

Art 150: Introduction to the Visual Arts

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Rhodes College, Fall 2001  
3663

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## COURSE OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION

The objectives of the course are as follows: (1) to provide students with a comprehensive, theoretical introduction to the visual arts; (2) to develop skills of visual analysis; (3) to examine various media used by artists; (4) to introduce students to methods of interpretation; and (5) to develop skills in writing about art. Throughout the course we will keep in mind the following two statements: Pierre Auguste Renoir's reminder that, "to practice an art, you must begin with the ABCs of that art;" and E.H. Gombrich's insight that, "the form of representation cannot be divorced from its purpose and the requirements of the society in which the given language gains currency."

Among the themes and issues we will examine are the following: balance, shape and form, space, color, conventions, signs and symbols, representation, reception, and interpretation. To do this we will look at many different types of art produced in several historical epochs and conceived in a variety of media. Whenever possible we will examine original art objects.

Art 150 is a foundation course that serves as an introduction for further work in studio art and art history. A three-hour course, Art 150 satisfies the fine arts requirement. Enrollment is limited to first- and second-year students who are not expected to have had any previous experience with either studio or art history. Art 150 is a lecture course with a considerable amount of classroom discussion.

### TEXTBOOKS

Duane Preble, Sarah Preble, and Patrick Frank. Artforms: An Introduction to the Visual Arts. 7th ed. New York: Longman, 2002.

Sylvan Barnet. A Short Guide to Writing About Art. 4th ed. New York: Harper Collins, 1993.

### REQUIREMENTS

Regular attendance and participation in classroom lectures and discussions, public lectures, and field trips. Students are allowed no more than three unexcused absences. With each additional hour of class missed your final grade will drop a third (for example, from a B to a B-).

Readings on the day they are assigned. Special readings are on reserve in the library.

Five quizzes.

Two examinations involving: definition of terms, application of terms and ideas taken from readings, lectures, and class discussions.

Students are responsible for all material presented in class and in the readings. The final examination is not cumulative, although students are expected to draw on previous information if it will help in answering the question.

Makeup examinations are rarely given.

Five papers of about two pages each on specific images and issues covered in the class. Papers exceeding specified limits will be returned for editing.

All papers must be typed, double-spaced, and numbered.

Papers receiving a grade of D or F will be returned for revision.

Late papers are not accepted.

### HONOR CODE

Remember that whenever you use another person's words or ideas, you must acknowledge that they belong to that person. If you choose to quote someone (I would advise only quoting primary sources, such as an artist's or critic's writings), place his or her words in "quotation marks" and note the exact source, including author's name, title of book or article, date, and page number in a footnote or endnote. Whenever you use another person's ideas, you must acknowledge this in the same way. If you paraphrase another person's writing without proper acknowledgement, for instance by copying the structure and organization of an essay or an entry in an encyclopedia, this too is an act of plagiarism. Most of the recent cases before the Honor Council have involved plagiarism. According to the Rhodes College Student Handbook, "ignorance is not an excuse for these violations."

If you are unclear as to what constitutes plagiarism, please see me before you turn in your final draft.

### GRADING OF WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Your grade for each writing assignment will depend on several factors. First, you must demonstrate sufficient mastery of the terms and ideas we examine in class and in our readings. To do this, you must apply these terms correctly to the work you investigate. Second, the skill with which you organize and write your essay will affect your grade. I expect clearly and concisely written papers. Pay attention to spelling, punctuation, and grammar. In this course, an "A" paper will include a clear statement of purpose in the introduction, an analysis of appropriate details/data arranged in clear relation to your thesis, coherent paragraphs with clear transitions, correct spelling, punctuation and grammar, and a conclusion that goes beyond simple summarization to suggest why and how your study is important. Deficiencies in any of these areas will bring your grade down. Do not turn in a first or second draft. Allow yourself enough time to edit what you have written. Remember that the writing assignments are your only chance to turn in polished work for this course. Take advantage of this opportunity.

### GRADING

Grading is designed to measure the success of each student's understanding and assimilation of the materials presented in the course. I grade for improvement.

The examinations are worth 40% of your final grade (20% each), the papers 25% (5% each), the quizzes 25% (5% each), and class participation 10%.

