'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.

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

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. All entrance fees and fares will be covered by the program.

As this class is based on first-hand observation, the exact content will vary form 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.
All site visits are a mandatory part of the course, which will consist of at least 40 contact hours over 6 weeks. 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 (30%) in week 4, a presentation in week 5 (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. 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

Introduction to the class: Looking at national history  Thursday 5 September
Meet Vollandes 10: end Parc des Eaux-Vives, 12.00
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

(On Saturday 8 all students in this class should attend the guided tour of the Old Town from 10 to 12)

Looking at styles: from Romanesque to Renaissance  Friday 6 September
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

Looking at urban history  Tuesday 10 September
Meet Muzy, 9.30: end Maison Tavel, 12.00
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

Looking at architecture  Wednesday 11 September
Meet St Pierre, 10.00-12.00
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
Michael Camille,  Gothic Art, Everyman 1996,  Chapter 1, New Ways of Seeing Gothic Art pp9-25
Ville de Genève  2005  St Peter’s Cathedral  pp.1– 20
Looking at the artefacts of the past  Thursday 12 September
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

Looking at Styles:  Renaissance to Rococo  Tuesday 17 September
Vollandes 10-12.30
Quick quiz (10%), followed by lecture
Reading
Anna Jackson, *Period Styles*,  *Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo, Neoclassicism*

Looking at beliefs 1:  the visual cultures of Catholicism and the Reformation  Wednesday 18 September
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

Looking at context  Thursday 19 September, 2-6
Visit to the Swiss National Museum at the Chateau de Prangins
Reading
Chateau de Prangins, 2008,  *Discovering History  ‘Enlightenment: The Dream of a World of Reason’*

WEEK FOUR
Research papers to be given in by midnight on Monday 23 September

Looking at beliefs 2:  Enlightenment to Revolution  Tuesday 24 September
Vollandes, 10.00-12.30
Reading
Nappey  ch.4,  *Transition to Modern Switzerland*, pp42-50
Lake Geneva as Shelley and Byron knew it  
*Romanticism: Problem Child of the Enlightenment*

Looking at Nature:  landscape painting  Thursday 26 September
MAH 11.00-13.00
Visit to the Museum of Art and History
Reading
Eighteenth century reading, MAH
Wolff Scott, *Chapter 5, The Alpine Swiss*, pp89 - 115

**WEEK FIVE**
**Student presentations**  *Tuesday 1 October*  Vollandes 10.00-12.30

**Looking at People: figure painting**  *Thursday 3 October*
MAH 11.00-13.30
Visit to the Museum of Art and History

**Reading**

**WEEK SIX**
**Looking at industry 1: The Great Watchmaker**  *Monday 7 October*
Meet Patek Philippe 14.00 - 16.30 (map and instructions on Blackboard)
Visit to the Musée Patek Philippe, the watchmaking museum

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

**Looking at Industry 2: Mechanisation**  *Tuesday 8 October*
Vollandes 10-12

**Reading**
Wolf Scott  *Chapter 6, The Homely Swiss*, pp117 – 122
Nappey ch.5 *The establishment of the federal state*, pp54-62

**Mechanisation and Modernism**  *Wednesday 9 October*
Meet Place des Nations, 10-12.30

**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
Nappey ch.6  *The 20th Century* pp66-80

**Final exam**  *Friday 11 October*  Vollandes 10.00–12.30
READING

Each student will be loaned copies of:
Louis Bintz, A Brief History of Geneva (Geneva 1985)
Wolf Scott, Pictures at an Exhibition: An Introduction to Swiss History and Art
Grégoire Nappey, Swiss History in a Nutshell

There will be one copy of Jonathan Steinberg, Why Switzerland, between 2 students.

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
Davies and Kennedy Medieval and Renaissance Art, V&A publications, 2009
Adrian Forty Objects of Desire, Thames and Hudson, 1987
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