AHS 291: Arts of China

Course Basics

Arts of China
AHS 291 01, Fall, 2026

Instructor Information

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Course Information

Course Description

Survey of the visual culture of China from the ancient times to the present day, including bronzes, paintings, statues, ceramics, calligraphy, and installations. (3 credit hours)

Prerequisites

AHS 100 or AHS 101 or AHS 102 or permission of the instructor.

Course Objectives

Students will develop the ability to:

- Identify major works, sites, types, and movements of art from China
- Talk and write about artistic techniques, materials, iconography, styles, and themes in the arts of China
- Talk and write about artworks from China and their respective historical, religious, and functional contexts
- Challenge an initial subjective response to a work of art by making an effort to inform him/her/themselves about cultures and art traditions that are temporally, geographically, or culturally unfamiliar
- Read, comprehend, discuss, and engage critically with scholarly texts and talks, peer-reviewed research articles, museum exhibition catalogues, and presentations by museum professionals
- Apply understandings of course material to identify "unknown" works of art
- Develop, design, and deliver collaborative in-class presentations of course material and lead class discussions

Course Time Commitment

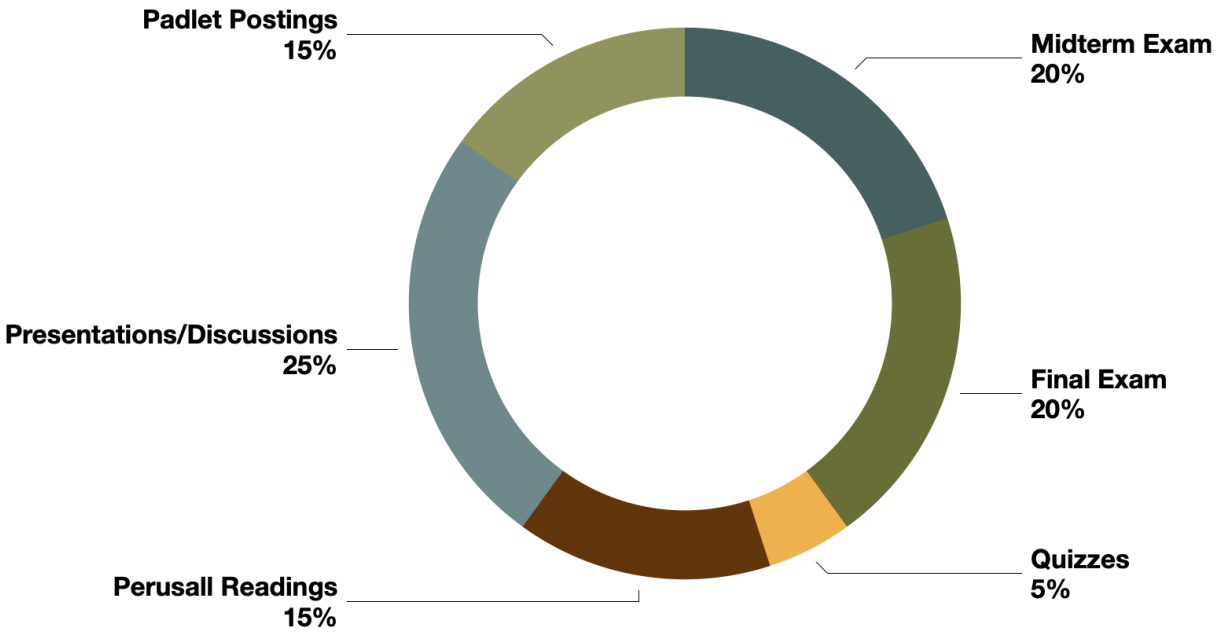
It is expected that students will spend approximately two hours doing work outside of class for every hour in class. Since this course is a reading and writing intensive three-unit class, you should **expect to spend an average of 6 hours outside of class each week**.

Course Materials

All readings, videos, and other media will be available within the course's Canvas site and through external links. Assignments with detailed instructions and other supporting resources are available in the weekly modules on Canvas.

