:

A precise and close description of the object itself, covering material, techniques, size, condition, date if known, place where it was originally housed, where it is now, an illustration (drawing, postcard, photograph if allowed by the museum) – 7.5 %

A brief description and critique of the way in which the object is displayed, including, if appropriate, a comparison with its original setting - 5%

The history of the object (‘provenance’), including how it came to be in the museum, if you can find this information – 5%

The context of the object, both historical and artistic – 7.5 %

This is an invented example …..

‘This tiled stove from the seventeenth century shows the adaption of Oriental ceramics to the Northern European climate during the period of Bernese dominance. Luxury objects such as this were produced essentially for the fortified manors of the Catholic overlords who were able to employ Italian artisans trained in faience techniques originating in China, and local workers familiar with the technique of stone construction normal in mountain regions …’

Finally, you should say why you chose this subject. 2%

The paper should have footnotes and a bibliography, including at least two references to sources in the reading-brick, two references to other books, and if wished two references to internet sources. 3%

It will count for 30% of your grade and should be at least 1,500 words long, double-spaced. There is no upper limit. You may use any font you wish and any system of references as long as it is clear and consistent.
For this assignment you must give a ten-minute presentation of a city, town or village that you have visited in Switzerland. It must be illustrated with your own photos, drawings, or models. This presentation counts for 30% of your grade.

You should cover the following points:

The location - give a through account of where it is, including a map, and describe the way in which the location has influenced the growth and evolution of the city, town or village - 5%

The salient points of its history – include the last 100 years, don’t get stuck on the Romans - 8%

The town at the present day – its economy, population, etc – 3%

How it fits in with what you have learnt on this course - this is the most important section, I am looking for at least three points of comparison with Geneva or another Swiss town, and for evidence of further reading and imaginative thinking here - 12%

Why you chose it - 1%

The final 5 marks will be assigned for presentation and for the quality of the pictures and other visual aid, as well as for answering questions from other students (and maybe from me too).

You may not have more than five words of text per slide except for timelines and maps.

Once you have given the presentation you will be asked to submit the presentation to me for re-reading before I assign a grade. There will be time for questions afterwards and potential extra credit for answering well or for asking an especially good question.

Please make sure that you time your presentation correctly, you will be stopped after 10 minutes. Remember also that you must organize your visit to make the most of your town and that you MUST visit the museum, if there is one, and at least two interiors of buildings.