

Arts of Spanish “Golden Age”

ARH4930. Fall Semester, 2025 (3 credit hours)

Monday: Periods 3-4 (9:35-11:30); Wednesday: Period 4 (10:40-11:30)

Room: FAC 201

Final exam: Final Exam: 12/10/2025 @ 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Derek Burdette, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

Email address: derekburdette@ufl.edu

Office: Fine Arts C 125

Office hours: TBD

Course Description:

The so-called Spanish Golden Age, or “Siglo de Oro” (Golden Century), lasted roughly 150 years, from the discovery of the Americas in 1492 to the mid-seventeenth century. This period of political and cultural ascendancy, which saw the Spanish empire take root at home and across the Atlantic and Asia, gave rise to many of Spain’s greatest cultural achievements.

This course examines the artworks and artists that made this period special, as well as the patrons and colonial politics underpinning the period’s achievements. We will focus, in particular, on painters such as El Greco, Francisco de Zurbarán, and Diego Velázquez, connecting their artistic production to artistic movements throughout Europe and to the broader trends of the baroque. We will explore the remarkable corpus of polychrome sculpture produced by sculptors such as Juan Martínez Montañés during the period, and examine their role in religious rituals and processions. We will also examine the major architectural trends and monuments from the period, including the Escorial and the Buen Retiro Palace in Madrid.

Lastly, we will examine the connections between Spain and its overseas Viceroyalties in the Americas, situating the “golden age” within the arc of Spanish imperialism and the extractivist politics of colonialism. This survey of painting, sculpture, and architecture from the period will help students understand the ideas and values underpinning this singular moment in artistic history, as well as the place of Spanish golden age art within a broader European and global context.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

- Comprehend the cultural constitution of “Golden Age Spain,” including geographical and cultural diversity and the historical connection between the church and the crown.
- Recognize, interpret, and analyze art and architecture created by the major figures from the period based on style, content and contextual analysis.
- Comprehend the historiography of the region—that is, the history of how Spanish art has been understood by scholars and collectors during the past 500 years.
- Compare early-modern worldviews with those of our modern-day culture.

- Improve writing skills by completing a research paper, as well as several smaller writing assignments.

Requirements and Grading:

Required Readings: There is no required textbook for the course. Instead, we will rely on numerous book chapters and articles available on our Canvas page.

Requirements:

All students must:

- (1) attend class (see attendance policy below)
- (2) complete assigned readings before the classes for which they are assigned
- (3) participate in class discussions and activities
- (4) complete homework assignments, including reading analysis assignments
- (5) write an essay about the spread of Spanish culture across its empire
- (6) Attend and complete the in-class midterm and final examinations.

Grading:

- 15% Attendance & Participation
- 15% Reading Analysis Assignments and Discussion Questions
- 20% Project on art and empire (Presentation and essay)
- 25% Midterm Exam
- 25% Final Exam

For more on grading at UF see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Attendance and Participation (15%):

Attendance is extremely important for this class, as many of our learning outcomes can only be achieved by attending class and participating fully in the lecture and in-class discussion. Each day you will need to sign in to ensure that you receive attendance points.

The completion of in-class discussion and in-class assignments will also form a part of your attendance and participation grade. This means that in addition to attending class you need to come having read the assigned materials and be willing to share your thoughts. Throughout the semester we will also have in-class writing assignments and short activities that will help ensure that students who might feel hesitant to share their thoughts will be able contribute.

The attendance policy is as follows: You will be allowed *two* un-penalized absences, which assumes that everyone needs a day here or there when we are sick or have conflicts. For each subsequent absence you will lose 2 points from the “Attendance” portion of your final grade. In order to have an absence excused you must send me appropriate documentation from a doctor, advisor, etc. Note that excessive absences are grounds for receiving a failing grade for the class, and failure to sign in (if you are late, for example) will be counted as an absence. For more on the attendance policies and guidelines at UF see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

Reading Analysis Assignments and Discussion Questions (15%):

Throughout the semester there will be several occasions where you will need to answer questions about the readings that are assigned for the class. These questions will appear in Canvas and will take the form of direct response or online discussion boards. Each assignment will target a single reading and thus will require that you read and engage with the material. They will help you develop your critical reading and thinking skills. Most times, the questions will be discussed in-depth during class, but they should be completed *before* the start of class on the day indicated in the assignment (when we cover the material in lecture). No late assignments will be accepted (without formal excuses).

