Leonardo has been acclaimed as the prototypical “Renaissance man:” scientist, artist, architect, writer of fables, inventor of automata. But what was it like to be Leonardo and to live in Florence, Milan, Rome, and Amboise in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries? We will read Leonardo’s own notebooks, look at his drawings (anatomical drawings, caricatures, pioneering landscape studies, analysis of water flow), his paintings and buildings, and the attraction his work has had for novelists, critics, and historians.

European art of the "long" eighteenth century (1680-1815) experienced radical shifts in aesthetic, social, and political orientation: from the splendors of absolutism to the austere neoclassicism of revolutionary art. This course explores painting and sculpture (and works in other media) in relation to the development of a public sphere, the emergence of individualism, the invention of personal domestic comfort, the introduction of women to artistic power, the scientific revolution, and the birth of global consumer culture. Prereq: one 400- or 500-level art history course. Writing intensive.

This lecture course examines the defining moments in the development of European modernism, from the 1860s through to 1945. Among the topics to be considered are the reinvention of painting by Édouard Manet; Picasso and Cubism; the Bauhaus and Utopian Architecture; Modernist Photography; Surrealism and Dada; and the fate of art under Hitler and Stalin. A wide range of media will be considered, from the traditional fine arts of painting, sculpture, and printmaking to photography, photomontage, and performance art. By focusing on the most important artists of the modern period, the course aims to give students a broad overview of the key debates and achievements of European modernism. Writing intensive.

Cults of the Original and Cultures of the Copy explores art from the Renaissance to the 21st century, focusing on the theme of originality and reproduction. We often take for granted that “original” or singular works of art are superior to copies or multiples, but this has not always been the case. This course examines how artistic practices and cultural values at different historical moments have reflected or been shaped by shifting attitudes toward originality, authenticity, and reproduction. Topics will include the artist’s workshop and signature, the cult of the artist’s touch, printmaking and print collecting, the advent of mechanical reproduction, Dada and the readymade, and appropriation art. Writing intensive.

Longinus’ text On the Sublime, written during the Roman Empire, was much read by aestheticians of the eighteenth century in particular and has been thought to have helped prepare the public sensibility for Romantic landscape painting with its preference for wild and threatening landscapes. Dolce’s dialogue, set in Renaissance Venice, is a discussion of the merits of Raphael’s and Michelangelo’s painting styles, in which the dominant speaker is Pietro Aretino, a man who used the newly available printing press to make a living as a freelance writer with a specialty in art criticism. Ruskin was a popular writer, a specialist in Venetian art and architecture, who championed the painter J.M.W. Turner and who helped catalyze the pre-Raphaelite movement, a response to an increasingly mechanized world. Al-Sabouni is a practicing architect in the war-ravaged city of Homs in Syria, who writes about how architectural practice can foment and possibly solve grievous problems. We will read these authors as a way of learning about how the history of art is both a history of society and of human concerns that bridge differences of time and place. Writing intensive.