

DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK, 2025–26

A major, minor, or concentration in the Department of Art History and Archaeology lays the basis for pursuing a variety of careers in and beyond the scholarly pursuit of the history of art, museum work, or work in the commercial art world of galleries and auction houses. Art history majors have also gone on to graduate education as well as careers in law, medicine, business, and academe, among others. Critical study teaches students not only the particulars of the art, archaeology, and architecture under study, but also the analytical and synthetic skills needed for mature, reasoned, and inventive solutions to broad-based questions in any field, with particular emphasis on the analysis of our visual culture.

The visual study of the world around us continues to increase in importance as global communication becomes most often based in visual media. Understanding the sources and significance of images that form a common language of communication is crucial for anyone who aspires to play an active part in society. The goal of the undergraduate programs offered by the Department of Art History and Archaeology is to explore the history of art, architecture, and archaeology across broad historical, cultural, geographic, and methodological spectrums. Courses take advantage of the extraordinary cultural resources of New York City and often involve museum assignments and trips to local monuments.

Comprising one of the largest art history departments in the world, the Columbia–Barnard art history faculty includes specialists in the art and architecture of an impressive spectrum of cultures and geographies from the Ancient Near East to Contemporary Global Art History. The curriculum offers coursework in the Pre-Columbian New World; in the art and architecture of Africa, of the Indian Subcontinent, of China, of Japan; in addition to many aspects of the art and architecture of North America and Europe, including African-American and diasporic art, and the art of First Nations in the Americas. Methodological approaches offered by the curriculum are equally diverse, including courses that explicitly address issues of gender and race. Several members of the faculty have extensive curatorial experience and regularly offer courses which feature instruction in the history of collecting, display, and museum practices.

The department offers three majors, two minors, and two concentrations. This handbook is intended as a reference to help guide students through departmental policies and procedures. The Director of Undergraduate Studies and the Undergraduate Program Coordinator are available to answer questions and support students as they make their way through their programs of study.

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1. ADVISING

Students should contact the **Director of Undergraduate Studies** and the Undergraduate Program Coordinator for advice regarding the major, minor, or concentration. The department does not assign individual advisors to students.

Both the DUS and the Undergraduate Program Coordinator can provide general advice regarding programs of study, the field of art history, and internship/career opportunities in the arts. The DUS makes the final decisions on all matters concerning the major, minor, or concentration. DUS approval is required for the following:

- Transfer credit for courses taken at other colleges or universities
- Interdepartmental credit for courses taken in other Columbia departments
- Study abroad credit from non-Columbia programs

For questions regarding degree progress, course planning, and program requirements, students should make an appointment with the **Undergraduate Program Coordinator**. It is recommended that students meet with the Undergraduate Program Coordinator to discuss their progress at any of the following times:

- Just before or after officially declaring a major, minor, or concentration
- If declaring a double major or multiple programs of study
- Before going on a study abroad program
- At the beginning of the final year of coursework

Department Email Listserv

The department regularly communicates with students via its undergraduate listserv. This is a critical source of information for majors, minors, and concentrators. Emails are sent regarding department events, course announcements, policy changes, and job/internship opportunities. While the listserv is updated after each major declaration period, if you aren't getting emails and would like to, please email the Undergraduate Program Coordinator and request to be added.

2. MAJOR, MINOR, AND CONCENTRATION REQUIREMENTS

The department currently offers three majors, two minors, and two concentrations. (Note that the option to declare a concentration is open only to students entering in or before the 2023–24 academic year.) The required coursework is listed in this section.

Distribution Requirements

Students should refer to the **Undergraduate Field Distribution Chart**, posted on the department website, to develop a plan for completing their course requirements. Chronological divisions for some courses are approximate. In cases of ambiguity about the eligibility of a course to fulfill a given requirement, contact the Undergraduate Program Coordinator or the DUS.

Most courses are eligible to count toward one or more distribution requirements. However, please keep in mind that a single course can only fulfill a single requirement. *Nineteenth Century Art in Europe*, for example, is eligible for credit toward **either** the ‘1700–Present’ requirement **or** the ‘Europe/North America/Australia’ requirement, but it cannot be applied to both of these requirements.

Students should track their progress using the **Program Planning Worksheets**, also available on the department website. These worksheets are intended to help students plan their coursework and the completion of their program. These are not official documents and do not need to be signed by the DUS.

Please do not rely on the SSOL degree audit to track your progress, as it may contain inaccuracies.