Project on Art and Empire: Presentation and Essay (25%):

Each of you will select a single artist, artwork, artifact or cultural tradition that began in Iberia and was “exported” to the Spanish Viceroyalties. Mudéjar style ceilings were integrated into monasteries in New Spain, Zurbarán paintings were exported to Peru, and devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe was spread through “copies” of an Iberian original. All these examples, and others like them, help us think about art, power, and the Spanish Golden Age in more nuanced ways.

Your essay must first establish the character and significance of the topic you have chosen in Spain before then showing how it evolved in the colonial territories. Lastly, you will need to identify and explain a big idea that this process teaches us about Spanish imperialism. (Note: It is also possible to reverse the direction of exchange. You would first study an artwork, object, artist from a viceroyalty and then document and analyze its impact in Iberia. This is a more difficult version, but it is possible.)

You will need to select the topic in week 6, present on your findings in week 14, and turn in your final essay on the last day of class. Your essays should be 5 pages in length (2x spaced, times new roman, normal margins), with 2 pages for each of the first two sections and 1 page for the analysis of the lesson we learned. More precise details (as well as a rubric) will be forthcoming.

Important Dates for Essay and Presentation

- **Essay Topic Due Week 6-** October 1st
- **Class Tutorial Week 12:** Monday, November 3rd
- **Presentations Week 14:** Monday Nov. 17 and Wed. Nov. 19
- **Final Paper Due Week 16:** Wednesday, December 3rd

Exams (50%):

These exams are designed to evaluate your understanding of the basic concepts (key terms), artists, stylistic movements, and historical realities we have learned about. I will provide a series of names and key terms each week, and you will need to be able to define those terms on the exams. You will also need to be able to identify artworks by the artists we have studied and explain their connection to big themes and issues raised in class. To that end, I will post the lectures and key artworks from each week on canvas, and you can use those powerpoints as a guide for preparing for the test. As the majority of the material on the exam will be delivered through lecture and class discussion there is no substitute for attending class and taking thorough notes.

The tests will include vocabulary questions (defining terms, filling in the blank, describing visuals with precise vocab words). It will also have image-based short answer questions (requiring you to identify the image, write about its content, and connect it to key themes and issues discussed in class). Each exam will have at least one brief essays addressing a large theme that connects material from multiple weeks of class. The tests will be offered only during the scheduled time, and absence may only be excused by a doctor's note.

Reminders and Requirements

For a complete list of UF policies applicable to this class please see: <https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolicies>

UF Requirements and Policy: Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

Statement Regarding the Honor Pledge: UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [See the UF Conduct Code website for more information.](#) If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Accommodations: Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. To get started with the DRC please visit the following page: <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/>

It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with instructors and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Changes to the Syllabus: While this document provides guidelines for the class, I do reserve the right to change the syllabus at any time during the semester if the need arises. Each class is different, and sometimes it takes some tweaking to get the right readings, topics, and assignments. Being flexible with the syllabus allows us to get it right.

In-Class Recording: Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal education use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and deliver by an instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course.

A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentation such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless, of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

***Please inform me (the instructor) before you record any content.**

Plagiarism

Please be attentive to the new regulations in the student handbook related to AI. It is copied below and can be found in full at the following webpage: <https://policy.ufl.edu/regulation/4-040/>

(e) Plagiarism. A Student must not represent as the Student’s own work all or any portion of the work of another person or Entity. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

5. Submission of Academic Work Purchased or Obtained from an Outside Source. A Student must not submit as their own work any academic work in any form that the Student purchased or otherwise obtained from an outside source, including but not limited to: **academic work in any form generated by an Entity**; academic materials in any form prepared by a commercial or individual vendor of academic materials; a collection of research papers, tests, or academic materials maintained by a Student Organization or other entity or person, or any other sources of academic work.

