

Art 231: History of Western Art I

Fall 2011

MWF 10:00; Clough 417

Course Objectives and Description

- The objectives of the course are as follows: (1) to provide students with a comprehensive overview of major images, artists, and movements in Western art from Prehistory through the Middle Ages; (2) to integrate the art with the broader cultural history of the period; and (3) to develop visual and analytical skills appropriate to further study in Art History. 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.

Textbooks and Other Resources:

- *Gardner's Art through the Ages: The Western Perspective, Volume I*, latest edition [softcover] (or previous edition if buying used). Note that *Gardner's Art through the Ages* contains the same material and includes non-western art. Buying the complete edition in hardcover is often a less expensive option if you plan to continue with Art 232, especially if buying used.
- Sylvan Barnet, *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*, any recent edition [recommended but not required].
- *Online materials*. On-line resources will be available for class use. Students should observe the honor code and copyright restrictions while making use of these materials for study purposes only.

Grading:

- 3 exams (each counts 25% towards the final grade)
- 1 paper (25% of final grade)
- Attendance at 3 Fine Arts events (gallery openings, special exhibitions, lectures, etc.). A one-page analysis is due for each. This requirement is graded pass/fail. Failure to complete the assignment in accordance with the honor code and on time will lower the final course grade. One event analysis is due before each exam, respectively, whether or not you are reminded.
- Class attendance has proven to bear a direct correlation to exam performance. Therefore class attendance is considered mandatory and more than three absences may result in a lower grade. Class participation (through questions and comments) is highly encouraged though lack thereof will not affect your grade.

Further instructions on the exams and paper are provided below.

Important Notes

- All students are expected to abide by the *Rhodes College Honor Code* for all assignments.
- Changes in content, scheduling, or other aspects of the course may be made at the discretion of the instructor. A rationale will normally be provided in class.
- Students with disabilities will be offered appropriate academic accommodation. Requests should be made during the first two weeks of the semester and students must first register with Student Disability Services.
- Possible Objectionable Material: This class includes images and content that involve issues of nudity, sexuality, violence, race and other themes 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.
- Certain class assignments (such as the museum paper) may require off-campus activities and therefore a waiver must be signed by each student. Students unable to leave campus may request accommodation before the end of the second week of class.

Schedule of Classes MWF

	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Lecture Topics</u>
	Part I: Ancient Art	
Aug	24	Introduction to Art History
	26	The Birth of Art (Prehistoric Art)
	Note: there will be no students added to the course after this class	
	29	The Ancient Near East: Sumer
	31	The Ancient Near East: Akkad and Babylonia
Sept	2	The Ancient Near East: Assyria and Neo-Babylonia
	5	Labor Day Holiday—No Class
	7	Old Kingdom Egypt
	9	Old Kingdom Egypt
	12	New Kingdom Egypt
	14	New Kingdom Egypt and the Amarna Period
	16	Aegean Art: Cycladic and Minoan
	19	Aegean Art: Mycenaean
	21	Exam 1: Ancient Art First event analysis due
	Part II: The Classical Period	
	23	Ancient Greece from the Geometric to Archaic Period
	26	Archaic Greek Architecture
	28	Classical Sculpture in the Transition Period
	30	The High Classical Period: The Golden Age in Athens
Oct	3	High Classical Art
	5	Late Classical Architecture
	7	Late Classical Sculpture
	10	Hellenistic Sculpture
	12	Hellenistic Architecture
	Fall Recess	
	19	Etruscan Art
	21	Roman Art from Republic to Empire
	24	Pompeii and the Roman City
	26	Roman Imperial Architecture
	28	Roman Imperial Sculpture
	31	Exam 2: Classical Art Second event analysis due

Part III: The Middle Ages

Nov 2 The Late Empire
4 Early Christian Architecture

Museum Papers are due this week (between Nov 7 and 11)

7 Early Christian Iconography
9 Early Byzantine Art
11 Later Byzantine Art

Note: special event today from 1-5 on the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible. Please attend the Ena Heller lecture. More info at <http://www.rhodes.edu/shakespeare/19894.asp>

14 Islamic Art and the West
16 Migration Art
18 Carolingian Art
21 Ottonian Art

Thanksgiving Break

28 Romanesque Architecture
30 Romanesque Sculpture and Embroidery
Dec. 2 Gothic Architecture
5 Sculpture: From Gothic to Renaissance
7 **Giotto and the Birth of Modern Art**
Third event analysis due

Saturday December 10 @ 8:30am

Final (Third) Exam

Notes

- Students should prepare for each class by reading the appropriate chapters in Gardner and any supplemental readings assigned.
- Note that rescheduled classes will be made up through alternate lectures and/or review sessions. Dates and times will be provided.
- Papers are due during the week of November 7-11.

Exam Instructions, Art 231

Each exam will consist of three parts:

- **Identification and Discussion of Known Works (3)**

An image will be shown of a work studied in class. Students must fully identify the work by title, culture, and date. Students must then write a brief essay in which the relevance of the work is discussed. Students should address the following questions: Why was the work created? Why is the work important? What do we learn from the work?

- **Identification and Discussion of Unknown Work (1)**

An image will be shown of a work hitherto unknown to the students. Based upon the context of works studied in class, all students should be able to identify the type of work, the producing culture, and the approximate date. Students should then be able to justify their response by comparing the work to others studied in class. This is not intended to be tricky or even difficult. It simply asks for good critical analysis of works of art, and all students who have properly studied should be well prepared. Even incorrect identifications may contain sound reasoning and receive partial credit. For the rest of your lives you will perform this exercise while visiting the world's museums.

- **Comparison of Two Works and Their Respective Cultures (1)**

Two images will be shown concurrently. Students should compare and contrast the images focusing on the same issues as in the first three essays. Most importantly, students must come to some conclusion about what is learned from the juxtaposition. In other words, the two works are shown together to prompt certain insights. Do not discuss one and then the other without forming some overall conclusions.

Note that the third exam will differ from previous exams by way of a final synthetic question rather than a final comparison.

Instructions for Fine Arts Events

Students must attend 3 Fine Arts events and write a one-page analysis for each. This is graded pass/fail. Failure to complete the assignment in accordance with the honor code and on time will lower the final course grade by up to one full letter grade. One event analysis is due before each exam, respectively, and is your responsibility whether or not there are reminders. Eligible events include (but are not exclusive to) art openings, art lectures, gallery openings, and special exhibits at museums. Individual works of art are NOT normally counted as events; neither is a tour of a museum's permanent collection. If you are traveling outside of Memphis this is a great opportunity to visit another museum but remember to write on a special exhibition rather than the permanent collection. Please ask if there are any questions.

Paper Assignment Art 231

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 actual work of art in the Memphis Brooks Museum. Please write your paper in the third person and refrain from personal anecdotes or other extraneous comments.

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 reproductions 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.

This assignment is designed to be a comprehensive analysis that will focus on a work of art but will also encapsulate various aspects of art historical inquiry that we have covered during the semester. Successful papers will synthesize diverse information in order to analyze a work of art both within the distinct cultural and artistic context from which it emerged and from the perspective of our own culture as interested viewers.

3 Important Items!

- Make sure to fully and clearly identify the object you have chosen. If there is a display number for the piece you can include that as well.
- The Brooks Museum is located in Overton Park. Though it is close enough to walk, it is safer to travel by car. Students who chose to walk should do so only in groups.
- Admission to the museum is either free or discounted to Rhodes students (depending on the day), so bring your student ID.

II. Writing the Paper

In writing the paper it will help to consult Sylvan Barnet, *A Short Guide to Writing about Art* (any recent edition). The book should be available for purchase at the college bookstore.

A) Drawing

You must include a drawing or brief sketch of the object you choose. I know, I know--you can't draw worth beans. Neither can I. But I assure you the exercise will help your visual analysis (and will help me identify the object you have chosen). 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 over the phone 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 part two 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 scan/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. Explain why it deserves attention (and to what degree), and what we ultimately gain from the conservation, display, and study of such an object. Do not be patronizing or superficial. Take this reflective exercise seriously.

