

northwestern university
DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY

Quarter/Year	Course Number	Day/Time	Instructor
Spring 2017	ART-HIST 430	R 2:00-4:50 PM	Swan
Course Title			
Aby Warburg/Atlas			



The German art historian Aby Warburg (1866-1929) is well known to art historians, anthropologists, cultural historians, among others. The primary focus of this seminar will be his magnum opus: *Mnemosyne Atlas*, left unfinished at his death, consisted of panels of photographic reproductions of works of art and other visual materials that he composed in an attempt to map “the afterlife of antiquity” (*Nachleben der Antike*), a generative topos he had pursued since his earliest studies on Renaissance Florentine art. The Atlas survives as a series of pictorial propositions, but was intended to be structured around text as well. How can we understand the format, the function, the value of such an effort today? Warburg is also known for his cosmological interests; his belief that religious studies and art history should operate shoulder to shoulder; and for the institutions that bear his name. His library, which Ernst Cassirer called “the organon of intellectual-historical studies,” founded in Warburg’s native city Hamburg, survives in London. While directed toward considerations on the *Bilderatlas*, the seminar will read many of Warburg’s key works and critical responses to them, and consider the ongoing impact of his work.

Required Textbooks

Aby Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, 1999, 9780892365371; G. Didi-Huberman, *The Surviving Image*, 9780271072081; article-length readings will be made available on CANVAS

Assessments

This course is dedicated to the analysis of texts and concepts; students will make brief oral presentations; regularly submit written responses; and write a final, sustained research essay.