



Artemisia Gentileschi, *Allegory of Rhetoric*, 1650.

Art historical scholarship is rooted in analytic and theoretical writing. In keeping with this foundation, we will begin a writing practice that makes mindful use of art historical methodologies and that builds a critical thinking muscle through the writing of essays that will convey important information and understandings as they apply to key works of art discussed in class, reading assignments, and other materials. You will be offered multiple assignments to choose from that will ask you to write visual analyses of specific works of art, or develop a critical response to readings on relevant works and art historical issues.

Marjorie Munsterberg's website, [writingaboutart.org](http://writingaboutart.org) and Laurie Schneider Adam's "Approaches to Art" from *Looking at Art* at, <http://www.theslideprojector.com/pdffiles/approachestoart.pdf> are resources that should help you significantly with your writing assignments in this class.

### Essay Checklist

To earn full credit on writing assignments, essays should:

- Be 4 to 5 pages, double-spaced, 12 pt. font, and 1" margins on all sides;
- Identify works of art with artistic attribution, underlined or *italicized* titles, and dates (in that order), when possible;
- Attempt to address most questions from the essay prompt;
- Include two or more properly formatted Chicago Manual of Style footnote citations to credible, scholarly, college level materials. (Works of art should not be cited unless a point is being made concerning different versions or installations of the work.);
- Present a clear thesis and offer visual and/or scholarly evidence to support your claims; and
- Offer personal insights that demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the subject & reading materials.

Your instructor is always interested in proposals for subjects to write about. If the given writing prompts do not spark your interests, please feel free to propose alternative questions to consider at least one week before the assignment due date.

### **Class Participation**

Students may earn up to 50 participation points by completing two of the following activities:

- Actively and consistently contributing to in-class discussions and applying theoretical ideas to works to earn up to 25 points;

- **Reading Reports**

Due throughout the semester

Each post may earn up to 5 participation points, added together, are worth 50 points

Posts must correspond to reading due date - posts need to be made during the week the reading is due (not all at once, and not at the end of the semester)

All posts must be made by the last class meeting on December 5

Report on at least five assigned readings through posts on the class blog located on Blackboard. Posts may be made on required readings as well as optional readings posted on the class Assignments page.

Reading Reports should offer, in complete sentences and focused thought, three main points or “take aways” from the reading. Please avoid discussing how interesting the reading was - the goal is to demonstrate that you read the text. Rather, make a goal of formulating three general ideas learned while engaging with the text, and record them in your blog post. Challenge yourself to discuss points that have not been made in previous posts by other students.

- **Visual Thinker Lecture Series Report**

Due within two weeks of attendance

25 points

Please answer the questions on the Art Department’s VTLS form. Copy or photograph the form before submitting at the event. Submit your copy or photo to the instructor in class, or via Blackboard.

You are asked by the department to attend all VTLS events. However, you are only required to report on one VTLS event for credit in this class.

### **Writing Assignments**

Students may earn up to 75 points by completing four of the following assignments.

- **Infographic**

Due Wednesday, October 3

50 points

Conduct an iconographic analysis on a work of art made during the Renaissance. Identify at least five objects or subjects depicted in the work with iconographic meaning and discuss their connotative and denotative meanings. This explanation of meaning can be a few sentences, or a short paragraph. Keep in mind that your intention is to unpack the meaning of the work in a clear, concise graphic that helps the viewer understand it better. You may find James Hall’s *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* useful. In addition, sources like your textbook often provide interpretations of symbols used in works.

Next, create an infographic that combines an image of the entire work with the explanations of the iconographic meaning you have written. You may want to include smaller, magnified details of important parts of the work, or reference other works/concepts through images. Be sure to create an organized system that carefully connects visual with textual information and meaning.