## VOCABULARY

visual form + subject matter = expressive content

medium (media)

Looking and seeing

Perception and awareness

Representational

Abstract

Nonobjective

architecture

plan, module, facade, fenestration, masonry, load-bearing walls.

post and lintel or post and beam (trabeated) used by Greeks: stone, platform, column, colonnade, roof, order (Doric or Ionic), cella, portico, pediment

Arch used by Romans: stone and/or concrete, arcade, voussoir, keystone, lateral thrust, buttress, centering, relieving arch, barrel vault, groin vault, dome

Pointed arch used by Gothic builders: stone, ribbed vaulting, flying buttress, skeletal structure, nave, transept, apse.

Cantilever used by modern builders: skeletal structure, reinforced concrete, steel, glass, curtain wall (opposite of load-bearing wall), steel-frame construction.

Sculpture

modeling (additive process): armature, plaster, plasticine, clay, terra cotta

casting: metal, wax, plaster, mold, lost wax process

carving (subtractive process): stone, wood, plaster

constructing: any materials

open/closed                      relief (bas-relief and high relief)                      freestanding

found object

collage (2-D)                      assemblage (3-D)

installation                      site-specific

Graphic arts: plate, proof, edition

Intaglio: etching, engraving, and drypoint

relief

lithography, silkscreen

Photography: camera obscura, camera lucida, lens, shutter, aperture

straight, manipulated, montage

painting: pigment, binder, support, gesso, impasto, transparent, opaque

Water: fresco, buon fresco, tempera, water color, gouache

Oil

Encaustic

Acrylic

drawing

sketch, study, cartoon

visual form

composition

law of simplicity

line (object, hatch, contour, outline)

implied line

contour rivalry

linear vs. painterly

shape (geometric and organic)

structural skeleton

axis (axes)

gestalt

subdivision

grouping (according to similarity)

isomorphism

plane

picture plane

actual space

virtual space

figure/ground

frame

convexity/concavity

truncation

overlapping

transparency/opacity or transparent/opaque

deformation

foreshortening

value

mass/volume

linear perspective

aerial perspective

vanishing point

focal point

horizon line

vantage point

orthogonals

gradients of: size, saturation, sharpness, texture, hue

value

chiaroscuro

highlights (through tinting)

shadows (through shading)

color/hue

local color

achromatic or neutral

intensity, purity, saturation

cool/warm

primary, secondary, tertiary hue

complementary hue

subtractive color (red, yellow, blue)

additive color (red, green, blue)

analogous color

monochromatic

after image

retinal fatigue

composition/design

balance

induced structure

perceptual induction

symmetry

asymmetry

unity/variety

pattern

visual weight

intrinsic interest

emphasis

focal point

subordination

isolation

size

scale and proportion

contrast

rhythm

format

hierarchical scale

Tribal Art: ritualistic, therapeutic, magical, apotropaic.

Style (language)

Mimesis (imitation)

naturalism

realism

invention/imitation

making/matching

schema and schemata (pl)

convention



mental set  
expectation/observation

horizon of expectation  
adapted stereotype

Iconography

Iconology

primary or natural subject matter (factual meaning and expressional meaning)

secondary or conventional subject matter

intrinsic meaning

symbol

allegory

conventional symbol

personification, attribute

personal symbol

imputed symbol

archetype

semiotics

sign (signifier and signified)

referent

interpretant

iconic

indexical

symbolic

synchronic

diachronic

synecdoche

metonymy

beautiful                      picturesque

sublime

representation

creation vs. representation

reflection vs. representation

maker--representation--beholder

paradigm

practice

production and consumption

discourse

"no representation without taxation"

sex, sexuality, gender

pornography and obscenity

Naked vs. Nude or Actual vs. Ideal

subject/object

self/other

scopophilia (voyeurism)

ego and libido

gaze: sadism/narcissism/masochism

fetish

Freud:

Lacan:

castration

lack

penis

phallus

unconscious

Symbolic (language)

Real (unobtainable immediacy)

Imaginary (realm where immediacy

is

restored through fantasy and

projection)

Mirror Stage

eye/I

taste

culture

"taste of sense"

"taste of reflection"

pleasure of the senses

pure pleasure

quality

## SYLLABUS

### WEEK 1

Aug. 22 Introduction.

Aug. 24 What is Art?

Reading: Artforms, pp. 1–37.

## WEEK 2

Aug. 27 Media and techniques: architecture.

