

## **'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 thorough 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 WhatsApp 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

Louis Binz A Brief History of Geneva Geneva 1985 pp. 1-36

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

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

#### **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 Graesllé *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

### **14. Tradition and innovation: Watchmaking 28.09.2018**

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

Joelle Kunz Switzerland: How an Alpine Pass became a Country.

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

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

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

Mathew Craske Art in Europe 1700 – 1830 Oxford, 1997

Davies and Kennedy Medieval and Renaissance Art, V&A publications, 2009

Adrian Forty Objects of Desire, Thames and Hudson, 1987

Isabell Graeslé 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

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.

### **PRESENTATION AH 308**

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 thorough 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.