Finally the infographic should include a summarization (at least two paragraphs) considering the work's historical context, style, and artist. This summary can be used to introduce the work, to outline various interpretations, or set the stage for the work's making. Importantly, the infographic should include at least two CMS footnote citations from different credible, scholarly sources. These footnotes need to appear alongside your infographic (on the front, if you're making a poster, or as End Notes if you're creating a Powerpoint).

| Infographic Grading Rubric                              |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| Identification and explanation of iconographic elements | out of 10 points        |
| Summary text  | out of 10 points        |
| Research & CMS footnotes                                | out of 10 points        |
| Use of graphic devices to connect image & meaning       | out of 10 points        |
| Unpacking meaning of the work                           | out of 10 points        |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>out of 50 points</b> |

- **Visual Analysis 1** Due Wednesday, October 17. 50 points  
Please choose one of the following essay prompts.

Read Erwin Panofsky's *Jan Van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait*.

Choose an Early Renaissance painting and consider the artist's use of iconography, a.k.a. "disguised symbolism." Panofsky suggested a three step approach to developing an understanding of a work through its iconology: 1. Consider the practical - the general sense of the painting, where your eye is drawn, and what elements your eye returns to repeatedly; 2. Identify the objects and figures depicted in the painting, and decode their symbolic meaning by comparing them to other cultural sources (for example, paintings by the artist's contemporaries, or literary works); 3. Consider the system of symbols that the artist uses to convey meaning and what that system says about the culture that produced it. Use this three step approach to discuss the general sense of the painting, the painting's symbolic meaning, and what that system of meaning reflects about the culture (place and time period) in which the artist lived and worked. Identify at least five objects depicted in the painting and discuss the connotative and denotative meanings of those symbols. Are there other interpretations, perhaps even contrasting interpretations, of this same work? Does the work fit into a geographic and/or historical tradition, or is it unusual in its imagery? Why?

- or -

Read Jonathan Jones' *Divine Inspiration*.

During the Renaissance, and after, artists regularly painted self-portraits. Choose two artist self-portraits in any media to compare and contrast, and use a biographic approach, as demonstrated in Jones' article, to understand their meaning. When using biography as a method for interpreting meaning, consider the following: 1. What do the details of the artist's life reveal about the work?; 2. 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. What does this sense of their artistic practice convey about the role that the artist and art plays in shaping culture, responding to philosophical and political concerns, and conveying a sense of a larger world view? Do the two artists agree, or contradict, each other's world view and the cultural significance of art?

- or -

Compare the three paintings of the Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci (1495 - 1498), Jacopo Tintoretto (1592 - 1594) and Veronese (1573). 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. Consider why each artist portrayed the narrative differently. What influenced the artist's choices, and what did the artist wish to convey about this shared subject?

- **Visual Analysis 2** Due Wednesday, November 14. 50 points  
Please choose one of the following essay prompts.

Jacques-Louis David and Francisco Goya present two very different images of warfare in *Oath of the Horatii* (1786) and *Third of May 1808* (1814). Compare and contrast each of these important works being careful to establish the historical context in which each work was created. How do the works differ in regards to approach, intention and style? How are they similar? Discuss how these differences and similarities relate to the artistic movements of Neoclassicism and Romanticism. Why are practitioners of these two styles described at odds with each other? How are the stylistic and personal aims of the artists evidenced in the work?

- or -

Use a feminist approach to compare and contrast a work by a female and a male Baroque artist. 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 work was received, and whether the two works were equally valued in their time.

- or -

Read the first chapter in John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*) and answer the following.

Consider Frans Hals' *Regentesses of the Old Men's Alms House* (1664) and *Regents of the Old Men's Alms House* (1664) as they are discussed by Berger. Do you feel that the artist has presented his sitters in a favorable or unfavorable manner? Relate these works to Hals' earlier group portrait, *Officers of the Haarlem Militia Company of Saint Adrian* (1627). How has the artist's approach and intention changed in the later work? What might have motivated the artist to portray his subjects favorably or unfavorably? What is "mystification" and how does it relate to these works?

- or -

Why was Manet's *Luncheon on the Grass* (1863) considered so shocking to the French Academy? Use extensive visual analysis to discuss the ways in which Manet breaks with convention in this work. How does the work relate to masterpieces of the past? Identify these predecessors and consider why Manet references these particular works. How does *Luncheon on the Grass* answer Baudelaire's call for new subjects? How is the work relative to the invention of photography and a newly emerging concept of the avant-garde? Alternately, you may ask the same questions of Manet's *Olympia* (1863).