Course Assignments and Assessments

Course Assignments



Padlet Postings

Padlets are the **online discussion boards** that we will be using in this course. Unlike Canvas discussion boards, you can easily post pictures, web links, and other visual content. Because they operate like a bulletin board, they are more stimulating to interact with than scrolling through a traditional discussion board.

Most weeks will include required postings to a Padlet board. Click the line that says **POST** in each module to join that week's discussion on the Padlet.

Please watch the short video about **how to use and post to a Padlet** in the Orientation module of Canvas.

Don't wait until the final hours before the deadline to contribute to the Padlets!

The activities in the Padlets take some time to complete and are easier to finish over the course of a couple of days. In most cases, the longer that you delay working on these activities, the fewer choices that you will have in terms of objects to write about in the Padlets.

Because grades for contributing to the Padlets include responding to other students' contributions, please, if possible, participate over several days.

Perusall Readings

Perusall is **annotation tool** that will allow us to **collectively engage with texts and videos online asynchronously**. We will be using it to annotate PDF files and share comments with other students within the document.

One of the objectives of this course is for students to develop the ability to read, comprehend, and engage critically with peer-reviewed research articles; exhibition catalogue essays; and scholarly and curatorial video presentations. Some students may not have much previous exposure to these types of materials. Trying to tackle scholarly articles and presentations focused on unfamiliar ideas, images, vocabulary, and concepts related can be doubly challenging. Engaging with materials collaboratively in Perusall will help students to more successfully understand and discuss advanced secondary scholarship.

Work on readings within Perusall is intended to enhance—not replace—our discussions of readings and issues together in class.

We will have a workshop early in the semester on **How to Read Scholarly Articles.**

During many weeks of the semester, **everyone in class will annotate readings and/or videos collectively in Perusall.**

Presentations and Leading Discussions

Each of you will, with one or more partners, be responsible for **presenting new material to the class and leading a discussion of it at least once**.

Student groups (2–3 students) **read/watch** material, fill out a **worksheet**, and **meet in advance** of the class session to prepare a visual and oral **presentation** that includes an overview (20–25 minutes) of the authorship, content, and issues in the readings and other materials, as assigned.

Include relevant images with captions in your presentation. Provide **3–4 discussion questions** to spark conversations among the group. All group members participate in delivering the presentation in class and leading the discussion.

Follow the **detailed instructions for each assignment** in Canvas. Consult the Discussion and Presentation Guidelines module on preparing presentations and developing effective discussion questions.

If you become ill or have a personal situation that will prevent you from collaborating with your partner(s) in preparing for and/or presenting in class, contact your partner and Prof. Giuffrida ASAP so that alternate arrangements might be made.

Quizzes

During many weeks of the semester, you will take a **five-minute in-class quiz** to check your understanding of course material. These quizzes are intended to encourage your learning.

Quizzes are only worth 5% of your total grade. If you do not attend class on a day when there is a quiz, you will receive a zero on that quiz. No makeup quizzes will be offered. Each student's lowest quiz score will be dropped.

Midterm Exam

Tue Oct 20: 3:30–4:45 PM

Image IDs, Unknowns, Names and Terms, Short Answer Questions

Each part of the exam is timed and students write their answers on paper in the classroom.

Types of questions include:

- Identification of images of artworks covered in course materials
- Identification of images of artworks not covered in course materials ("unknowns")
- Short answer questions (with and without images)
- Explanations of names and terms and their relationship with specific artworks

For **image IDs**, you'll be asked to provide the artist, title (or subject), cultural or historical period, date, medium, format, and location (if still *in situ*), and country for all images included in the weekly modules and reproduced in the Study PDFs module in Canvas.

For the **unknowns**, you'll be asked to provide the customary identification information and explain why you associated the work with a particular time period, style, topic, artist/school, and/or country by referring to comparative images from course materials.

Short answer questions will have multiple parts and you'll need to write several sentences to answer them fully.

For **names and terms**, you'll identify and explain the significance of the item in artistic, historical, cultural, and/or religious contexts, and link each name or term to a specific work. Names and terms are drawn directly from course materials and study images PDF files available on Canvas.

Make-up examinations will be offered only for valid, documented reasons of medical or personal emergency.

Final Exam

Tue Dec 8: 2:15–4:15 PM

Image IDs, Unknowns, Names and Terms, Short Answer Questions

Each part of the exam is timed and students write their answers on paper in the classroom.

Types of questions include:

- Identification of images of artworks covered in course materials
- Identification of images of artworks not covered in course materials ("unknowns")
- Short answer questions (with and without images)
- Explanations of names and terms and their relationship with specific artworks

For **image IDs**, you'll be asked to provide the artist, title (or subject), cultural or historical period, date, medium, format, and location (if still *in situ*), and country for all images included in the weekly modules and reproduced in the Study PDFs module in Canvas.

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Make-up examinations will be offered only for valid, documented reasons of medical or personal emergency.

Assignment details, including instructions, relevant readings, due dates, and grading criteria/rubrics will be posted and updated on Canvas. Please check Canvas regularly to stay informed and on track.

Course Grading

Letter Grade	Range
A	100% - 95%
A-	<94% - 90%
B+	<89% - 87%
B	<86% - 83%
B-	<82% - 80%
C+	<79% - 77%
C	<76% - 73%
C-	<72% - 70%
D+	<69% - 65%
D	<64% - 60%
D-	<59% - 55%
F	<54% - 0%

Course Policies

Communication

You should visit the course Canvas site frequently throughout each week of the semester. Important announcements will be posted at the top of the home page and sent via email to your BSU account. You are responsible for keeping track of any changes to course activities and assignments announced on Canvas.

You are expected to complete all assignments, discussion posts, and any other activities by the due dates/times posted in Canvas.

If you have a question or a concern about something presented in the course materials or brought up on our discussions, please bring this to my attention as soon as you are able. It is important that you feel challenged, but not confused, by the material.

The best way to contact me is by emailing directly at my bsu.edu address.

When you send an email to me you must **use your BSU email account** and **include the course number or name and topic in the subject line**, a greeting, a courteous message, and a complete signature. EXAMPLE: Subject: AHS 291 - Question about Padlet

- **I prefer that you *NOT* use the Canvas "inbox"** to contact me since it the system does not allow the sender to provide a subject line. Please email me directly.
- Refer to professors according to their professional title (Prof. Giuffrida, for example, not Mr., Ms., or Mrs.).
- If you have trouble finding or accessing our course content on Canvas, please email me about the issue as soon as you experience it. Chances are good that a small tweak to the back end of Canvas will resolve the issue.
- You can expect to receive a response to an email (sent directly to my bsu.edu address) within 24 hours Monday through Friday and within 48 hours over the weekend. Messages received during official university breaks will be returned when classes resume.

Conduct and Participation

Active participation in this course requires close looking at information and images on the slides at the front of the room and thoughtful contributions to discussions. To facilitate this type of engagement, **cell phones are not permitted during class time**. Cell phones are a distraction to the owner of the phone, to the students sitting nearby, and to your professor. Put your cell phones away for the duration of the course.

Studies show that taking notes by hand, writing notes with pen and paper, improves students' retention of information. I encourage you to take handwritten notes in a designated notebook. However, laptops or tablets may be used for notetaking, for referring to readings during discussions, and for other appropriate in-class uses. If someone is using electronic devices for non-class purposes (e.g. social media, doing work for other classes, gaming, shopping, etc.), I will ask that person to put their device

away for the remainder of class. On the second occurrence, that person will be prohibited from using their device except during class workshops.

Attendance

Engaged listening, asking questions, as well as active participation in discussions and other in-class activities are an integral part of the course, so regular attendance and respectful conduct are vital to your success. Being in class is an embodied physical statement of your commitment to the collective work of learning together. Attending class is a the most basic way to invest in your success in a course. Research indicates that students who do not regularly attend classes are not likely to earn passing grades.

Students should plan to attend ALL classes on time and prepare to participate by carefully reading the assigned articles, asking and answering questions, and contributing their thoughts to discussions about approaches to art history.

While it would be best if every student attended every class, unforeseen circumstances (including illness, family emergencies, travel to school-sponsored academic or athletic events, job interviews, jury duty, etc.) can result in an absence. You are responsible for catching up on all material covered and class activities that you missed during your absence.