Reading: Artforms, 229–52.

Aug. 29 Media and techniques: sculpture.

Reading: Artforms, 193–211.

Aug. 31 Media and techniques: drawing and the graphic arts.

Reading: Artforms, 111–25, 139–52.

QUIZ.

## WEEK 3

Sept. 3 Labor Day. No class.

Sept. 5 Media and techniques: painting.

Reading: Artforms, 126–38; and John Berger, "Chapter Five" in Ways of Seeing.

Sept. 7 Media and techniques: photography.

Reading: Artforms, 153–82; and Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Who Is Speaking Thus?: Some Questions about Documentary Photography," in Photography at the Dock.

## WEEK 4

Reading: Barnett, A Short Guide to Writing About Art, pp. 1–85 (as needed).

Sept. 10 Form: Line.

Reading: Artforms, 39–44.

Sept. 12 Form: Shape and Mass.

Reading: Artforms, 44–48.

Sept. 14 Field trip.

PAPER.

#### WEEK 5

Sept. 17 Form: Space and Depth.

Reading: Artforms, 49–56.

Sept. 19 Form: Space and Depth.

QUIZ

Sept. 21 Form: Light and Tone (Value).

Reading: Artforms, 60–62.

View film in class: Robert Weine, Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1919).

#### WEEK 6

Sept. 24 Form: Color.

Reading: Artforms, 62–68.

Sept. 26 Principles of Design.  
Reading: Artforms, 72–90.

Sept. 28 Principles of Design.  
PAPER.

#### WEEK 7

Oct. 1 Review.

Oct. 3 EXAMINATION.

Oct. 5 Form as meaning: Soviet Film.  
View film in class: Sergei Eisenstein, Battleship Potemkin (1925).

#### WEEK 8

Oct. 8 Form as Meaning: African tribal art.

Oct. 10 Style.  
Reading: Meyer Schapiro, "Style," in Theory and Philosophy of Art.

Oct. 12 Style.  
PAPER.

#### WEEK 9

Oct. 15 Fall recess.

Oct. 17 Naturalism.

Reading: E.H. Gombrich, "Psychology and the Riddle of Style," and "Truth and the Stereotype," in Art and Illusion.

Oct. 19 Iconography and Iconology.

Reading: Erwin Panofsky, "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art,' in Meaning in the Visual Arts.

QUIZ.

WEEK 10

Oct. 22 Art as language: Symbols.

Reading: Sigmund Freud, "Chapter Four," in Leonardo da Vinci.

Oct. 24 Art as language: Signs.

Reading: Roland Barthes, "The Face of Garbo," and "Photography and Electoral Appeal," in Mythologies.

Oct. 26 Art as language: the problem with flags.

PAPER

WEEK 11

Oct. 29 Semiotics and Architecture: Rhodes College.

Oct. 31 Making artists.

Reading: Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," in Women, Art, and Power.

Nov. 2 Representation.

Reading: W.J.T. Mitchell, "Representation," in Critical Terms for Literary Study.

QUIZ.

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WEEK 12

Nov. 5 Representation and the Body.  
  
Reading: Lynda Nead, "Theorizing the Female Nude," in The Female Nude.

Nov. 7 Representation in popular culture: film.  
  
Reading: Luara Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in Visual and Other Pleasures.

View excerpts of film in class: Jean Negulesco, How to Marry a Millionaire (1953).

Nov. 9 Field trip.  
  
PAPER.

### WEEK 13

Nov. 12 Representation and otherness.  
  
Reading: bell hooks, "Representing the Black Male Body," in Art on My Mind.

Nov. 14 Representation of artists.

Nov. 16 Taste and social difference.  
  
Reading: Pierre Bourdieu, from Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste; and Komar and Melamid, "Painting by Numbers: The Search for a People's Art," in The Nation.  
  
QUIZ.

### WEEK 14

Nov. 19 Beauty.

Nov. 21 Thanksgiving Recess.

Nov. 23 Thanksgiving Recess.

### WEEK 15

Nov. 26      The Grotesque.

Nov. 28      Historical interpretation: Taste in the fifties and sixties.

Nov. 30      Historical interpretation: Art and the Cold War.

Week 16

Dec. 3      Thinking about contemporary art.

Dec. 5      Review.

FINAL EXAMINATION: Saturday, 8 December , 8:30-11:00 am. 417 Clough.