London: Art, History, & Culture in Context

English Museums & Libraries From the Middle Ages to the Modern Era

This course will involve behind-the-scene tours with the instructor and curators of the major art, science, and cultural museums, palaces, and historic rare book and manuscript libraries, as well as private collections, in greater London and Cambridge.

The purpose of the course is to introduce students to the unique historical circumstances that shaped each of these unique museums, collections, palaces, and their respective missions over time, from the late Middle Ages to the foundation of the first great public museums and libraries from the second half of the 18th into the 19th centuries, and beyond.

In the mornings students will have guided tours and presentations of the institutions. Each student will identify a specific item, or small collection of items, from the holdings of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London and conduct archival research in the afternoons under the direction of the V&A Archivist, Dr. Nicholas Smith.