History of Art and Architecture

The concentration in History of Art and Architecture introduces students to the history of art, architecture, and visual culture. Students in HIAA explore Western and non-Western areas ranging over a wide period of time (Ancient, Medieval, Islamic, East Asian, Latin American, Early Modern, Modern/Contemporary). Concentrators often focus on a particular period (e.g., ancient, modern architecture), a particular branch of the field (e.g., urbanism), or a methodology (e.g., semiotics, critical interpretation, archaeology), but students may choose to create their own program of study. Concentrators will receive essential training in perceptual, historical, and critical analysis. Concentrators often study abroad for first-hand knowledge of works of art and monuments as well as exposure to foreign languages and cultures. Because foreign language skills are essential for pursuing art historical studies in a professional environment or in graduate school, HIAA requires two years of foreign language study.

History of Art and Architecture Requirements

To complete the concentration, you will be expected to take a minimum of ten courses (11 for honors). Our goal in setting out these requirements is to welcome students into a lively and diverse department that also shares a cohesive and strong commitment to the field. We as a faculty want students to cultivate their special interests and also to venture into areas that may not be so familiar but that will open new and exciting possibilities for them. Ten courses are only the minimum requirement. Beyond that students are encouraged to take courses at RISD, participate in study abroad programs, and take courses in other Brown departments. As we are a truly interdisciplinary department, you will also find that our faculty collaborates with members of other departments to teach courses that bring together the strengths of different disciplines. We encourage both experimentation and concentration.

Our general survey in history of art and architecture (HIAA 0010) is an excellent foundation for the concentration. It is not a prerequisite for taking other lecture courses but you can count it as one of the 4 non-core courses required for the concentration (see below for core and non-core courses).

Since the history of art and architecture addresses issues of practice within specific historical contexts, concentrators are encouraged to take at least 1 studio art course. Courses in history also train students in methods and approaches that are highly relevant to the history of art and architecture. Study abroad can be a valuable enrichment of the academic work available on campus, in that it offers opportunities for first-hand knowledge of works of art and monuments as well as providing exposure to foreign languages and cultures. Study abroad should be planned in consultation with the concentration advisor in order to make sure that foreign course work will relate meaningfully to the concentrator's program of study.

Four core general lecture courses, numbered HIAA 0020 - HIAA 0940. The courses should be distributed between three of the seven available areas of the discipline: Ancient; Medieval; Islamic; East Asian; Latin American; Early Modern (ca. 1400-1800); Modern/Contemporary.

Two core seminar courses, numbered between HIAA 1040 and HIAA 1890.

Four elective courses. These can include courses taught in the History of Art and Architecture department and cross-listed courses in other departments that are pertinent to architectural studies. They may also include a select number of non-cross-listed courses approved by the concentration advisor.

The following pertains to ALL concentrators in the department:

Language Requirement

You will be expected to demonstrate reading proficiency in a language other than English. By learning the language of another culture you will gain a deeper understanding of its art, literature and history. Aside from this, knowledge of a foreign language will equip you with a skill essential for pursuing art historical studies in a professional environment or graduate school. The requirement can be fulfilled by either passing an
Admission to the Honors Program in History of Art and Architecture.

During the second semester of the junior year all concentrators will be required to write a final essay that takes measure of what they have learned from the concentration, including their capstone and other experiences relating to their study of the history of art and architecture. For students doing a capstone, their capstone director will read this essay. A department subcommittee will read essays written by students not electing to do a capstone. The self-assessment should be turned in with a revised list of courses actually taken and the final paperwork for concentration approval.

Self Assessment
All concentrators are required to write an essay when they file for the concentration that lays out what they expect to gain from the course of study they propose. All second semester seniors will be required to write a final essay that takes measure of what they have learned from the concentration, including their capstone and other experiences relating to their study of the history of art and architecture. For students doing a capstone, their capstone director will read this essay. A department subcommittee will read essays written by students not electing to do a capstone. The self-assessment should be turned in with a revised list of courses actually taken and the final paperwork for concentration approval.

Capstone Project
At the beginning of your senior year you will be actively encouraged to propose and undertake a Capstone Project. The Capstone Project is intended to challenge you with an opportunity to synthesize at a high level of achievement the knowledge and understanding you have gained by concentrating in the History of Art and Architecture or Architectural Studies. To propose and work on a Capstone Project you will need the support of a faculty sponsor. Capstone Projects embrace many possibilities. You can perfect a seminar paper in which you have developed a strong interest. You can participate in a graduate seminar to which the instructor has admitted you. You can serve as an undergraduate TA. You can work as an intern in museums and auction houses such as Christie’s. You might work on an archaeological excavation. You can participate in the Honors Program. Beyond these opportunities, the Department is open to other approaches. You should work with a faculty sponsor and with the Undergraduate Concentration Advisor to decide what will work best for you.

Honors
The Honors program in History of Art & Architecture and Architectural Studies will be administered as follows: accepted students will sign up for HIAA 1990 in the Fall and in the Spring. In the Fall, students will meet regularly with the whole Honors group and HIAA faculty to discuss methodology and general research and writing questions. In the Spring, students will continue to meet to present their research in progress to each other for comment and feedback. They will also be meeting regularly with their advisors and second readers throughout the year. Finished drafts of the thesis (which will generally be no more than 30-35 pages in length) will be due to the advisor and second reader by April 1 of the Spring semester or by November 1 of the Fall semester if you plan on graduating in December. Comments will be returned to the students for final corrections at that point. There will be a public presentation of the Honors work at the end of the Spring semester.

Writing the Honors Thesis
1. If you are accepted into the Honors Program you will register for HIAA 1990 during the two semesters when you are working on a thesis. This is a seminar led by the Department Undergraduate Concentration Advisor in which all honors students meet once a month to present the current progress of their work. It is a valuable opportunity to share ideas and receive feedback from your fellow honors students and faculty alike. The honors seminar also offers a practical framework around which you can organize the progress of your work.
2. You will meet regularly with your thesis advisor and with a second reader to develop your ideas and writing.
3. Finished drafts of the thesis, which will generally be no more than 30-35 pages in length (exceptions to be determined in consultation with the instructor), not counting bibliography and visual materials, will be due to the advisor and second reader by April 1 of the Spring semester.

Honors Application Process
During the second semester of the junior year all concentrators will be invited to apply for admission to the Honor Program in History of Art and Architecture and Architectural Studies.

Admission to the Honors Program
1. To be admitted to the Honors Program you should have produced consistently excellent work and maintained a high level of achievement in all your concentration course. You should have earned an A grade in most of your concentration courses.
2. The key project for honors is to write an honors thesis. When you apply for admission you will be asked to submit a proposal of no more than two double-spaced pages that states the topic (subject and argument) of the research to be undertaken as clearly as possible, and add a one-page bibliography of the most relevant books and major articles to be consulted for the project. This three page application should be submitted, along with a resumé and a printout of the student’s most recent available transcript and submitted to the Department with a short cover letter stating who you feel the most appropriate advisor and second readers are for the thesis and why, and what your preparation is for this project. Clarity and brevity are considered persuasive virtues in this process. Applicants will be notified about the success of their applications at the end of the semester.
3. For admission to the Honor Program you must include with your proposal a letter of support from a faculty member of the History of Art and Architecture Department who has agreed to serve as your thesis advisor. You should discuss the thesis topic with your advisor before you submit your proposal. During the process of researching and writing you will meet regularly with your advisor to discuss your work.

Honors Application Process
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