

## History of Western Art I

ART 231, Fall 2007  
Phone: (W) 843-3140; (H) 726-1125  
Office: Clough 412

Dr. Glenda Swan  
Email: SwanG@rhodes.edu  
Office Hours: TTh 9-10:30 a.m. or by appointment

### Course Description and Goals

This course is the first half of a year-long survey of Western Art and students are encouraged to continue with ART 232. Students are not expected to have completed any previous courses in Art History. The primary objectives for this course are as follows:

- Provide students with a comprehensive overview of major images, artists, and movements in Western art from Prehistory through the Middle Ages
- Integrate these images with the broader cultural history of the period
- Develop visual and analytical skills appropriate to further study in Art History

### Evaluation

- Exam 1 (Friday, September 21<sup>st</sup>): 25%
- Exam 2 (Friday, October 26<sup>th</sup>): 25%
- Exam 3 (during the final exam period): 25%
  - For the 9:00 a.m. section of the course: Friday, Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m.
  - For the 10:00 a.m. section of the course: Saturday, Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 a.m.
- Paper (Due week of Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>; no papers accepted after Fri., Nov. 16<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m.): 25%
- Event Analyses (Due by start of class on Wed., Sept. 19, Wed. Oct. 24, and Wed., Dec. 5)  
Students must attend three Fine Arts events – gallery openings, special exhibitions, lectures, etc. – and then submit a one-page analysis of each event no later than the class review day before each exam, respectively. This is graded pass/fail. Failure to complete an assignment on time and in accordance with the honor code will lower the final grade by five points for each occurrence. Note that new Fine Arts events are always being added to schedules, so checking for an event you can attend and enjoy will be an ongoing process over the semester. The professor will make announcements about some events, but some other useful sources of information include the Rhodes Event Calendar at [www.rhodes.edu/calendars.asp](http://www.rhodes.edu/calendars.asp), the calendar at [www.artmemphis.net](http://www.artmemphis.net), and the arts events at [www.memphisartscouncil.org](http://www.memphisartscouncil.org).
- Class Attendance

Class attendance has proven to show a direct correlation to exam performance. Therefore, class attendance is considered mandatory and more than three absences may result in a lower grade. While class participation – through questions and comments – is highly encouraged, lack of such will not affect your grade.

### **Course Materials**

- Required: F. Kleiner and C. Mamiya, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages, Volume I* (with ArtStudy CD-ROM), 12th Edition, 2005. If you plan on taking ART 232, you may want to buy the complete edition, as it may be less expensive than buying separate volumes.
- Recommended: Sylvan Barnet, *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*, 9th Edition, 2008.
- Online materials can be accessed via the course website in the WebCT system (<https://webct.rhodes.edu>); contact ITS (x3890) if you need more information about how to login to WebCT and self-enroll in this course. This material is for study purposes only and students should observe the honor code and copyright restrictions while making use of them.

### **Off Campus Activities**

Certain class assignments (such as the paper) may require off-campus activities and therefore a waiver should be signed by each student. Students unable to leave campus may request accommodation by the end of the second week of class.

### **Possible Objectionable Material**

This class includes images and content that may be emotionally or politically challenging or even offensive to some viewers. If you are unwilling or unable to examine and discuss such works in an academic context then you should reconsider enrollment in this course.

### **Academic Honesty**

All work in this course must be completed in accordance with the Honor System at Rhodes College. For questions regarding course material, contact the professor *before* turning in work.

### **Special Needs**

If a student has a documented disability and wishes to receive academic accommodations, the student should first contact the Office of Student Disability Services (x3994) and then provide the professor with an accommodation form *as soon as possible*.

## Exams

All the material discussed in class and the required readings is indispensable for exam preparation. In addition, the content and format of the exam are frequently modeled in class to provide students with greater familiarity regarding the design and evaluation of exam questions. Yet, while many slides may be shown in class, students will only be held responsible for *certain* images on the exam. **The required images – and the basic identifying information for each image – will be posted as part of a powerpoint presentation on the course website in the WebCT system.** This list will be updated regularly, with the last update occurring no later than four days before each exam.

In order to discuss or cite an image on an exam, students are required to know the BASIC IDENTIFICATION FOR EACH SLIDE, which *may* include all of the following:

- Culture
- Period
- Title
- Date

While all necessary identifying information will be available to students through the images posted as part of a powerpoint presentation on WebCT, remember that memorization of this information is only the first step toward achieving proficiency with the course materials.

*Note that for Exams #2 & #3, students are responsible for all the images they were required to know on all previous exams, but these images would appear only in the compare and contrast section of the exam and need to be identified only by culture.*

### EXAM FORMAT:

- Unknown Slide Discussion (1 Slide, 5 Minutes: 10 points)

This section consists of a single slide for which the student has not been held responsible. Students should try to place this image in its cultural and temporal context using the skills of visual analysis in comparison with required images, which should be cited using their basic identification information. Explaining why you would attribute this image to a particular culture, period and date is the most important part of this question.

- Questions about Individual Slides (3 Slides with 8 Minutes for each slide: 60 points)

This section will be a series of single slides for which students will have to provide the basic identification for that slide and then answer the question associated with that slide. The difficulty and complexity of the questions will vary and may even require students to cite additional required slides in the course of answering the question.

- Compare and Contrast Two Slides (2 Pair, 8 Minutes for each pair: 30 points)

This section consists of a slide pair for which students will first have to provide the basic identification for each slide and then briefly explain some of the most significant elements that these two slides *do* and *do not* have in common. Again, note that on Exams #2 & #3, students are responsible for all the images they were required to know on all previous exams, but these images would appear only in the compare and contrast section of the final and need to be identified only by culture.