- or -

Attend a professional exhibition that includes works made between the Renaissance and early Modern periods. The Getty Museum, LACMA, the Huntington Museum, the Norton Simon Museum, and the Bowers Museum regularly feature exhibitions of Renaissance to Modern works. Plan ahead by checking museum websites to be sure that relevant works will be on view when you plan to visit. In addition, read Marjorie Munsterberg's, <http://writingaboutart.org/pages/visualdesc.html> for information on visual description and analysis.

Choose one work seen in person and develop a visual analysis. Visual description involves communicating what you see and feel when viewing a work of art to a general reader who may or may not have experienced the work themselves. For the Museum Analysis, assume that your reader has a background in art, but has not seen the work you are discussing in person. Begin your description with the basics - let your reader know the artist's name, the title of the work (being sure to distinguish the title in your text by italicizing or bolding your font), and the date the work was made. Describe what you see, drawing the viewer's attention to key elements (objects, figures, symbols). Discuss the work's subjects. What are the main components, what is represented, who is portrayed, where does the story take place? While you may want to keep your visual description concise, remember that you cannot assume that what you are seeing and experiencing is universal.

Then, craft a persuasive visual description that supports your thesis and that skillfully utilizes pertinent vocabulary. After discussing the denotative meaning of the work (it's literal features), consider the work's connotative meaning by describing the ideas that are suggested and implied by its formal properties. While this may feel descriptive, what you're focusing on in this section are the qualities and characteristics of compositional elements such as *atmospheric* perspective, *asymmetrical* balance, *irregular* rhythm, *organic* shapes, *faint* line work, and *bold* color harmonies. The handouts on design and the elements of art from the Getty Museum may be helpful. Refrain from offering iconographic, biographic, or semiotic analysis as much as possible in this essay.

Finally, connect your visual description, denotative consideration, and connotative read into an overall interpretation of the work. What meaning do the objects, subjects, and symbols suggest? What meaning is conveyed by the work's form and visual elements? What story is told, or view of the world expressed by this work of art? If the exhibition venue, layout, and interpretive materials did their work well, your final interpretation should nicely reflect the exhibition's theme and concepts.

Please include a photograph of yourself at the museum with your essay, and remember to list each contributor (if written collaboratively)

- Architectural Analysis**
Due Wednesday, December 5
50 points  
 You may choose to create either an Architectural Analysis, or a Timeline. You do not need to create both.

Find and photograph a building in your immediate environment (on campus, surrounding cities, or your home town). The building may be civic or domestic, famous or unknown, recently constructed or historic. Find images in your textbook or online of buildings constructed from the Renaissance to Modern periods that incorporate similar details, decorative programs, floor plans, construction methods, and/or architectural styles. Using your photo as the base, create a diagram that outlines the architectural elements and their references. Include descriptive text that identifies each element, explains its context, and considers its function. Please also include floorplans of at least two architectural works in your analysis.

Be creative! A diagram doesn't have to be two-dimensional - it can be a three-dimensional model, a Powerpoint presentation or a computer animation. You may choose to form small groups of two or three to collaborate on this assignment.

| <b>Architectural Analysis Grading Rubric</b>        |                  |
|---|------------------|
| Compares found and historic architecture with skill | out of 10 points |
| Includes at least five images                       | out of 10 points |
| Explanatory text demonstrates understanding         | out of 10 points |
| Well organized text and imagery                     | out of 10 points |
| CMS format and endnotes                             | out of 10 points |
| <b>Total</b>  | out of 50 points |

- Timeline** Due Wednesday, December 5      50 points  
 You may choose to create either an Architectural Analysis, or a Timeline. You do not need to create both.

Compose a timeline that includes at least ten key historical events (political, cultural and/or social) from the periods we have studied this semester - Renaissance to early Modern periods. Incorporate at least ten important works of art (properly identified) that exemplify the artistic concerns of the era. Include concise explanatory text to connect the key events with the exemplary works of art you have identified. Your timeline should incorporate both text and images. How well you organize this data is one element of your grade.

Rather than consider all of the history we have studied this semester, you may choose to focus on one relevant period. The interactive timeline, *The Top 50 Works of Modern Art* on artstory.org provides an excellent model.

