Sculpture—the process of molding, carving, welding, or otherwise constructing matter into a three-dimensional artwork—has been a prevalent and consistent form of expression since the beginnings of humankind. Even with its ubiquity, many remain unaware of the medium’s history and unsure of how to understand, experience, and talk about sculpture. This seminar will examine the history of sculpture, predominantly of the Western tradition. The first half will focus on the developments and lasting impact of the classical figural sculpture of Ancient Greece and Rome, while the second half will explore radical changes to the medium during the late 19th and 20th centuries. The seminar will conclude with a brief discussion of contemporary sculpture in the 21st century. The aim is not to provide a comprehensive chronology, but enable students to understand the most important developments, conditions, and concepts that have shaped the medium of sculpture. As such, basic terminology and medium-specific issues will be covered and contextualized within broader historical, art historical, and social changes.

The Instructor will offer a list of suggested further reading at the end of the seminar, but students are encouraged to read the following text in preparation:


Students should email the instructor at marinsullivan@gmail.com to receive a pdf of this text.