

Art 195

Name _____

Art & Text

Due Date _____

You earned _____ out of 50 possible points.

Paper 2 Formal Analysis

Formal Analysis = a basic feature of art historical writing, formal analysis addresses an artwork's formal elements, such as color, line, texture, composition, size, and media. Formal analysis begins with ekphrasis, the practice of describing a work in rich detail. 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 this paper, 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 title of the work (being sure to distinguish the title in your text by italicizing or bolding your font), the artist's name, and the date the work was made.

However, formal analysis does not end at description. Rather, it is an analysis because it utilizes descriptive observation in service of interpretations of meaning.

Observe the work's physical properties. Take precise notes as you takes in the whole work, and its details. Consider the work's composition, colors, textures, size, space, and other physical properties of the work - how was it made, what materials were used to create it, what techniques were employed to build the form. Go beyond your first impressions.

Next, **consider the subject** of the work - what are the main components, what is represented, who is portrayed, where is the scene set? While you may want to keep your description concise, remember that you cannot assume that what you are seeing / experiencing is universal. In other words, be careful not to make assumptions! Instead, use Barthes' *Rhetoric of the Image* as a guide for deconstructing and uncovering meaning produced by the particular configuration of signs within your work of art. Employing the vocabulary from Hall Chapters 1 & 2, and incorporating your analysis of some of the conceptual and visual structures (as "signs") that we covered in Chapters 3 & 4, perform what is described as "close read" of the work of art.

Remember, the denotative organization of the work of art is its formal analysis, while the connotative analysis of these visual structures / signs (the denotative elements), identify semiotic codes and offer more extensive interpretation of their meanings, including conflicting, polysemic interpretations.

Make a claim that summarizes your observations. You might bring your observations on the physical properties of the work together with your semiotic analysis of its subject by reflecting on the work's overall organization. Another strategy could be to consider how the formal properties of the work encourage particular interpretations. A third kind of claim that art historians write are comparisons between one or more related works of art. When discussing your claim, the goal is to explain the meaning of the work from one perspective (either your own, or a popularly held perspective).

Support your claim with visual details. Drawing from your in depth observation of the work, focus your discussion on the formal properties that support your claim. Discuss why these elements are significant to your claim and the ultimate meaning conveyed by the work. Conduct research to find expert interpretations that support your claims, being sure to properly cite your sources using Chicago Manual of Style footnotes as outlined in Barnett's *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*, pages 334 - 344.

Visual Analysis Grading Rubric		
Visual Description / Ekphrasis of work		
Use of Hall terminology		out of 5 points
Denotative meaning		out of 5 points
Subject		out of 5 points
How does the work develop meaning?		
Articulation and explanation of claim		out of 10 points
Connotative meaning		out of 5 points
Formal analysis		out of 5 points
Research that supports claim		out of 5 points
Use of Chicago Manual of Style		
Demonstration of learning and "close read" of a work of art		out of 10 points
		out of 50 points

Suggested Works of Art to Consider:

Artemisia Gentileschi, *Judith and Maidservant Slaying Holofernes*, c. 1620.

Francisco de Goya, *Third of May, 1808*, 1814.

Theodore Gericault, *Raft of the Medusa*, 1818 - 1819.

Hokusai, *The Great Wave Off Kanagawa*, 1829 - 1832.

Manet, *Bar at the Folies Bergere*, 1882.

Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes D'Alger (O.J.)*, 1907.

Edward Weston, *Pepper #30*, 1930.

Dorothea Lange, *Migrant Mother, Nipomo, CA*, 1936.

Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*, 1937.

Robert Frank, *Trolley, New Orleans*, 1955.

Alice Neel, *Self-Portrait*, 1980.

Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Charles the First*, 1982.

Robert Mapplethorpe, *Charles*, 1985.

David Salle, *Old Bottles*, 1995.

Jenny Saville, *Reverse*, 2000 - 2002.