

## **AH 308, '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 and an extremely rich artistic culture.

### **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. All sessions are 2 hours long unless otherwise stipulated and run from 10 to 12. 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 quiz at the start of the third week, to establish baseline competence (10%), a research paper in week 3 (30%), plus a presentation in week 5 (30%), and a final in the last week (30%).

## **Reading**

There is no textbook but a class reading-brick which will be introduced in the first session. It includes chapters from books, articles, glossaries of specialised terms, maps, diagrams, chronological tables and other material: it will be given to all students at the start of the course. In addition, students are able to use the wonderful resources of the specialised Bibliothèque d'art et d'archéologie, which they will be taken to on the second day of the class.

## **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**

#### **SESSION ONE**

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

Lecture followed by group discussion

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

#### **Reading Brick**

Jonathan Steinberg, Why Switzerland? Introduction (pp 1-7) and Chapter 1 *History*, pp 8 -73, to be read over the first week

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

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

### **WEEK TWO**

#### **SESSION TWO**

#### **Looking at urban history**

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 Brick**

Louis Binz A Brief History of Geneva Geneva 1985 pp78

Kuntz *Geneva: A republic plugged into the world*, pp.115 – 135

### SESSION THREE

#### **Looking at architecture**

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

#### **Reading Brick**

Michael Camille, Gothic Art, Everyman 1996, Chapter 1, *New Ways of Seeing Gothic Art* pp9-25

Ville de Genève 2005 St Peter's Cathedral, pp1-20

### SESSIONS FOUR, FIVE AND SIX

#### **Field trip to Bern**

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

Visit to the Museum of Fine Arts, followed by optional visit to the Paul Klee museum

This will be a full day out with 6 hours of visits

#### **Reading Brick**

Kuntz *Bern: Playing Politics from the Centre* pp 162 – 171

Kunstmuseum Bern 2002 The Museum of Fine Arts pp 15 – 45

Zentrum Paul Klee In the Enchanted Garden, exhibition catalogue, 2008

### **WEEK THREE**

#### SESSION SEVEN

#### **Looking at the artefacts of the past:**

Quiz, followed by

Visit to the Geneva museum of art and history

#### **Reading Brick**

Steinberg Chapter 1 *History*, pp 8 -73

Wolf Scott, Pictures at an Exhibition: An Introduction to Swiss History and Art, Geneva 2007 Chapter 1, *The Original Swiss*, pp11-26

Claude Lapaire The Museum of Art and History, Geneva *The History of a Museum*, pp 7 – 19, and *From the Dawn of Modern Times* pp 43 – 59

#### SESSION EIGHT

#### **Looking at beliefs 1: the visual culture of Catholicism and the Reformation**

Visit to the Museum of the Reformation

#### **Reading Brick**

Jonathan Steinberg, Why Switzerland? Chapter 6, Religion, pp 206 - 234, to be read over the third week

Isabell Graesllé Reminiscences International Museum of the Reformation, 2006 *Introduction* pp 5-17

Wolf Scott ch.3, *The Reforming Swiss*, pp 51-66

**Research papers to be submitted by the end of this week**

## WEEK FOUR

### SESSION NINE

**Looking at the decorative arts** Lecture followed by **visit** to the Musée Ariana, the museum of glass and ceramics

#### Reading Brick

Roland Blaettler, The Ariana Museum, Geneva The Swiss Institute for Art Research 1995

*History of the museum*, pp 7 – 11

*Swiss Ceramics*, pp 89 – 105

Adrian Forty Objects of Desire, Thames and Hudson 1987, ch.2, *The First Industrial Designers*, pp.29-40

### SESSION TEN

#### Looking at beliefs 2: Enlightenment to Revolution

Lecture followed by group discussion

#### Reading Brick

William Vaughan Romanticism Thames and Hudson, 1978 Chapter 1, Attitudes and Ambiguities, pp 9-27

Mathew Craske Art in Europe 1700 – 1830 Oxford 1997 Rococo to Romanticism: a problem of definition or a question of belief? pp. 7-21

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

### SESSIONS ELEVEN AND TWELVE

**Visit** to the Swiss National Museum in Prangins

This will be a four-hour class

#### Reading Brick

Steinberg Chapter 5 *Wealth*, pp 163 - 206, to be read over the fifth week

Kuntz Chapter 2 *How we became a player in the World Economy* pp 95 - 110

Discovering History Musée Suisse, Prangins, 2003 Sections on 'The Dream of a World of Reason', 'Industry in pre- industrial times', and 'Progress as a Challenge', pp59-149, text pages only

## WEEK FIVE

### SESSION THIRTEEN

#### Looking at nature: landscape painting

Lecture followed by a second trip to the Museum of Art and History

#### Reading Brick

Lapaire, *From the Renaissance to the Baroque*, pp 61 – 85

*Jean-Piere Saut-Loup to Ferdinand Hodler* pp

Kunstmuseum Luzern Swiss Masters, Calame, Zündt, Hödler, pp.56 - 111

Vaughan Chapter 5, *Trancendent Landscapes*, pp132 – 182

SESSIONS FOURTEEN AND FIFTEEN

Student presentations

SESSION SIXTEEN

**Visit** to the Musée Patek Philippe, the watchmaking museum

**Reading Brick**

Musée Patek Philippe 2007 *The Essence of Genevan Watchmaking*, pp.10 – 51

**WEEK SIX**

SESSIONS SEVENTEEN, EIGHTEEN AND NINETEEN

**Looking at industry: Modernism as a Swiss style: the work of Le Corbusier and his heritage.**

Lecture followed by visit to the Maison de Verre.

**Reading Brick**

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

Peter Hall Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century City Wiley Blackwell, 2002, chapter 7, *City of Towers: The Corbusier Radiant City* pp218 – 250.

SESSION TWENTY Final exam

## **Bibliography**

Each student will be issued a copy of Louis Bintz, A Brief History of Geneva (Geneva 1985), and Joelle Kuntz Switzerland: How an Alpine Pass became a country Historiator, 2005. Shared copies of Jonathan Steinberg, Why Switzerland? (Cambridge, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2005) will be available.

In the reading-brick there will also be extracts from the following:

Aldo Benini, Modern Switzerland McGraw Hill, 1999

Roland Blaettler, The Ariana Museum, Geneva The Swiss Institute for Art Research, 1995

Michael Camille, Gothic Art, Everyman, 1996

Le Corbusier Towards an Architecture 1927 Francis Lincoln edn., 2008

The City of Tomorrow 1929 Dover edn., 1987

Mathew Craske Art in Europe 1700 – 1830 Oxford, 1997

Adrian Forty Objects of Desire, Thames and Hudson, 1987

Isabell Graesllé 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 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

Kunstmuseum Bern The Museum of Fine Arts Bern, 2002

Kunstmuseum Luzern Swiss Masters Benteli 2008

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

Zentrum Paul Klee In the Enchanted Garden, exhibition catalogue Bern, 2008