

ART HISTORY MAJOR

MAJOR DESCRIPTION

The Major in Art History provides students with a strong understanding of the visual and material environment created by humankind and how those creations both embody and shape the culture, beliefs, and values of the people who made them. Taking artworks as primary objects of study, students will critically analyze their form and materials and draw upon written texts and/or oral sources to interpret their aesthetic, social, economic, political, philosophical, and religious significance. Students will gain an understanding of languages pertaining to material and cultural production, iconographical and historical analysis and archaeological methodologies, in addition to attaining intermediate-level proficiency in a foreign language.

The ideal student of art history is open-minded and insatiably curious about all aspects of human civilization, diverse cultures, and the historical contexts that have shaped—and been shaped by—human creativity through time. They are visually aware and perceptive, with an empathetic appreciation for the aesthetic choices made by artists. They are eager to explore all kinds of art in varying forms and settings and to engage in rigorous research using multiple sources. They are critical thinkers and effective communicators with excellent writing skills and the ability to participate in thoughtful discussions using sound reasoning and evidence.

The Art History program prepares students to pursue various professional careers in fields such as higher education, museum work, the art market, architectural history and practice, urban planning, landscape architecture, historic preservation, publishing, and cultural property law.

ADMISSION TO THE MAJOR

A prospective major should plan to take one 100-level introductory course and at least two other courses in art history by the end of sophomore year. The student must have at least a B average in art history courses, and a B average overall.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

Coursework requirements ensure that students gain geographic breadth and historical depth, while having the opportunity to define their interests and chart their own path through the major.

A minimum of 10 courses—all taken on a graded basis—is required for the Art History major. These include: one introductory course (numbered in the 100 range) plus seven intermediate and advanced courses (numbered in the 200 and 300 ranges) fulfilling the geographic and historical requirements outlined below. In addition, students must select two electives (see below for parameters). Among required courses in Art History, two must be seminars (numbered in the 300 range). Finally, students must demonstrate proficiency in at least one foreign language.

To take full advantage of the program, students are encouraged to take more than the 10 required courses and to pursue honors in Art History.

Code	Title	Hours
	Introductory Course	1
	Geographic Areas (1 course in 4 different geographic areas)	4

The Americas

Europe

East Asia

South and Southwest Asia

Africa

Historical Periods (1 course in 3 different historical periods) **3**

Historical Period 1 (up to ca. 1400)

Historical Period 2 (ca. 1400 to ca. 1800)

Historical Period 3 (ca. 1800 to the present)

Electives (200-level or above) **2**

Foreign Language Proficiency (second semester intermediate-level course or equivalent)

Total Hours **10**

Important note: Any single course may be counted toward only one geographic area or historical period requirement. All required courses (the introductory course, both seminars, and all courses fulfilling historical and geographical requirements) must originate in Wesleyan's Art History program, with the exception of courses in ancient art offered through the Classical Studies department.

ELECTIVES:

In addition to the above courses in Art History, two full credit electives are required. These can include: additional courses in Art History (100-, 200-, or 300-level; one 100-level course is permitted as an elective); preapproved courses taken off campus; or courses in cognate fields, such as anthropology, archaeology, art studio, CEAS, FGSS, film, foreign languages, history, music, religion; social, cultural, or critical theory; sociology; and/or urban studies.

To count as electives toward the Art History major, courses outside Art History must be petitioned prior to enrollment—and approved by the major advisor.

Up to two courses in a foreign language may count as electives toward the Art History major.

For the [purposes of planning](#), students may [click here for our Course Planning Documents and](#) review the following:

- [ARHA Program Course Projections](#), which estimate when specific courses will be offered during a three-year period.
- [Comprehensive List of ARHA Courses, organized by the categories they may fulfill.](#)
- ARHA Planning Worksheets for Majors, [to help students map out a course of study.](#)

GENERAL EDUCATION

Candidates for Honors in Art History must comply with the University's General Education Expectations (through Stage 2).

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

Art History majors acquire the following skills:

- Visual analysis of the form, materials, and meanings of specific works, buildings, and sites.
- Textual analysis of primary and secondary sources in both historical and theoretical genres.
- Historical awareness, or understanding of how a given object, building, or site relates to the culture(s) that produced them.
- Intercultural literacy, including proficiency in at least one foreign language and knowledge of artistic production in several world regions.
- Methodological sophistication, including experience with more than one art historical methodology and knowledge of critical theories.
- Expository writing.
- Research, including how to formulate a research question and relevant methodology, and to locate and evaluate appropriate sources.
- Originality, or the ability to think independently and create new knowledge.

Students will demonstrate their knowledge and abilities through research projects, critical analysis papers, participation in class discussions, collaborative group work, and multimedia presentations. Written exams, peer review, and self-assessments also foster student learning.

