Unit Description – Traditionally, the history of ancient art is a history of rise and decline, a story of stylistic development that culminates in the achievements of the Classical age, declines in the Hellenistic age and reaches its nadir at the end of the Roman period, only to be revived in the Renaissance. Using the Parthenon sculptures as a key example, this unit will ask why we think about classical art in these terms but its real focus will be on how art works in practice. We will think about how the audiences of the Classical and Hellenistic world engaged with the art around them. Why did classical Greece produce such naturalistic art and why/how did later audiences continue to use the style in new contexts? And why did new styles and themes, that appear to challenge the values of classical art, come into existence?

Contact Hours and Mode of Teaching: 2 hours per week, lectures and seminars.

Methods of Assessment

Year 1:
One course work essay of 2,000 words (first years) and 2,500 words (second years) – 50 marks; one written examination (one and a half hours) involving comment on three out of a choice of six images and one essay from a choice of four – 50 marks.

Year 2:
One course work essay of 2,000 words (first years) and 2,500 words (second years) – 50 marks; one written examination (one and a half hours) involving comment on three out of a choice of six images and one essay from a choice of four – 50 marks.

Essential Reading
R. Osborne, Archaic and Classical Greek Art (Oxford) 1998
J.J. Pollitt, Hellenistic Art (Cambridge) 1986
N. Spivey, Understanding Greek Sculpture (London) 1996

Further Information

Date written: 03/03/09  Date revised: 19/03/09