Major in Art History

- AHIS UN3000 *Majors Colloquium: Introduction to the Literature and Methods of Art History* **OR** AHIS UN3007 *Majors Colloquium: Introduction to the Literature and Methods of Architectural History*

- Seven courses in art history, as follows:

Three courses, satisfying three of four historical periods:

- Ancient (pre-400 CE/AD)
- 400–1400
- 1400–1700
- 1700–Present

Two additional courses, satisfying two of five world regions:

- Africa
- Asia
- Europe/North America/Australia
- Latin America
- Middle East

The remaining two courses are the student's choice.

- Two seminars in art history
- One studio course in the visual arts or architecture (which may be taken Pass/Fail)

Major in the History & Theory of Architecture

- AHIS UN3000 *Majors Colloquium: Introduction to the Literature and Methods of Art History* **OR** AHIS UN3007 *Majors Colloquium: Introduction to the Literature and Methods of Architectural History*
- AHIS UN1007 *Introduction to the History of Architecture*
- Six courses in art history, at least three of which must focus on architectural history, as follows:

Three courses, satisfying three of four historical periods:

- Ancient (pre-400 CE/AD)
- 400–1400
- 1400–1700
- 1700–Present

One additional course, satisfying one of four world regions:

- Africa
- Asia
- Latin America
- Middle East

The remaining two courses are the student's choice.

- Two seminars in art or architectural history
- ARCH UN1020 *Introduction to Architectural Design and Visual Culture* (which may be taken Pass/Fail)

Courses in the Department of Architecture may substitute for up to two courses in art history with prior approval of the DUS.

Combined Major in Art History+ Visual Arts

- AHIS UN3000 *Majors Colloquium: Introduction to the Literature and Methods of Art History* **OR** AHIS UN3007 *Majors Colloquium: Introduction to the Literature and Methods of Architectural History*

- Seven courses in art history, as follows:

Three courses, satisfying three of four historical periods:

- Ancient (pre-400 CE/AD)
- 400–1400
- 1400–1700
- 1700–Present

Two additional courses, satisfying two of five world regions:

- Africa
- Asia
- Europe/North America/Australia
- Latin America
- Middle East

The remaining two courses are the student's choice.

- 21 points in Visual Arts covering: VIAR UN1000 *Basic Drawing* (3 points); VIAR UN2200 *Ceramics I* **OR** VIAR UN2300 *Sculpture I* (3 points); and five additional VIAR 3-point studio courses (15 points)
- Either one seminar in the Department of Art History and Archaeology, or a senior project in Visual Arts (pending approval by the Visual Arts Department)

The combined major requires the completion of at least sixteen courses. It is recommended that students interested in this major begin work toward the requirements in their sophomore year.

Students electing the combined major should speak with the DUS or Undergraduate Program Coordinator in art history as well as with the DUS of the Visual Arts Department.

Minor in Art History

- Five courses in art history, as follows:

Three courses, satisfying three of four historical periods:

- Ancient (pre-400 CE/AD)
- 400–1400
- 1400–1700
- 1700–Present

One additional course, satisfying one of four world regions:

- Africa
- Asia
- Latin America
- Middle East

The remaining course is the student's choice.

Minor in the History & Theory of Architecture

- AHIS UN1007 *Introduction to the History of Architecture*
- Four courses in art history, at least three of which must focus on architectural history, as follows:

Three courses, satisfying three of four historical periods:

- Ancient (pre-400 CE/AD)
- 400–1400
- 1400–1700
- 1700–Present

One additional course, satisfying one of four world regions:

- Africa
- Asia
- Latin America
- Middle East

At least one seminar is encouraged for the minor programs, though not required.

Concentration in Art History (open only to students entering in or before the 2023–24 academic year)

- Seven courses in art history, as follows:

Three courses, satisfying three of four historical periods:

- Ancient (pre-400 CE/AD)
- 400–1400
- 1400–1700
- 1700–Present

Two additional courses, satisfying two of five world regions:

- Africa
- Asia
- Europe/North America/Australia
- Latin America
- Middle East

The remaining two courses are the student's choice.

Concentration in the History & Theory of Architecture (open only to students entering in or before the 2023–24 academic year)

- AHIS UN1007 *Introduction to the History of Architecture*
- Six courses in art history, at least three of which must focus on architectural history:

Three courses, satisfying three of four historical periods:

- Ancient (pre-400 CE/AD)
- 400–1400
- 1400–1700
- 1700–Present

One additional course, satisfying one of four world regions:

- Africa
- Asia
- Latin America
- Middle East

The remaining two courses are the student's choice.

At least one seminar is encouraged for the concentration programs, though not required.

3. DECLARING A PROGRAM OF STUDY

While students are advised to discuss the major, minor, or concentration program they are interested in with the DUS or Undergraduate Program Coordinator before officially declaring, formal approval from the Department of Art History and Archaeology is not required in order to declare an AHAR program with your advising dean.

Columbia College students typically declare in the second semester of their sophomore year during the designated declaration period. Please visit the **Center for Student Advising** and speak with your advising dean for more information.

General Studies students typically declare in the months of March or October. Please visit the **Dean of Students Office** and speak with your advising dean for more information.

Double Major/Multiple Programs of Study

All students intending to complete a double major or multiple programs of study should keep in mind that they must complete separate sets of required and related courses for each department. Please refer to the Academic Requirements page of the **College Bulletin** for the policy on double-counting courses toward requirements.

4. TRANSFER, INTERDEPARTMENTAL, AND STUDY ABROAD CREDIT

Transfer Credit for Courses from Other Colleges and Universities

Approval by CC or GS of transfer credit toward the degree does not mean that this credit will automatically count toward the major, minor, or concentration requirements. All such courses being applied to the major, minor, or concentration must be approved in writing by the DUS. The department will allow no more than three transfer courses toward the major or concentration, and no more than one transfer course toward the minor.

In order to obtain departmental approval for any transfer courses, please take the following steps:

1. Complete a **Transfer Credit Request Form**, which can be found on the department website. Students must indicate if they are requesting the course to count toward a specific distribution requirement. If a specific requirement is not indicated, the course will count as an elective lecture.
2. Attach a syllabus and a copy of written work for the course, such a final paper.
3. Attach an unofficial transcript, indicating that the course has been successfully completed.
4. Email the completed form followed by all attachments as a **combined PDF** to the Undergraduate Program Coordinator. Alternatively, a hard copy of the completed form with all attachments may be dropped off in the main office.
5. The student will receive notification of the DUS's decision via email. The DUS can approve the transfer credit as requested or instead approve the course for elective credit. The DUS may also request more information from the student, or may deny the request. Students should retain the notification email and all related materials for their records.

Transfer credit toward the major, minor, or concentration requirements will not show up on the SSOL degree audit. Records are kept internally.

Before beginning this process, it is helpful to discuss your options and the approval process with the Undergraduate Program Coordinator.

Interdepartmental Credit for Courses Taken in Other Departments

With prior approval of the DUS, students may take up to two courses outside the department for credit toward the major or concentration. This limit does not include the required studio

course(s) for majors.

Students interested in this option must complete an **Interdepartmental Credit Request Form**, include the course syllabus, and email these materials as a **combined PDF** to the Undergraduate Program Coordinator. Alternatively, a hard copy of the completed form with the syllabus may be dropped off in the main office. Students will receive notification of the DUS's decision via email. Students should retain the notification email and all related materials for their records.

Barnard Art History Courses

Most Barnard art history courses may count towards the major, minor, or concentration requirements. Students can see which Barnard courses have been approved by checking the **Undergraduate Field Distribution Chart** on the department website. If a Barnard art history course is on the chart, it counts directly toward the program requirements and requires no additional approval.

Study Abroad Programs

Students in the Department of Art History and Archaeology are encouraged to study abroad. Please consult the **Center for Undergraduate Global Engagement** and your advising dean regarding your options and how those options fit into your Columbia degree. It is also recommended that students consult with the department when exploring study abroad options.

Courses taken through Columbia study abroad programs will transfer directly to your degree. Please discuss with the Undergraduate Program Coordinator which art history requirements these courses will fulfill. Students do not need to complete additional transfer credit forms for Columbia courses with the subject code AHIS taken abroad.

Art history courses taken through a non-Columbia study abroad program may be counted towards your major, minor, or concentration requirements with the approval of the DUS. Please follow the steps for **Transfer Credit from Other Colleges and Universities**.

Summer Programs

The Department of Art History and Archaeology, in conjunction with the Center for Undergraduate Global Engagement, offers classes on several summer abroad programs including Columbia Summer in Paris and Columbia Summer in Venice. Information about applying to these programs can be found on the UGE website.

Students also have the opportunity to take Art Humanities & Music Humanities abroad through the UGE Summer Core program.

5. CURRICULUM AND GRADING POLICIES

Grades

In order to receive credit for a course counting toward the major, minor, or concentration, students must receive a grade of C- or higher.

Classes taken in the Architecture or Visual Arts departments to fulfill the studio requirement for the Art History and History & Theory of Architecture majors may be taken Pass/Fail.

If a student's first course in art history is taken Pass/Fail, before a program of study is declared, this course may be eligible to count toward the major, minor, or concentration requirements with approval in writing from the DUS.

