Description
Art and violence have been considered antithetical. Artworks have, primarily, been created and admired in periods of prolonged peace and economic prosperity. Art viewing and collecting is one of the most luxurious and lucrative practices in today’s global economy. Few, for instance, were shocked when, in February 2015, Paul Gauguin’s When Will You Marry was bought for $300 million. The creative impulse that results in a ‘beautiful’ work of art or architecture represents and, is therefore esteemed, as the greatest achievement of a given society. Rome is synonymous with the Coliseum; Christianity with High Sophia; Islam with Alhambra; China with the Great Wall; and Paris with Mona Lisa.

During conflict, war, and genocide, art and architecture have been not only strategic, but, above all, symbolic targets. The deliberate and, often, demonstrative destruction of specific art or architectural object has served to denigrate an entire civilization. This First Year Seminar studies the history of violence on art and architecture. It aims to trace major examples of conflict where the arts were at the center of ideological discourses. Each weeks’ lectures and discussions are devoted to the following topics: 1) the French Revolution (1789) and its cult of erasure; 2) World War I and the first genocides (1915); 3) World War II and The Rape of Europa (1939-45); 4) Communist China and the Cultural Revolution (1966-79); 5) 9/11 and the Twin Towers (2001); 6) torture and the Abu Ghraiib photographs; and 7) the Taliban-ISIS and the treatment of cultural heritage today.

Goals
The goal of the course is to explore the dialectical relationship between art and violence from the French Revolution to ISIS. The course asks why, traditionally, art historians have considered the destroyed art object as “non-art” and have simply refused to address it. Why have instead pathologists and criminologists examined the vandalized or destroyed artifacts in order to understand human violence? How, furthermore, has the discourse on art history, made by art historians, placed art objects in a volatile and a vulnerable position during conflicts? In turn, the course examines ways that the valorization of art by the art market and its display in temple-like museums has contributed to its treatment. Does ISIS blow up archeological sites because they are valuable to the Western ethos? Would it still destroy, if they held no civilizational symbolism (for the West)? The course concludes by raising the question asked by many today: save lives or art objects?
Assignments
1) Student will do the week’s reading (10-20 pages) in order to be able to better understand the lectures and participate in the class discussion each week.

2) On select weeks, student teams will present a PowerPoint presentation to the class, tracing the visual history and contemporary relevance of a specific topic assigned in the syllabus. The teams can be creative with their treatment of the topic and the contents and forms of their presentations.

3) The same student teams will create and present to the class a text-image artifact, which includes a 750-words essay. It will address questions related to a specific aspect of art and violence. The work can be in a traditional format (writing, painting, sculpture, etc.) or in digital, in performance, in scientific, or any other format that the team can imagine and create.

Grading
Students will be graded based on:

1) the PowerPoint presentation to the class tracing the art history and contemporary relevance of a specific topic assigned in the syllabus and raised by students

2) the creation of a text-image artifact that addresses questions related to a specific aspect of art and violence.

Students will be graded with pass-no-pass based on their participation and performance in the class discussions and on each of these projects.

Bio
Talinn Grigor is a professor of contemporary art in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of California, Davis. Her research concentrates on the cross-pollination of visual culture and global politics and historiography, focused on Iran and India. She received her Ph.D. from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2005. Her books include Building Iran: Modernism, Architecture, and National Heritage under the Pahlavi Monarchs (2009); Contemporary Iranian Art: From the Street to the Studio (2014); and Persian Kingship and Architecture: Strategies of Power in Iran from the Achaemenids to the Pahlavis (2015).
## Books

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## Info for Committee

The course aims to hold discussions about issues that are regularly raised by the students themselves about what is happening to cultural heritage around the world today.