Notes on Technology and Communication

- **Communication and Respect:** We all must strive to be good communicators to make this class successful. This means listening respectfully to others in class (faculty and students) and engaging in respectful conversation. It also, perhaps just as importantly, means maintaining professional standards while communicating via email and outside of class. With that in mind, please use formal, respectful, and professional standards when corresponding via email. This means beginning emails with a formal greeting, employing proper grammar, and avoiding unprofessional colloquialisms.
- **Canvas:** Please make sure that you are familiar with our course site on Canvas so that you will have access to announcements, assignments and readings, and pptx presentations you will need for your work.
- **Course Evaluations:** Students are expected to provide professional and respectful

feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online. Students can complete evaluations in three ways:

- The email they receive from GatorEvals
- Their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals
- The central portal at <https://my-ufl.bluera.com>

Guidance on how to provide constructive feedback is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Campus Resources: Health and Wellness

- UF Whole Gator Resources: Visit <https://one.ufl.edu/whole-gator/discover> for resources that are designed to help you thrive physically, mentally, and emotionally at UF.
- *U Matter, We Care*: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center*: Visit the [Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center*: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the [Student Health Care Center website](#).
- *University Police Department*: Visit [UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the [UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).
- *GatorWell Health Promotion Services*: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the [GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273-4450.

Academic Resources

- E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- *Career Connections Center*: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- *Library Support*: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources. Call 866-281-6309 or email ask@ufl.libanswers.com for more information.
- *Academic Resources*: 1317 Turlington Hall, Call 352-392-2010, or to make a private appointment: 352- 392-6420. Email contact: teaching-center@ufl.edu. General study skills and tutoring.
- *Writing Studio*: Daytime (9:30am-3:30pm): 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138 | Evening (5:00pm-7:00pm): 1545 W University Avenue (Library West, Rm. 339). Help

brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

- Academic Complaints: Office of the Ombuds; [Visit the Complaint Portal webpage for more information.](#)
 - Enrollment Management Complaints (Registrar, Financial Aid, Admissions): [View the Student Complaint Procedure webpage for more information.](#)
 - UF Student Success Initiative: Visit <https://studentsuccess.ufl.edu/> for resources that support your success as a UF student.
-

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Course Introduction

M- Aug. 25: Introduction to Class and Critical Viewing

- Overview of course and syllabus
- Introduction to critical viewing and formal analysis

W- Aug. 27: Spain in its “Golden Age” (Historical Overview and Moral Question)

- Richard Kagan and Benjamin Schmidt, “The World of Early Modern Spain: Empire and Its Anxieties in the Golden Age,” in *Spain in the Age of Exploration: 1492-1819* (Seattle Art Museum, 2004), 49-79.
- Nina Siegal, “A Dutch Golden Age? That’s Only Half of the Story,” NYT Oct 25, 2019.

Week 2: Al-Andalus

M- Sept. 1: **HOLIDAY, No Class**

W- Sept. 3: Al-Andalus

- Marjorie Trusted, “The Heritage of Islam and Judaism,” *Arts of Spain: Iberia and Latin America* (University Park, PA: PSU Press, 2007), 107-141.

Week 3: The Rise of the Habsburg Empire

M- Sept. 8: Carlos V, Phillip II and the Habsburg Empire

- Jesús Escobar, “Architecture in the Age of the Spanish Habsburgs,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 75, no. 3 (September 2016), 258–26.
- Jonathon Brown, “Church and State: The Reign of Phillip II,” in *Painting in Spain 1500-1700* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998), 46-50.

W- Sept. 10: Habsburg’s Continued

Week 4: Habsburg Politics and Empire

M- Sept. 15: Portraits and Imperial Politics

- RAA Sarah Schroth, “Veneration and Beauty: Messages in the Image of the King in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century,” 103-136.

W- Sept. 17: Details TBD

Week 5: Religious Art: Trent, Toledo and El Greco

M- Sept. 22: Council of Trent, El Greco and Religious Paintings

- David Davies, “El Greco’s Religious Art: The Illumination and Quickening of the Spirit” in *El Greco* (London: National Gallery, 2003), 45-71.

W- Sept. 24: El Greco Continued (Featuring the Burial of the Count of Orgaz)

- Sarah Schroth, “The Burial of the Count of Orgaz,” *Figures of Thought: El Greco as an Interpreter of History, Tradition, and Ideas*, edited by Jonathan Brown (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1982), 1-18.

Week 6: Religious Art: Jusepe de Ribera and the Italian Connection

M- Sept. 29: Carravagism and Ribera in Italy

- Jonathon Brown, "Jusepe de Ribera: A Spaniard in Italy," in *Painting in Spain 1500-1700* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998), 147- 163.

