

Assignment 2

Please choose one of the following essay prompts.

Since the Renaissance, artists have regularly painted self-portraits. Choose two artist self-portraits in any media to compare and contrast using a biographic approach, as demonstrated in Jones' article, to understand their meaning. What do the details of the artist's life reveal about the work? How did the important events of the artist's life influence their choice in subject matter, and the manner in which they expressed their subject? What associations or themes do we identify in the work that may be associated with this personal context or the artist's biography?

Consider how the artists chose to represent themselves, and what larger meaning is conveyed about their profession through their representational choices. How are the artists responding to the philosophical and political concerns of their ages? What kind of world view do their portraits convey?

- or -

Compare the three paintings of the Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci (1495 - 1498), Veronese (1573), and Jacopo Tintoretto (1592 - 1594). How are the paintings similar, and how do they differ? Discuss elements in each work that reflect the period and place in which they were made. For example, discuss the artist's representational strategies – what choices does each artist make to tell the well known story in an interesting and innovative manner that simultaneously conveys their own personal style while also rendering a scene that distinctly characterizes their particular time and place. What historical events or important philosophical ideas influenced the artist's choices? What aspect of the scene did the artist highlight or center on? How did the artist describe their intentions? Was the work well received once unveiled? Why or why not?

- or -

Use a feminist approach to compare and contrast a work by a female and a male artist from the High Renaissance, Baroque period, or Age of Enlightenment. Consider who the artist assumes the viewer of the work to be, and from whom's perspective the action or story unfolds. Who is the main subject, and what significance does their gender play in understanding the meaning of the work? What subjects exhibit power in the work, and how is that power understood (for example, logical, rebellious, odd, or conforming)? Do all subjects depicted in the work exhibit agency (power, freedom of choice, action)? Is there a gender division in the display of authority and/or action as depicted? Consider whether the work reinforces or critically evaluates gender stereotypes? Finally, discuss how the works were received, and whether they were equally valued in their time.