Please provide a CMS Bibliography to cite at least two credible sources of information you consulted while developing your timeline. This can be printed, glued to, or follow your timeline.

| Timeline Grading Rubric   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| Includes ten key historical, political, cultural or social events | out of 10 points |
| Includes ten important properly identified works of art           | out of 10 points |
| Explanatory text demonstrates understanding                       | out of 10 points |
| Well organized text and imagery                                   | out of 10 points |
| CMS format and endnotes   | out of 10 points |
| <b>Total</b>  | out of 50 points |

- Extra Credit** Due by Wednesday, December 5      25 points

View the episode on Caravaggio, Bernini, Rembrandt, David, Turner, or Van Gogh from Simon Schama's *The Power of Art* and report on the presentation of information. How was your understanding of this artist's work either extended, confused, or maintained by viewing this documentary? What effect did the documentary have on your appreciation for the works considered during this semester? What new insights can you offer in response to the episode?

## Elements of Art

The elements of art are the building blocks used by artists to create a work of art.



**Line** is a mark with greater length than width. Lines can be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal; straight or curved; thick or thin.



**Shape** is a closed line. Shapes can be geometric, like squares and circles; or organic, like free-form or natural shapes. Shapes are flat and can express length and width.



**Forms** are three-dimensional shapes expressing length, width, and depth. Balls, cylinders, boxes, and pyramids are forms.



**Space** is the area between and around objects. The space around objects is often called negative space; negative space has shape. Space can also refer to the feeling of depth. Real space is three-dimensional; in visual art, when we create the feeling or illusion of depth, we call it space.



**Color** is light reflected off of objects. Color has three main characteristics: *hue* (the name of the color, such as red, green, blue, etc.), *value* (how light or dark it is), and *intensity* (how bright or dull it is).

- White is pure light; black is the absence of light.
- Primary colors are the only true colors (red, blue, and yellow). All other colors are mixes of primary colors.
- Secondary colors are two primary colors mixed together (green, orange, violet).
- Intermediate colors, sometimes called tertiary colors, are made by mixing a primary and secondary color together. Some examples of intermediate colors are yellow green, blue green, and blue violet.
- Complementary colors are located directly across from each other on the *color wheel* (an arrangement of colors along a circular diagram to show how they are related to one another). Complementary pairs contrast because they share no common colors. For example, red and green are complements, because green is made of blue and yellow. When complementary colors are mixed together, they neutralize each other to make brown.



**Texture** is the surface quality that can be seen and felt. Textures can be rough or smooth, soft or hard. Textures do not always feel the way they look; for example, a drawing of a porcupine may look prickly, but if you touch the drawing, the paper is still smooth.

## Principles of Design

The principles of design describe the ways that artists use the elements of art in a work of art.



**Balance** is the distribution of the visual weight of objects, colors, texture, and space. If the design was a scale, these elements should be balanced to make a design feel stable. In symmetrical balance, the elements used on one side of the design are similar to those on the other side; in asymmetrical balance, the sides are different but still look balanced. In radial balance, the elements are arranged around a central point and may be similar.



**Emphasis** is the part of the design that catches the viewer's attention. Usually the artist will make one area stand out by contrasting it with other areas. The area could be different in size, color, texture, shape, etc.



**Movement** is the path the viewer's eye takes through the work of art, often to focal areas. Such movement can be directed along lines, edges, shape, and color within the work of art.



**Pattern** is the repeating of an object or symbol all over the work of art.



**Repetition** works with pattern to make the work of art seem active. The repetition of elements of design creates unity within the work of art.



**Proportion** is the feeling of unity created when all parts (sizes, amounts, or number) relate well with each other. When drawing the human figure, proportion can refer to the size of the head compared to the rest of the body.



**Rhythm** is created when one or more elements of design are used repeatedly to create a feeling of organized movement. Rhythm creates a mood like music or dancing. To keep rhythm exciting and active, variety is essential.



**Variety** is the use of several elements of design to hold the viewer's attention and to guide the viewer's eye through and around the work of art.