W- October 1: Ribera Continued (Piety and the Picaresque)

****Topic for Presentation and Essay Due****

Week 7: Midterm Examination

M- October 6: Midterm Review

W- October 8: **Midterm Examination**

Week 8: Religious Art: Seville and Artistic Immediacy

M- October 13: Zurbarán in Sevilla

- Jonathon Brown, "The Art of Immediacy: Seville 1625- 1640" in *Painting in Spain 1500-1700* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998), 131-146.
- Xavier Bray, "The Sacred Made Real: Spanish Painting and Sculpture, 1600- 1700," *The Sacred Made Real* (London: National Gallery Company/ Yale UP, 2009), 14- 43; 191-195.

W- October 15: Religious Realism, Polychrome Sculpture, and the *Paragón*

- Gridley McKim Smith, "Spanish Polychrome Sculpture and its Critical Misfortunes," in *Spanish Polychrome Sculpture 1500- 1800 in the United States Collections* ed. Suzanne Stratton (New York: Spanish Institute, 1993), 13- 31.
- Susan Verdi Webster, "The Ritual Context" and "Public Response to the Sculptures," 143-188. *Art and Ritual in Golden Age Spain*
- **RAA Due for McKim Smith and Verdi Webster.**

Week 9: Religious Art: Murillo and the Ethereal

M- October 13: Murillo and Painterly Ideals

- Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt, "Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, 1617-1682," in *Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617- 1682)* (NY: Harry Abrams, 2002), 11-29.
- Charlene Villaseñor Black, *Creating the Cult of St. Joseph: Art and Gender in the Spanish Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), selection.

W- October 15: Baroque across the Empire

Week 10: Velázquez in Sevilla

M- October 20: Velázquez, Sevilla, The Bodegón and Artistic Origins

- Tanya Tiffany, "Velázquez's Bodegones and the Art of Emulation," *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte* (U.A.M.). Vol. XVIII, 2006, 79-95.

- Zahira Véliz, “Becoming an Artist in Seventeenth-Century Spain,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Velázquez*, edited by Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt, (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 11-29.

W- October 22: Early Velázquez Continued

- Tanya Tiffany, “Light, Darkness and African Salvation: Velazquez’ *Supper at Emmaus*,” *Art History* 31, no. 1 (2008), 33-56.

Week 11: Velázquez and the Spanish Court of Philip IV

M- October 27: Philip IV, The Buen Retiro, and the Hall of Realms

- Jonathon Brown, “The Dawn of a Golden Age: Madrid 1620-1640,” in *Painting in Spain 1500-1700* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998), 111-130.
- Jonathon Brown and John H. Elliot, “King and Favorite in the Hall of Realms,” in *A Palace for a King* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 149-202.

W- October 29: NO IN PERSON CLASS.

- Las Meninas (Asynchronous Online Lecture and Response)
- Brown, “On the Meaning of Las Meninas”
- RAA Byron Ellsworth Hamann, “The Mirrors of *Las Meninas*: Cochineal, Silver, and Clay,” in *Art Bulletin* XCII, no 1-2 (March-June 2010) 6-35.

Week 12: Velázquez Continued

M- November 3: NO IN PERSON CLASS.

- Presentation Prep (Asynchronous Lecture and Working Day for Presentations)

W- November 5: Velazquez’s Mythological Paintings

- Andreas Prater, *Venus at Her Mirror* (New York: Prestel, 2002), 7-28, 51-63.

Week 13: Spanish Architecture around the Empire

M- November 10: Architecture and the State

- Jesús Escobar, *Habsburg Madrid: Architecture and the Spanish Monarchy* (Penn State University Press, 2022), selection.

W- November 12: Architecture in the Colonial Realm

- Jesús Escobar, “Architecture, Race, and Labor in the Early Modern Spanish World” in *Constructing Race And Architecture 1400 – 1800, Part 1* (Publishers), 268-269.
- Jesús Escobar and Michael Schreffler,

HESCAH Lecture- Thursday November 13 6pm: Jesús Escobar, location TBD

Week 14: Project Presentations

M- November 17: **Project Presentations Begin**

W- November 19: **Project Presentations Conclude**

Week 15: Thanksgiving Break

Week 16: The Legacy of Spanish Golden Age Art

M- December 1: Remembering and Rethinking Art and Empire: How do we relate to the Spanish Golden Age?

W- December 3: Final Exam Review

****Research Paper Due In Class****

FINAL EXAM: Final Exam: 12/10/2025 @ 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM