

Inventing the Renaissance: Technology and Aesthetics in the Pre-Modern World

This course will explore the relationship between the visual arts and the many scientific and technological innovations of the Pre-Modern world, with special emphasis placed on the developments during the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

Specific subjects to be covered will include: 1) In-depth coverage of historical individuals such as Archimedes, Villard de Honnecourt, Piero della Francesca, Leonardo da Vinci, and Galileo Galilei; 2) A survey of the mechanical devices developed in the ancient world and how they affected the arts; and 3) Frequent discussions of many “Proto-scientific” fields, such as Astrology, Alchemy, and Magic.

The class will draw from a variety of approaches to art history, including traditional sociological and structuralist approaches, but it will emphasize technological rather than economic, political, or other social factors. Lectures will be given each day until class presentations/debates begin. In all cases, research and discussion will be over the value of science and technology toward the form and content of artworks and aesthetic trends.

3 credits, 45 contact hours

Prerequisites: ART 212

Potential Topics for Lecture include:

The Trial of Prometheus: Discovery vs. Invention
The Terror of History: Witchcraft in the Western World
Images of the Universe: Greek vs. Renaissance Astronomy
From Gilgamesh to Gospel: Technology and the Written Word
New Worlds: Technology in China and the Americas

Written assignments and exams will be based on the text and supplemental lectures.

Brief presentations, based on student research, will allow the class material to expand beyond the text and to adapt to individual student interests.

For more information, Contact Michael Fenton at mfenton@lamar.colostate.edu