**Unity** is the feeling of harmony between all parts of the work of art, which creates a sense of completeness.

| <b>Grading Rubric</b>                     |  |   |  |  |
|---|--|---|--|--|
|   | <b>Deficient<br/>0 - 2 points</b>  | <b>Minimal/Basic<br/>3 - 4 points</b>   | <b>Proficient<br/>5 - 7 points</b>   | <b>Advanced<br/>8 - 10 points</b>  |
| <b>Content and Development</b>            | Art not identified and/or unacceptable choice of artwork. Student did not follow assignment guidelines.  | Art not fully identified: Title; culture; date. Content is incomplete. Utility of analyzing formal characteristics for understanding artwork is unclear.                                | Art fully identified: Title; culture; date. Utility of analyzing formal characteristics for understanding artwork is expressed.  | Art fully identified: Title; culture; date. Utility of analyzing formal characteristics for understanding artwork is clear.  |
| <b>Analysis</b>                           | Makes inaccurate statements. Does not address visual images/objects.   | Analysis tends to be simplistic, superficial, or implausible. Formal description included but vague. Describes visual images/objects but without formal/ semiotic/ contextual analysis. | Analysis is plausible and begins to account for ambiguity or contradictory evidence. Clear formal description of art to support analysis and references course content. Describes visual images/objects and provides a plausible formal/semiotic/ contextual analysis of them. | Analysis is clear, nuanced, and sophisticated. Clear and well-integrated formal description of art connects to analysis and references course content. Formal/ semiotic / contextual analysis of visual images/ objects is integral to the thesis. |
| <b>Organization of argument</b>           | No discernible organization; minimal or faulty transitions. Student either did not submit the assignment or was unable to demonstrate enough knowledge to receive credit for the assignment. | Organization and structure detract from the message of the writer. Handout or other documentation (if required) incomplete. Paragraphs are disjointed and lack transition.              | Structure is mostly clear and easy to follow. Handout or other documentation (if required) is completed. Paragraph transitions present.  | Structure of the paper is clear and easy to follow. Handout or other documentation (if required) is thoughtfully completed. Paragraph transitions are logical.   |
| <b>Vocabulary</b>                         | Vocabulary is not appropriate to the subject.  | Vocabulary choices are clear but remain prosaic and banal. Vocabulary is appropriate to the subject, but lacks precision.   | Vocabulary choices enhance presentation's effectiveness. Uses art historical terms effectively and treats visual complexity appropriately.   | Vocabulary is sophisticated and appropriate to the subject.  |
| <b>Grammar, punctuation, and spelling</b> | Paper contains numerous grammatical, punctuation, and spelling errors. Language uses jargon or conversational tone.  | Paper contains grammatical, punctuation and spelling errors. Language lacks clarity or includes the use of some jargon or conversational tone.  | Rules of grammar, usage, and punctuation are followed; spelling is correct. Language is clear; sentences display varied structure.   | Rules of grammar, usage, and punctuation are followed; spelling is correct. Language is clear and precise; sentences display consistently strong, varied structure.  |

| <b>AH 201 Point Tally</b>                        |                                      |                  |                   |
|--|--------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Class Participation 10%</b><br>Two of these:  | Contributions to conversation        | out of 25 points | 50 points         |
|  | Voluntary report on assigned reading | out of 25 points |                   |
|  | Visual Thinker Lecture series        | out of 25 points |                   |
| <b>Writing Assignments 60%</b><br>Four of these: | Visual Analysis 1                    | out of 75 points | 300 points        |
|  | Visual Analysis 2                    | out of 75 points |                   |
|  | Museum Analysis                      | out of 75 points |                   |
|  | Architectural Analysis               | out of 75 points |                   |
|  | Timeline                             | out of 75 points |                   |
| <b>Exams 30%</b>                                 | Exam 1                               | out of 50 points | 150 points        |
|  | Exam 2                               | out of 50 points |                   |
|  | Socratic Circle Final Exam           | out of 50 points |                   |
| <b>Sub Total</b>                                 |                                      |                  |                   |
| Extra Credit                                     |                                      |                  | max 25 points     |
| <b>Total</b>                                     |                                      |                  | out of 500 points |