Grades from transfer courses taken at other colleges or universities are not calculated in the major GPA. Grades from Columbia-administered study abroad programs, and from interdepartmental courses taken in other Columbia departments that have been approved towards the major, will count towards the major GPA.

Core and Global Core Courses

HUMA UN1121 *Masterpieces of Western Art* does not count towards the department's major, minor, or concentration requirements.

The department offers several courses that have been approved for partial fulfillment of the Global Core requirement. Students may count a Global Core–approved art history course toward both a department requirement and a Global Core requirement.

Courses approved for the Global Core requirement are listed on the College Bulletin.

Undergraduate Lectures (UN2000–2999)

Undergraduate lectures are open to all students. Students are strongly encouraged to take several lecture courses before applying to seminars.

Students should refer to the **Undergraduate Field Distribution Chart**, posted on the department website, for information about which distribution requirements lecture courses are eligible to fulfill.

Undergraduate Seminars (UN3000–3999)

The department offers several undergraduate seminars in a variety of fields and topics each semester. Seminars are limited-enrollment classes which offer students the opportunity to explore a topic in-depth with the instruction of a faculty member who is an expert in that field. Seminars typically require intensive reading and discussion, culminating in an extended research paper and oral presentation.

Any additional seminars taken beyond the required amount for a student's program of study may be applied to a historical, geographic, or elective distribution requirement, as indicated on the Undergraduate Field Distribution Chart. (Note that lecture courses cannot be used to fulfill seminar requirements.)

Unless otherwise specified, all undergraduate seminars require an **application**. The application provides an opportunity for students to detail their background and interest in the course. Applications must be submitted online; a link to a specific application for each seminar is posted below the seminar's course description on the department website. The deadline to submit applications for a given semester is posted on the department website and circulated via the listserv.

Students will be notified of the instructor's decision by the Undergraduate Program Coordinator. Accepted students must join the wait-list in Vergil/SSOL during the registration period in order to enroll.

Undergraduate Travel Seminar

The travel seminar is a highlight of the undergraduate major program. It features a week-long trip during spring break to study firsthand the subject of the seminar. The course combines the rigors of a traditional seminar with the excitement and intensity of round-the-clock learning and camaraderie on a trip led by a Columbia professor. The trip is a required part of the course, and major expenses (airfare and hotel) are covered by the department.

All students interested in the travel seminar must submit a seminar application.

Bridge Lectures (GU4000–4499)

Bridge lectures are large lecture courses open to both graduate students and advanced undergraduates. While instructor approval is not required, undergraduates are expected to have some background in the subject of the course.

Bridge Seminars (GU4500–4999)

Bridge seminars are open to both graduate students and advanced undergraduates. As with undergraduate seminars, these courses require an application. Advanced knowledge within a field is typically expected. If you have questions about the suitability of a course, please contact the instructor to discuss your qualifications.

Graduate Lectures and Graduate Seminars

With permission of the instructor, undergraduates may enroll in graduate lectures and graduate seminars. Please contact the instructor before submitting an application to find out whether the instructor is willing to consider admitting undergraduates to the class.

The Majors Colloquium

The Majors Colloquium is a required course for all Art History, History & Theory of Architecture, and Art History+Visual Arts majors. The course is an intensive, discussion-based introduction to the methods and key texts of art history.

Prior to the start of the early registration period, students will have the opportunity to sign up to be considered for enrollment in this course. Sign-up dates and instructions are announced via the listserv. Admission to the Colloquium is not guaranteed. It is suggested that students start signing up for the Colloquium at the end of their sophomore year.

Early sign-up is recommended as the instructor may take into account the order in which students sign up when making admission decisions. Instructors also take into account the student's expected graduation date.

The department offers at least three sections of the Majors Colloquium per year, typically one in the fall and two in the spring. The Colloquium is not offered during the summer.

AHIS UN3000 *Majors Colloquium: Introduction to the Literature and Methods of Art History* and AHIS UN3007 *Majors Colloquium: Introduction to the Literature and Methods of Architectural History* are **not** eligible to be covered by a transfer course.

Independent Study (pending approval by the DUS)

Students interested in exploring a specific research topic with a faculty member in the department may choose to complete an Independent Study in the fall or spring semester. Students should contact the faculty member who they would like to work with directly. If the faculty member agrees to supervise the Independent Study, the faculty member will contact the Undergraduate Program Coordinator and DUS to arrange to have the student registered.

Students may complete an Independent Study for 3 points. Independent Studies typically count toward lecture credit; exceptions may be made with the approval of the DUS.