You are allowed **four absences** during the semester. **After four absences, your final grade will be reduced by one letter grade for each absence.** For example, if your final grade is a B, your grade will drop to a C. ***Eight or more absences will result in failure of the course***.

Disrespectful or disruptive behavior including tardiness; early departure; sleeping; use of phones, laptops, or tablets for purposes that are not related to our course during class (including doing work for other classes). For certain class workshops (noted in Canvas announcements), it will be helpful to bring and use your laptop or tablet.

However, **please be respectful of your classmates and professor by not attempting to use these devices during class sessions for purposes that are not related to this class**. If devices in class ever become more of a distraction than a useful tool, we may adjust this policy and restrict their use to specific sessions. Please use the restrooms prior to the start of class or afterward to avoid most instances of having to leave during class sessions. Lidded drinks are permitted, **please do not eat during class**.

How to Enter Attendance at Class Sessions

Use aPlus+ Attendance through Canvas to self-report attendance for each session:

1. Log into our course in Canvas and click the "Attendance" link in the left-hand navigation menu
2. **Enter the unique session code written on the whiteboard at the front of the classroom**

Session codes are active for the first 30 minutes of class.

During the first two weeks of classes, if you attend class and forget to enter the attendance code within 30 minutes, email your professor on the same day and he/she/they will enter it manually for you. ***Beginning in the third week of classes, students are completely responsible for entering attendance codes.*** Your professor will NOT manually enter attendance codes for individual students. You are responsible for keeping track of how many sessions you have missed.

Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments should be submitted in the accepted formats listed in the assignment description. Assignments, unless otherwise indicated, should be submitted using the assignment link in each module**.**

Late and Missing Work

Everyone is eligible for two 24-hour extensions (no-questions-asked) on a single Padlet or Perusall assignment. Simply email me that you are using your extension by the original due date/time.

Otherwise, unless you have made special arrangements with me in advance, all assignments and papers should be submitted by the due date and time posted on Canvas. After that time, your work is considered late. For each 24-hour period that an assignment is late, your score is lowered by 10%. You may receive partial credit if you submit work within seven calendar days of the original due date. **Late assignments are not accepted after this seven-day period.**

A Note on Pronouns

We all have pronouns that we expect people to use when they refer to us. These may be he/him, she/her, they/them, or something else. Many people never have to think about their pronouns, but most of us would still be uncomfortable if someone referred to us using pronouns that feel wrong to us. For that reason, it is important to use the correct pronouns when referring to others, including your classmates, professor, and the authors we will be discussing throughout the semester.

Academic Integrity and Ethics

Instances of academic misconduct (such as cheating on an assignment, plagiarizing a text, or lying) degrade the ethical and educational value of a college experience and will result in a failing grade on that assignment. Academic misconduct is also reported to the Student Academic Ethics Committee and the Associate Provost and included in your academic records. Depending on the severity and frequency of the offense, academic misconduct may also result in a failing grade in the course or suspension or expulsion from the university.

To maintain its credibility and reputation, and to equitably assign evaluations of scholastic and creative performance, Ball State University is committed to maintaining a climate that upholds and values the highest standards of academic integrity. Every student is responsible for understanding and abiding by Ball State's Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities. For a full explanation of the university's policy on ethics, consult Academic Ethics.

Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated.

AI Policies

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) such as Gemini, ChatGPT, Claude, etc. should NOT be used to complete any portion of course assignments, including worksheets, presentations, online discussion boards, annotation of readings/videos, or in-class participation. If a student submits or presents an assignment that was generated by AI, they will receive 0% on that assignment.

All work produced and/or submitted in this course should reflect your own ideas and demonstrate your current knowledge, abilities, and skills. This course is designed to help you develop critical thinking, reading, discussion, and presentation skills. The learning process involves working on your own and with other students on difficult material and tasks without outsourcing to GenAI.

I want you to engage directly with the material and with one another, rather than merely repeat or respond to what GenAI may tell you. GenAI is good at projecting confidence and expertise, even when the "information" it offers is incorrect or misleading. Since students in this course are not experts in Asian art (yet), you may not recognize when GenAI has made mistakes, oversimplified information, and introduced biases.

