We increasingly recognize the trans-cultural and global roots and manifestations of Renaissance visual and literary culture. This interdisciplinary seminar critically examines concepts of Europe, Africa, and the Renaissance during the period associated with the emergence of modernity and increasing global contact. Through the study of primary and secondary texts and works of art in various media, we investigate Africa’s fundamental but often neglected importance for the constitution of European identity and for constructions of the idea of the Renaissance. We examine art objects and literary texts which thematize and visualize connections and collisions between Africa and Europe. This seminar explores key terms including race and Renaissance, and also the ways in which identity and difference were visually marked in art and culture.

We investigate the African ancestry of rulers of lordly dynasties and the ways that this heritage was emphasized or concealed in portraits (such as Pontormo’s *Alessandro de’ Medici* in the Philadelphia Museum of Art). We consider the emergence of the Atlantic slave trade, but likewise the ways that the dominant image of the slave ship has obscured other histories. Texts by Mallory and Shakespeare among others, and images of the Three Magi or Saint Maurice, suggest the fraught nature of cross-cultural negotiations but also the reverence in which Africans might be held. This seminar is integrated with the important exhibition “Revealing the African Presence in Renaissance Europe,” on display at the Princeton University Art Museum beginning in February. We will take full advantage of this phenomenal opportunity, and a trip to the PUAM to view the exhibition will allow us to reach new insights and judgments through in depth, first hand engagement with the art and material culture studied throughout the seminar.
**Course Requirements:** Attendance and participation are vital to this seminar. The success of the class depends on your energetic participation. You are expected to come prepared to class, ready to contribute to the discussion of assigned readings.

**NB:** We do not expect you to understand everything. Some of the readings we will discuss are challenging. We do, however, expect that you put forth substantial effort to think about these texts. We will learn to read in order to better understand a scholar’s methods and perspectives, and not just to gain specific information. Come to class with ideas, and with questions.

**Required Text:**
Joaneath Spicer, ed. *Revealing the African Presence in Renaissance Europe* (Baltimore, 2012). This book has been ordered and is for sale in the Villanova Bookstore ($25.00). Note that it is not available on Amazon or seemingly elsewhere online.

Two additional important texts:
David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates Jr., eds. *The Image of the Black in Western Art* (Cambridge, MA, 2010). A number of volumes of this series are available in Falvey Library.

A useful bibliography related to the exhibition is available at http://thewalters.org/exhibitions/african-presence/bibliography.aspx

It is **required** that you **attend the exhibition** at some point in the semester, preferably with the class as a group – and this visit is **tentatively** scheduled for Saturday March 16. Otherwise, you will have to get yourself to Princeton at some point, though we can help you figure out how to do that.

Notice as well the important guest lectures of April 2 and April 9. It is expected that you do your best to attend these lectures.

Grade breakdown and assignments: participation and attendance 25%; 8-10 page paper, due April 2, 25%; final 15-18 page paper, 25%; final group oral exercise 25%.

Your major assignment with wrestle with the conceptualization of race and Renaissance, and issues of their representation, through 3-5 images from the exhibition. This will be expanded with further discussion of historical and social context and approaches through various disciplines. Many of you will consider literary in addition to visual and artistic evidence.

Plagiarism and proper citation of sources are taken seriously. Issues of Academic Integrity will be discussed before students begin the research paper.

If you have a documented disability, please speak with me so I may meet your needs. It is Villanova’s policy to make reasonable academic accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. You must present verification and register with the Learning Support Office (contacting 610 519 5636 or at nancy.mott@villanova.edu) before I can make necessary accommodations.
Jan 15 Africa, Europe, and the Renaissance

Jan 17 Africa, Europe, and the Renaissance

Jan 22 Race and Premodernity I

Jan 24 Race and Premodernity II

Jan 29 Africans in Renaissance Europe I

Jan 31 Africans in Renaissance Europe II
Feb 5 Blackness I
2. William Shakespeare, *Othello*, selections

Feb 7 Blackness II
2. Megan Holmes, “‘How a Woman with a Strong Devotion to the Virgin Mary Gave Birth to a Very Black Child’: Imagining ‘Blackness’ in Renaissance Florence,” in *Fremde in der Stadt: Ordnungen, Repräsentationen und Praktiken*, ed. Gerhard Wolf, Peter Bell, and Dirk Suckow (Frankfurt, 2010), 333-351.

Feb 12 Africa, Europe, and Ambassadors I

Feb 14 Africa, Europe, and Ambassadors II

Feb 19 Turks I: Past and Present

Feb 21 Turks II: Tolerance and Cultural Exchange

Feb 26 The Courts of Fifteenth-Century Italy
3. Timothy McCall, “Blanched Beauty, Nobility, and Power,” from *Brilliant Bodies: Men at Court in Early Renaissance Italy* (forthcoming).

Feb 28 European Lordship and Africa: Alessandro de’ Medici I

Mar 12 European Lordship and Africa: Alessandro de’ Medici II
1. Leo Steinberg, “Pontormo’s Alessandro de’ Medici, or, I Only Have Eyes for You,” *Art in America* 63/1 (1975), 62-65.

Mar 14 Slaves and Free Men and Women

Mar 16 Class trip to Princeton University Art Museum

Mar 19 Recap and discuss objects and exhibition

Mar 21 Africa, Europe, and the Americas I


Mar 26 Africa, Europe, and the Americas II
1. Stephanie Leitch, “Burgkmair’s *Peoples of Africa and India* (1508) and the Origins of Ethnography in Print,” *Art Bulletin* 91/2 (2009), 134-159.


Apr 2 Paper due
Afternoon lecture: Lia Markey, Princeton University, “Imaging the Americas in Medici Florence.”

Apr 4 Crossing Cultures: Missionaries and Conversions


Apr 9 Paul Kaplan visit
1. Essays provided by Dr. Kaplan and related to the PUAM exhibition
2. In addition, there will be a public lecture by Dr. Kaplan this afternoon.

Apr 11 Juan Latino

2. Reading TBD, investigating Cervantes and Juan Latino

April 16 Globalizations


Apr 18 Afro-Portuguese Ivories
2. Mario Pereira, reading TBD

Optional trip to Princeton for evening colloquium on the exhibition

Apr 23 Revisiting Race

Apr 25 Revisiting Race and Representation

May 2 Course recap and reflections

Finals papers due May 8; group final oral examinations as well