Comparative Images

In most cases you will want to find images of other objects that can be usefully compared to your chosen piece. Sometimes the comparisons will be almost exactly alike and other times they will show other properties. Nobody in this world has a visual recall of every art object so you must cut and paste the image into your paper for me. This can either be integrated within the text or appended to the end. Since this is for academic purposes there is no copyright issue. If an image is impossible to copy then you can always photocopy the page from a book or use the "Print Screen" command to paste it into your paper. Also identify the image with a caption and note the image source (either book or web address).

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, encyclopedias, and other general art history survey books (especially those by Gardner, Hartt, Janson, Stokstad, Adams, etc.) do not count towards satisfying this requirement.

Electronic Resources: Students are encouraged to use electronic resources, especially the Internet. The library has access to several excellent electronic databases as well as book catalogues. However, no citation for this paper may be from an electronic source that has no printed version or peer review process. Know your source! Be forewarned that the information on the web is mixed, ranging from the highly informative to the seriously misleading so use good critical judgment on those sites you use.

Please visit the art department web page on using electronic sources for research at:

http://www.rhodes.edu/images/content/Art_Docs/Electronic_Resources_Guide_%283%29.pdf

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. Start early to avoid trouble. The University of Memphis also has a nice collection of art books. The Brooks Museum has a useful library though their hours are irregular so call beforehand to be sure it is open. For general research you may consult the *Dictionary of Art*, kept on reserve in the library, though it does not count as one of your required citations.

III. Format

The text of your paper should be about 6-8 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. Place direct quotes in quotation marks and note instances in which you are paraphrasing. If anything is unclear please ask me or consult a manual of style.

If you need general help take a look at Sylvan Barnet, *A Short Guide to Writing about Art*, (the most recent edition has been ordered for the bookstore as a recommended text). 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.

Due Date: Papers are due during the week of November 8-12. Papers may be handed to me or left under my door. No papers will be accepted after 5:00 p.m. on that Friday.

Electronic Submission

Please submit your paper electronically so we can save trees and so I can click on links. Please scan your drawing. Use the electronic inbox. **DO NOT SEND YOUR PAPER AS AN EMAIL ATTACHMENT.** Yes, I will accept hard copies of your paper—that is still fine too.

GENERAL WAIVER AND RELEASE

There are many opportunities for on-campus and off-campus study and other activities at Rhodes College in which we encourage students to participate. The College makes every effort to assure that due care and prudence are exercised in these programs. However, the College cannot assume liability for all risks associated with these programs. Accordingly, we request that each student and a parent or guardian sign this General Waiver and Release.

This General Waiver and Release applies to all on-campus and off-campus study and activities sponsored by Rhodes College, and is effective during the student’s official enrollment at Rhodes College. However, it applies only to on-campus activities or to domestic travel or absence from campus for a short duration. If the student is in an off-campus study abroad program, there is a separate Off-Campus Study Abroad Release.

I, _____, a student enrolled at Rhodes College, in consideration
(please print)

of participation in on-campus and off-campus study and activities sponsored by Rhodes College, do, for myself, my heirs and personal representatives, hereby forever exempt and release the College, its trustees, officers, faculty, staff, agents and employees, from any and all liability, claims, demands or causes of action whatsoever arising out of any damage, loss or injury to me or to my property while engaged in such on-campus or off-campus study or activities, including but not limited to transportation, housing and field trips, whether such loss, damage or injury results from the negligence of the College, its trustees, officers, faculty, staff, agents or employees, or from some other cause.

In the event that I drive my automobile to supply transportation for myself or other students, I warrant that I have a valid operator’s license and am covered by liability insurance currently in force. I understand that Rhodes College assumes no responsibility or liability for car repairs and damage to my automobile.

Trip leaders, program directors and faculty assume no responsibility for the personal conduct of group members. In the area of personal behavior, students are required to make personal decisions for which Rhodes College does not assume responsibility or liability.

Student’s signature Date _____

Parent’s or guardian’s signature (required of all students under 18 years of age) Date _____