Early Europe and Colonial Americas
200–1750 C.E.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING 3-1.
European medieval art is generally studied in chronological order and divided into geographical regions, governing cultures, and identifiable styles, with associated but distinctive artistic traditions. There is significant overlap in time, geography, practice, and heritage of art created within this time frame and region. Nationalist agendas and disciplinary divisions based on the predominant language (Greek, Latin, or Arabic) and religion (Judaism, Western or Eastern Orthodox Christianity, or Islam) have caused considerable fragmentation in the study of medieval art.

Essential Knowledge 3-1a.
Medieval artistic traditions include late antique, early Christian, Byzantine, Islamic, migratory, Carolingian*, Romanesque, and Gothic, named for their principal culture, religion, government, and/or artistic style. Continuities and exchanges between coexisting traditions in medieval Europe are evident in shared artistic forms, functions, and techniques. Contextual information comes primarily from literary, theological, and governmental (both secular and religious) records, which vary in quantity according to period and geographical region, and to a lesser extent from archaeological excavations.

Essential Knowledge 3-1b.
Before the late Middle Ages, the coexistence of many regional styles makes period-wide generalizations impossible. Isolated regional revivals of naturalism and classicism occurred, sometimes motivated by the association of classicism with the Roman Christian emperors and church. Other traditions, such as those of European Islamic art and early medieval migratory art, embraced calligraphic line and script, as well as dense geometrical and organic ornament.

Essential Knowledge 3-1c.
Medieval artists and architects were heavily influenced by earlier and contemporary cultures, including coexisting European cultures. Thus early medieval and Byzantine art was influenced by Roman art and by motifs and techniques brought by migratory tribes from eastern Europe, West Asia, and Scandinavia. High medieval art was influenced by Roman, Islamic, and migratory art, and European Islamic art was influenced by Roman, migratory, Byzantine, and West Asian art.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING 3-2.
Medieval art (European, c. 300–1400 C.E.; Islamic, c. 300–1600 C.E.) derived from the requirements of worship (Jewish, Christian, or Islamic), elite or court culture, and learning.

Essential Knowledge 3-2a.
Elite religious and court cultures throughout the Middle Ages prioritized the study of theology, music, literary and poetic invention, and in the Islamic world, scientific and mathematical theory. Cultural and artistic exchanges were facilitated through trade and conquest.
Essential Knowledge 3-2b.
Surviving architecture is primarily religious in function (though domestic architecture survives from the late Middle Ages); ground plans and elevations both accommodated worship and incorporated symbolic numbers, shapes, and ornament.

Essential Knowledge 3-2c.
Medieval figurative and aniconic two- and three-dimensional works of art are characterized by stylistic variety, avoidance of naturalism, primarily religious or courtly subject matter, and the incorporation of text.

Essential Knowledge 3-2d.
Periodic rejections of figural imagery on religious structures or objects on theological grounds were common to all three major medieval religions. These artworks could facilitate a connection with the divine through their iconography (icons) or contents (reliquaries).

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING 3-3.
Art from the early modern Atlantic World is typically studied in chronological order, by geographical region, according to style, and by medium. Thus, early modernity and the Atlantic arena are highlighted, framing the initiation of globalization and emergence of modern Europe, and recognizing the role of the Americas in these developments. More attention has been given in recent years to larger cultural interactions, exchanges, and appropriations.

Essential Knowledge 3-3a.
The early modern Atlantic World encompasses what today is known as Western Europe — specifically Italy, Spain, France, Germany, England, Belgium, and the Netherlands — and those territories in the Americas that were part of the Spanish empire, including the Caribbean, the Western and Southwestern regions of the United States, Mexico, Central America, and South America, from approximately 1400 to 1850 C.E. Study of this art historical period, and specifically of the European material traditionally identified by the more familiar labels of Renaissance and Baroque, is canonical in the discipline and is thus extremely well documented. Most primary source material is housed in archives and libraries worldwide and includes works of art both in situ and in private and public collections. An immense body of secondary scholarly literature also exists.

Essential Knowledge 3-3b.
The traditional art history survey presents a historical narrative that, by selectively mapping development of the so-called Old World, constructs the idea of the West. One problem with this model is that in privileging Europe, the Old World is placed in an oppositional relationship to the rest of the world, which tends to be marginalized, if not neglected. A focus upon early modernity and interconnectedness of the Atlantic regions presents a more comprehensive approach to the study of art.

Essential Knowledge 3-3c.
The advent of the Age of Exploration in the late 15th century resulted in the emergence of global commercial and cultural networks via transoceanic trade and colonization. European ideas, forms, and practices began to be disseminated worldwide as a result of exploration, trade, conquest, and colonization.
Essential Knowledge 3-3d.
Information and objects from different parts of the world were gathered in European cultural centers, where their influence is evident in the contents of curiosity cabinets, advances in science and technology, consolidation of European political and economic power, and the development of modern conceptions of difference such as race and nationalism.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING 3-4.
The arts of 15th century Europe reflected an interest in classical models, enhanced naturalism, Christianity, pageantry, and increasingly formalized artistic training. In the 17th century, architectural design and figuration in painting and sculpture continued to be based on classical principles and formulas but with a pronounced interest in compositional complexity, dynamic movement, and theatricality. There was an increasing emphasis on time, narrative, heightened naturalism, and psychological or emotional impact.

Essential Knowledge 3-4a.
Developments in the form and use of visual elements, such as linear and atmospheric perspective, composition, color, figuration, and narrative, enhanced the illusion of naturalism.

Essential Knowledge 3-4b.
The emergence of academies redefined art training and the production and identity of the artist by introducing more structured, theoretical curricula in centralized educational institutions.

Essential Knowledge 3-4c.
Corporate and individual patronage informed the production, content, form, and display of art—from panel painting, altarpieces, sculpture, and print to myriad decorative arts, such as metalwork and textiles. Displayed in churches, chapels, convents, palaces, and civic buildings, the arts performed various functions (e.g., propagandistic, commemorative, didactic, devotional, ritual, recreational, and decorative).

Essential Knowledge 3-4d.
Art production in the Spanish viceroyalties in the Americas exhibited a hybridization of European and indigenous ideas, forms, and materials, with some African and Asian influences. Although much colonial art is religious, nonreligious subjects such as portraiture, allegory, genre, history, and decorative arts were central to Spanish vice regal societies.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING 3-5.
The 16th-century Protestant Reformation and subsequent Catholic Counter-Reformation compelled a divergence between northern and southern western European art with respect to form, function, and content.

Essential Knowledge 3-5a.
Production of religious imagery declined in northern Europe, and nonreligious genres, such as landscape, still life, genre, history, mythology, and portraiture, developed and flourished. In the south, there was an increase in the production of political propaganda, religious imagery, and pageantry, with the elaboration of naturalism, dynamic
compositions, bold color schemes, and the affective power of images and constructed spaces.

**Essential Knowledge 3-5b.**
Art production in the Spanish viceroyalties paralleled European art practices in terms of themes, materials, formal vocabulary, display, and reception. However, given the Spanish Catholic context in which this art production developed, Spanish colonial art of the early modern period corresponded more closely to that of southern Europe.