

Art History 275: Introduction to Writing and Critical Thinking in Art History

Syllabus and Schedule - Fall 2007 Julia Sapin

Course Description

This course introduces you to fundamentals of creative work—visual analysis and research—in the field of art history. Through a series of "viewings," readings, and writing workshops, you will get a chance to visualize, think about, and practice different types of art historical writing and become familiar with methods of art historical research. You will also reflect on the development of your own writing throughout the class via a writing portfolio, which will help you become aware of your own writing and thinking processes. Ultimately, this course is designed to function as a "hands-on" practicum in which you will develop confidence as a thinker and as a writer by engaging in those activities that form the foundation of art historical practice.

This course will help you:

- understand and address different situations in which art historical writing is used
- articulate a clear line of reasoning to explain and illustrate your perspectives about art and visual culture
- assess the effectiveness of your writing and critical thinking processes and products
- implement a range of writing strategies to generate, organize, revise, and edit your ideas
- revisit the conventions of written English (e.g., spelling, punctuation, grammar, paragraphing, etc.) and start to learn about those in the field of art history (e.g., documentation of visual material).

Grading Criteria

Writing Assignment 1	12.5%	50
Writing Assignment 2	12.5%	50
Reader Responses (4)	10%	40
Portfolio of Writing Experiences	20%	80
Annotated Plan of Research Project	35%	140
Participation	10%	40
	100%	400 points

Grade Scale

376-400=A
360-375=A-
352-359=B+
320-359=B
320-335=B-
312-319=C+
296-311=C

280-295=C-
 240-279=D
 239 and below=F

Texts: Electronic readings available through Western Library

Class Schedule

9/27	Introduction: Tuning the Eye
WEEK I:	
10/2	A Building Block of Art Historical Writing: Visual Analysis
	Discussion and "freewrite"
	John Berger , <i>Ways of Seeing</i> (London: Penguin Books, 1972), 7-34.
10/4	Due: Portfolio 1: How do you see yourself as a writer? (+/- 250 words)
	WRITING WORKSHOP I: A "write-around" (practice analysis) (9:30 am)
	Discuss Writing Assignment 1 and choose object of focus
WEEK II:	
10/9	Due: Portfolio 2: What makes a good analysis? (+/- 250 words)
10/11	Due: Writing Assignment 1 (1st draft)
	WRITING WORKSHOP II: Reader Response 1: "read-around" (9:30 am)
	Portfolio 3 (in class): What did you learn about your writing from class feedback?
	What are your goals for your final draft? (+/- 250 words)
WEEK III	
10/16	Due: Writing Assignment 1 (final draft)

	Discussion about argument construction, discovering the author's thesis (main point) and hands-on practice dissecting an argument
10/18	Argument dissection/construction
	Linda Nochlin , "Morisot's <i>Wet Nurse</i> : The Construction of Work and Leisure in Impressionist Painting," in <i>Women, Art, and Power, and Other Essays</i> (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 37-56.
	Go over research project assignment
WEEK IV:	
10/23	More argument dissection/construction:
	Richard Shiff , "Breath of Modernism (Metonymic Drift)," in Terry Smith, ed., <i>In Visible Touch: Modernism and Masculinity</i> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 184-213.
	WRITING WORKSHOP III : Getting started on your research project (10:30 am)
10/25	Due: LIT (Library Information Tutorial)
	LIBRARY WORKSHOP I : Negotiating the library: how to begin your research project
	Meet at 9:30 in the Sky Bridge, Wilson Library
	"If we knew what we were doing, it wouldn't be called research, would it?" (Albert Einstein)
WEEK V:	
10/30	Individual meetings with instructor (others work on research)
11/1	Individual meetings with instructor (others work on research)
WEEK VI:	

11/6	Due: Portfolio 4 (see handout/Blackboard for questions)
	More argument dissection/reconstruction
	Sheng Kuan Chung , "Media/Visual Literacy Art Education: Cigarette Ad Deconstruction," <i>Art Education</i> , vol. 58, no. 3(May 2005): 19-25.
11/8	Due: Thesis Statement for Research Project (1st draft) (Reader Response 2)
WEEK VII:	
11/13	LIBRARY WORKSHOP II: Developing research strategies
	Meet at 9:30 in the Sky Bridge, Wilson Library
11/15	Preparing for Writing Assignment 2: Analysis of exhibition reviews; see the exhibition.
	Simon Schama , "The Patriot: Turner and the Drama of History," <i>The New Yorker</i> , 24 September 2007, 174-184.
	Nancy Princenthal , "Feminism Unbound," <i>Art in America</i> (June/July 2007): 142-52, 221.
	Visit Western Gallery; meet with Dr. Sarah Clark-Langager, Western Gallery Director, 10:30am
WEEK VIII:	
11/20	Due: Writing Assignment 2 (1st draft)
	WRITING WORKSHOP IV: Organizing the topic of your research project (10:30am)
11/22	NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Holiday)
WEEK IX:	

11/27	Due: Writing Assignment 2 (final draft)
	Discuss organizing techniques (Reader Response 3)
	Discuss annotations
11/29	Due: 1 sample annotation (Reader Response 4)
	Discussion of Writing Techniques with Esteemed Guests, 10:30am
WEEK X:	
12/4	Discuss writing styles in the visual arts
	Carol Mavor, "Mother Land Missed: The Becoming Landscape of Clementina, Viscountess Hawarden, and Sally Mann, in Singular Women: Writing the Artist, Kristen Frederickson and Sarah E. Webb, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 66-80.
12/6	LIBRARY WORKSHOP III: Research Confab with Margaret Fast: Fine-tuning Your Searches
	Due: Portfolio 5 (see handout/Blackboard for questions)
DUE Tues December 11, by 10am:	Final Portfolio Piece and Final Draft of Annotated Plan