You may use **Assistive AI** on writing **that you have already created on your own** to do the following *only*: run spelling, grammar, and synonym checks; recommend tweaks to the structure of individual sentences and/or the reorganization of single paragraphs.

Intellectual Property

Course materials prepared by the instructor, including in-person lectures, online videos, assignments, PDFs of presentations, and study guides posted on Canvas, are the property of the instructor**.** Course materials are not to be reused or revised without the written consent of the instructor. Disseminating course materials and other copyrighted material, such as PDFs of book chapters/articles, to anyone not enrolled in this class this semester is prohibited.

In-person lectures, discussions, and presentations in the course shall not be recorded via audio and/or video without prior knowledge and written consent of the instructor and all students involved. Students should not attempt to sell notes or study materials as doing so is unethical and may violate the intellectual property rights of the instructor, authors of course readings and their publishers, and/or artists and owners of the works of art we study.

Technical Support

If you have a technical issue with your personal computer or a machine in a lab, please contact the Help Desk directly via email, chat, or voice phone.

Keep in mind that the help desk typically closes at 7:00 PM on Monday through Thursday and at 5:00 PM on Fridays. It is not available during weekends. Click here to see current hours of operation.

University Policies and Statements

University Statement

We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services Office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

Student Support Services

The Learning Center

The Learning Center offers free Tutoring and Academic Coaching for many courses at Ball State. Students can make appointments for online (Zoom) or in-person (NQ 350) appointments. To make an appointment, visit myballstate.bsu.edu and click on "Navigate" in the Academic Tools section, or just go directly to bsu.navigate.eab.com.

Testing accommodations for students with disabilities are available for students who have received the appropriate documentation from Disability Services. Tests may be administered in the Learning Center.

Supplemental Instruction is available in select courses. If you have an SI leader for your course, that person will provide students with information the first week of school regarding weekly study sessions. For more information about Learning Center programming, visit bsu.edu/learningcenter or call 765-285-1006.

The Writing Center

All writers improve with practice and feedback, so as a student in this course, you are encouraged to use the Writing Center (in Robert Bell 295 during weekdays, Bracken Library First Floor West in the evenings, or online during any of our regularly scheduled hours) to get additional feedback on your writing.

The Writing Center offers free planning, feedback, and accountability sessions (in person and online) to all students composing essays, reports, reflections, research projects, web content, lesson plans, slideshows, poster presentations, resumes, and other digital or print texts. To schedule a free appointment to discuss your writing, go to bsu.edu/writingcenter. Online and in-person appointments are available; however, plan ahead because appointments book quickly!

The Basic Needs Hub

If you are having difficulty affording enough food, do not have a safe and reliable place to sleep, and/or experiencing an emergency or crisis, help is available through the Basic Needs Hub. The Basic Needs Hub has information, resources, and provides individualized support to students. To talk with a supportive staff member about your experience, receive one on one assistance, or learn more about resources, you can submit a Basic Needs Assistance Form.

The Counseling Center

The Ball State University Counseling Center offers free and confidential services to all students. The Counseling Center is in Lucina Hall, Room 320. To schedule an appointment, you can contact us at 765-285-1736. Ball State also offers a 24/7 Crisis Line, which can be reached at 765-285-HOPE (4673). The Crisis Line is a mental health resource for those who are struggling with any mental health concerns, including thoughts of self-harm and/or suicide.

At the Ball State Counseling Center, we see students for a variety of reasons, some of which include homesickness, relationship concerns, anxiety, and depression. At your first appointment, you will work with a therapist to create a plan that will connect you with resources that best fit your needs. We assist students with getting connected to therapy at our Center as well as connecting students to self-help resources, other on-campus resources, and community-based resources. All Ball State students also have access to several on-demand, self-help resources through a variety of different platforms. All of these resources, including a direct link to our website, can be found **here**.

Subject to Change Statement

This syllabus is subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.

Course Schedule

To support a learning experience that is responsive to the needs, interests, and pace of our class community, the course schedule may shift over the semester. The most current version of the schedule is available on Canvas.