## Paper

The paper assignment is intended to be an experience through which students synthesize information and methods learned during the course of the semester, engage in focused art historical research, and make an original contribution to the discussion of art history through a case study of an original work of art in the Memphis Brooks Museum. Successful papers will synthesize diverse information in order to closely analyze a specific work of art, the distinct cultural and artistic context from which it emerged, and the perspective of our own culture as interested viewers in that work.

### I. Choosing a Work of Art

A vital component of the course is encouraging students to visit museums and art galleries. The history of art should not be studied merely from slides and pictures in books! Therefore your paper assignment involves analysis of an actual object of Western Art produced during the period we are studying. Due to its proximity and breadth of its collection, the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art provides easy access to such works. For your paper you may choose any object within the museum that falls within the scope of our course. Normally this would include only pieces produced in the western world before 1300 C.E. *Students who wish to choose a work from another collection may do so only with the prior approval of the instructor.*

- Make sure to identify the object you have chosen by writing the gallery in which you found it and the display number of the piece on the cover sheet of your paper.
- Information about the Brooks Museum can be found online at [www.brooksmuseum.org](http://www.brooksmuseum.org). Note the free or discounted admission to students (depending on the day) with a student ID. While the Brooks Museum is located in nearby Overton Park, it is safer to travel by car; students who chose to walk should do so only in groups.

### II. Writing the Paper

In writing the paper it will help to consult Sylvan Barnet, *A Short Guide to Writing about Art*. Don't be shy about coming to me with any problems, but start early and give it your best shot before panicking. This assignment is intended to be as enjoyable as it is educational.

#### A) Drawing

You must include a drawing or brief sketch of the object you choose. While this exercise will help your visual analysis, it is *not* about your drawing ability. Your drawing will not influence your grade in any way, though its omission will result in a full letter grade deduction.

Photographs, photocopies, postcards, and stick-figure drawings do NOT satisfy this component but may be included if you wish.

#### B) Visual Analysis (2-3 pages)

Discuss the salient visual characteristics of your piece. Write as if you are describing the piece to someone who is completely unfamiliar with the object. Concentrate on the things you can actually see. Begin with the basics: describe the materials used, the geometric and organic forms, the decoration, etc. Then respond to your observations. For example: How do the various visual features coordinate with each other? Does the piece seem utilitarian? Ceremonial? Decorative? How does its form and decoration complement its function? This should lead naturally to the next part of the paper...

#### C) Historical Analysis (4-6 pages)

...now think about WHY the object appears the way it does. What was the artist attempting to express and why so? What makes the piece typically (or atypically) Near Eastern, Egyptian, Gothic, etc.? What are the cultural imperatives that influenced the depiction? How is the piece representative of larger cultural and aesthetic issues? How was it used, displayed, or received? In this section it is essential to compare and/or contrast the work with others you have studied. You may simply refer to pieces illustrated in your textbook or you may photocopy illustrations from other books or sources. Discuss where your piece would fall relative to others and what we learn from your piece! Give your discussion a context in which to integrate your piece within the larger framework of Art History. Finally, conclude the paper by analyzing the importance and the significance of the work to the contemporary viewer. In a sense, you can think of critiquing the object's relevancy to the modern audience, why it deserves attention (and to what degree), and what we ultimately gain from the conservation, display, and study of such an object.

#### D) Bibliography and Sources (1 page)

You must use and properly note at least 3 art historical sources aside from your textbook. The purpose of this component is to familiarize yourself with art historical research and the various

texts available to you. This does NOT mean you should go looking for a fancy quote. In fact, quoting is not necessary. Rather, you should find sources that help establish a context through which to evaluate your work or art. The sources may discuss art within the producing culture; they may be sources with similar objects, illustrations for comparison, or even a general survey of the period. Just make sure your sources are relevant. Dictionaries (such as the *Dictionary of Art*), encyclopedias, and other general art history survey books (especially those by Gardner, Hartt, Janson, Stokstad, Adams, etc.) do not count towards satisfying this requirement.

**Library Resources:** The library has a good selection of books but be warned that your classmates will all be searching for them at the same time, so start early! The University of Memphis also has a nice collection of art books. The Brooks Museum has a useful library, but call first to make sure it is open.

**Electronic Resources:** The library has access to several excellent electronic databases as well as book catalogues; especially helpful are the Bibliography of the History of Art (BHA) JSTOR (for full text articles). While the larger world-wide-web can be a useful resource, be aware that only ONE citation for this paper may be from an electronic source that has no printed version (CD-ROM, Internet, etc.). Also be aware that information on the web is mixed, ranging from the informative to the misleading, so use good critical judgment on those sites you use.

### III. Format

The text of your paper should be about 6-9 double-spaced typed pages, not including bibliography and supplemental material. Pay attention to presentation! There should be a minimum of typographical and grammatical errors, and the clarity and thoroughness of your discussion most definitely count towards the grade. You must cite any sources you have consulted (including guide cards or textbooks) and give full credit to those whose ideas you have presented. Remember, taking *any* information or idea from a source without proper citation is plagiarism, even if one completely changes the grammar, language, sentence structure and/or organization of the original source. Place direct quotes in quotation marks and note instances in which you are paraphrasing. If anything is unclear ask me or consult a manual of style.

**Due Date:** Papers may be handed to me or left under my office door at any time during the week of November 12th, but no papers will be accepted after 5:00 p.m. on Friday, November 16th.