

Prof. Victor Coonin
412 Clough, x3824
coonin@rhodes.edu

Art 231: Survey of Western Art
MWF 10:00-10:50 and 1:00-1:50

Art 231: Survey of Western Art Fall 2004

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 these images 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, 11th or 12th edition [required]. Note that *Gardner's Art through the Ages* contains the same material but is slightly more expensive since it includes non-western art. You may want to buy the complete edition if you plan to take Art 232. This is less expensive than buying the separate volumes. All new editions should now come packaged with a useful CD-ROM.
- Sylvan Barnet, *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*, 7th Edition, 2002 [Recommended].
- *Course Web Page*. A web page devoted to important images will be available for course use. The address will be provided in class and students should observe the honor code and copyright restrictions while making use of it for study purposes only.

Grading:

- 3 exams (each counts 25% towards the final grade)
- 1 paper (25% of final grade)
- Attendance at 2 Fine Arts events (sponsored lectures, gallery openings, special exhibitions, etc.). This is graded pass/fail and will be administered by the honor code. Failure to complete the assignment will lower the final course assessment by one full letter grade.
- Class attendance has proven to show a direct correlation to exam performance. Therefore class attendance is considered mandatory and more than two unexcused 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.

All exams and assignments are to be completed and pledged in accordance with the Rhodes College Honor Code.

Schedule of Classes MWF

	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Lecture Topics</u>
	Part I: Ancient Art	
Aug	25	Introduction to Art History
	27	The Birth of Art (Prehistoric Art)
	30	The Ancient Near East
Sept	1	The Ancient Near East
	3	The Ancient Near East
	6	No Class (Labor Day Recess)
	8	Old Kingdom Egypt
	10	Old Kingdom Egypt
	13	New Kingdom Egypt
	15	New Kingdom Egypt
	17	Aegean Art (Cycladic and Minoan)
	20	Aegean Art (Mycenaean)
	22	Catch-Up Day
	24	Exam 1: Ancient Art
	Part II: The Classical Period	
	27	Early Greek Art
	29	Archaic and Early Classical Architecture
Oct	1	Early Classical Sculpture
	4	High Classical Art in Athens
	6	High Classical Art (cont.)
	8	Late Classical Architecture
	11	Late Classical Sculpture
	13	Hellenistic Sculpture
	15	Hellenistic Architecture
	Fall Recess	
	20	Etruscan Art
	22	Roman Art from Republic to Empire
	25	Pompeii and the Roman City
	27	Roman Imperial Architecture
	29	Roman Imperial Sculpture
Nov	1	The Late Empire
	3	Exam 2: Classical Art

Part III: The Middle Ages

5	Late Antique and Early Christian Architecture
Papers are due this week, between November 8-12	
8	Early Christian Art and Iconography
10	Early Byzantine Art
12	Class rescheduled due to Italian Sculpture Conference (Use this time to finish papers)
15	Later Byzantine Art
17	Islamic Art and the West
19	Migration Art
22	Carolingian and Ottonian Art

****Thanksgiving Recess****

29	Romanesque Architecture
Dec 1	Romanesque Art
3	Gothic Art in France
6	Gothic Art in Europe
8	Final Class: From Late Gothic to Early Renaissance

Final Exam Schedule

There are two periods scheduled for our final exam:

Friday, December 10, 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 14, 8:30 a.m.

Students may attend either session (but not both).

- Students should prepare for each class by reading the appropriate chapters in Gardner and any supplemental readings assigned.
- Note that any cancelled classes will be made up by attending scheduled lectures. Dates and times will be provided.
- Papers are due during the week of November 8-12. There will be no further extensions for any reason whatsoever.

Exam Instructions, Art 231

Each exam will consist of three parts:

- Identification and Discussion of Known Works (3)

A slide 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)

A slide 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 slides 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 final exam will differ from previous exams by way of a final synthetic question rather than a final comparison. Students will receive a sheet of sample study questions on the final day of class.

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 original work of art in the Memphis Brooks Museum.

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.

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 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.
- 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 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 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, 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. Burrow library has access to several excellent electronic databases as well as book catalogues. However, only ONE citation for this paper may be from an electronic source (CD-ROM, Internet, etc.). Also 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.

Library Resources: Burrow 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 Burrow library, though it does not count as one of your required citations.

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. 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 Friday, November 12.