STUDY ABROAD

Many Art History majors study abroad, most commonly during the fall or spring semester of their junior year. Students visit collections and museums in other parts of the world and may apply and deepen their foreign language skills. When selecting a study abroad location, students should consider their language abilities and the requirements of programs of interest. Many programs involving language immersion require completing at least two years of language study at the college level before studying abroad. While abroad, advanced students may want to use their time to identify artworks or collections that could serve as the basis for an honors thesis during their senior year. Students may also consider studying abroad during the summer months, whether on a shorter-length study abroad program or to undertake independent research. Juniors may apply for John T. Paoletti Summer Travel Fellowships.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT

A student who has completed an Advanced Placement (AP) Art History course or its equivalent while in secondary school and who has achieved a grade of 5 in the art history AP examination will be granted one AP course credit, but only after completing an introductory or intermediate-level course in art history at Wesleyan and receiving a grade of B+ or higher. Credit is not awarded for an AP score of less than 5.

AP credit may not be counted toward the completion of major requirements.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

To become conversant in art history as a global practice, students must demonstrate proficiency in at least one foreign language. Proficiency consists of at least two full years of study at the college level, or the equivalent, as measured by a placement test administered by the language department in question. German, French, and Italian are normally considered the most useful for the study of European art. Students concentrating in the history of Asian art are encouraged to study a relevant Asian language. Other languages may be relevant depending on a student's course of study.

The Fries Center for Global Studies provides resources to study languages not formally taught at Wesleyan. For more information, visit the Language Resources and Technology page. Native speakers of languages other than English are encouraged but not required to study additional languages.

PRIZES

Alumni Prize in Art History

Awarded to a senior who has demonstrated special aptitude in the history of art and who has made a substantive contribution to the major.

Beulah Friedman Prize

Awarded to seniors to recognize outstanding achievement in the history of art.

James E. Lieber ('84 P'24) Art History Internship Award

Provides grant support to outstanding Art History majors or minors pursuing summer or post-graduate internships in the field.

John T. Paoletti Travel Research Fellowship in Art History

Supports student research and travel related to a senior thesis project advised by an Art History faculty member.

TRANSFER CREDIT

To receive credit for elective courses in the art history major, Art History students should provide their major advisor with a course description and detailed syllabus in advance of taking the course. All courses taken off-campus for the major must be preapproved by the student's major advisor. The Office of Study Abroad must also preapprove courses taken abroad. Preapproved courses taken abroad or at other U.S. institutions can be used to satisfy the major's 200-level electives but will not be counted toward the major's geographical or chronological distribution requirements.

Students who wish to receive general education credit for Art History courses taken off-campus should send the Art History program director a copy of the course syllabus, indicating the number of contact hours, readings, and assignments. This course information is required in addition to the transfer credit petition available through the student portal.

Transfer students wishing to receive credit towards the Art History major for courses taken at their prior institution must provide the Art History program director with course syllabi indicating the number of contact hours, readings, and assignments. For transfer students majoring in Art History, a minimum of five courses within the major must be taken at Wesleyan.

Approval of a course for transfer credit will be based on the number of contact hours and the academic rigor of the readings and assignments, which must be comparable to a Wesleyan course.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Students interested in pursuing museum internships may apply for education-in-the-field credit. To be approved, the internship must involve work that is the equivalent in intellectual content and rigor to a Wesleyan Art History course, as demonstrated in substantive research and writing. Students must provide a description of projects they will be working on and the name of their supervisor, who will coordinate with an on-campus advisor. Before credit is given, students must provide examples of the work they did.

Wesleyan University charges additional tuition for education-in-the field credits earned in the summer or while on an authorized leave of absence during the academic year.

Individual Majors in Art History or Art Studio:

Students majoring in one area can count toward the 32 courses required for graduation up to 16 courses in the department. University regulations regarding the maximum number of courses allowed in a department should be applied to the major itself: Art History or Art Studio. Thus, majors in either program may count toward their graduation requirements no more than 16 credits in their major program (of which no more than 3 may be 100-level courses, and no more than 13 may be 200-level and above). These 16 would include 2 credits of thesis in the case of students majoring in Art Studio or writing a senior thesis in Art History.

Double Majors in Art History and Art Studio:

Students double-majoring in Art History and Art Studio can take up to 20 credits in the department, providing that 2 of these credits are for senior thesis tutorials. In addition to listed courses, a limited number of tutorials, internships, and teaching apprenticeships are available under specific conditions. Prior approval must be obtained to transfer credit from another institution. Review and approval by a faculty member in the area of study must also be made after completion of such course work.

HONORS

Honors candidates must earn a minimum GPA of B+.

Students seeking Honors in Art History enroll in a two-semester tutorial (ARHA 409/410) and undertake an independent, two-semester research project under the guidance of a faculty advisor, which results in an honors thesis. Honors students will formulate a research question, master the relevant literature, propose a research methodology, and work independently to achieve a significant outcome with the goal of making an original contribution to the field.

Honors candidates will participate in a senior colloquium and will present 20-minute "senior talks" on their completed theses.

For students considering graduate or postgraduate studies in the humanities or related fields (including law, medicine, or business), the successful completion of a yearlong independent research project is a mark of distinction. For students applying to MA or PhD programs in Art History, an honors thesis is often the most significant component of an application.

Honors candidates should begin discussing ideas with relevant faculty tutors early in the spring semester of their junior year. Applications are due the third Friday in February, with all thesis decisions announced by the program director in early March. For detailed information and instructions, please visit the Honors in Art History page.

CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

The Art History Capstone consists of two seminars in Art History, which foster more advanced skills in reading, writing, and independent research.