A syllabus of readings and assignments must be developed by the student and faculty member in coordination and be submitted to the DUS for approval before the end of the Add/Drop period.

Students may count no more than one Independent Study toward their department requirements.

Summer Courses

Summer Session courses in art history may be taken for credit toward the major, minor, or concentration requirements.

The department offers undergraduate lectures and seminars during the summer sessions. Seminars offered during the summer session do not require an application.

6. THE SENIOR THESIS PROGRAM

The Senior Thesis is an optional project available to Art History, History & Theory of Architecture, and Art History+Visual Arts majors.

The Senior Thesis qualifies students to compete for departmental honors and (indirectly) strengthens dossiers for University honors. It is also a great opportunity for those interested in graduate school to build their academic resume and experience the intensity and rewards of graduate-style research.

Keep in mind that the thesis requires commitment. It is a year-long project encompassing the senior year, as well as the summer before, and will consume much of winter break and all of spring break. Substantial research and preparation, and travel as appropriate (see below), is completed in the summer before senior year.

All thesis writers are required to enroll in the year-long (YC) course AHIS UN3002 *Senior Thesis Seminar*, which is offered as a 3-point seminar in the fall and a 3-point seminar in the spring. This 6-point year-long seminar may substitute for a single elective lecture course. Students receive a grade at the end of the spring term which is applied to both semesters of the seminar.

If a student withdraws after the fall term, they will receive a P/F grade for the fall term which cannot be applied to the major.

Securing faculty sponsorship is critical. Speaking with potential advisors during the spring semester of junior year is highly recommended. With approval of the DUS, students may work with a faculty sponsor outside the department. Written confirmation from the advisor is due in May of junior year along with a statement of topic from the student. Deadlines are posted on the department website and announced via the listserv.

In August, students who have secured faculty sponsorship must submit the **Senior Thesis Application**. The application, based on research completed over the summer, includes a proposal of about 400 words, an annotated bibliography, and the faculty advisor's signature. Students should have a GPA of at least 3.7 in art history courses and should have completed at least six courses counting toward the major requirements, preferably including at least one seminar.

The DUS reviews the applications with the goal of ensuring that the student has the academic qualifications to succeed and has identified a credible project. Typically, no more than ten students complete the Senior Thesis each year.

Application deadlines are posted on the department website and circulated via the listserv.

Riggio Summer Research Grants for Rising Seniors

Through the generous support of the Riggio Fund for Undergraduate Education, the department is able to offer summer research travel grants to facilitate the preparation of a Senior Thesis. These competitive grants can be used for domestic and international travel to art collections, archives, architectural sites, monuments, and other places of interest. In order to apply, students must submit the following to the Undergraduate Program Coordinator:

1. A proposal of 750 words
2. An itemized budget
3. A letter of recommendation from a Barnard or Columbia faculty member in art history

The proposal should include a statement on the overall significance of the project, outlining the particular research proposed for the summer and how it will contribute to the thesis.

Applications for the Riggio Summer Research Award are typically due in April of junior year.

CC and GS Grants

Grants for thesis research during the academic year are also available through Columbia College and General Studies. Please visit their websites for more information.

7. HONORS AND AWARDS

Departmental Honors

To be considered for departmental honors, students must have a GPA of at least 3.7 in classes for the major and have submitted a Senior Thesis of distinction. The faculty of the Department of Art History and Archaeology submits recommendations to the Committee on Honors, Awards, and Prizes for confirmation. Normally, no more than ten percent of the graduating majors in the department receive departmental honors.

Departmental Awards

The department awards the following prizes:

The **Senior Thesis Prize** is awarded annually for a Senior Thesis of superior distinction. Support for this prize comes from the Riggio Fund for Undergraduate Education.

The **Judith Lee Stronach Memorial Prize** is awarded for outstanding contributions in art history or archaeology by a General Studies student.

The **Benedetto Marraro Prize** is awarded to a General Studies student for distinction in Italian studies. The department may nominate one student for this award annually.

The **Meyer Schapiro Book Prize for Excellence in Art History** is awarded to senior thesis writers of distinction.

8. INTERNSHIP AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Students may meet with the DUS and the Undergraduate Program Coordinator about internship and career advice. Other faculty members and instructors in the department may also advise students on ways to use an art history education outside the classroom.

The department regularly receives internship postings from museums, galleries, and artists in the greater New York City area and beyond. These are distributed via the listserv.

Students are also encouraged to visit the Columbia University Center for Career Education for internship and career support. For resources outside the University, students may find the New York Foundation for the Arts website helpful.