

## Essay 1 Using Historical Context to Understand Meaning

This semester you will build a writing practice that makes mindful use of the art historical methodologies, and develops your critical thinking and research skills. Each essay requires at least two footnote citations in Chicago Manual of Style (no bibliography) from two different, credible sources originating on paper.

While there is no page or word requirement, please refer to the the rubrics in your syllabus and on Blackboard for detailed descriptions of the grading metrics that will be used to evaluate your work. In addition, consider the following criteria:

- An average essay should be comprised of no less than four paragraphs considering the questions posed;
- An above average essay will build upon the questions posed with additional insights and information that are developed through the intentional use of art historical methodologies. A clear position will be apparent, and sources will seek to provide evidence that supports your claims.
- An exceptional essay will achieve the above while applying the art historical methods with skill.

### CMS Footnote Citation Format

• Book

• <sup>1</sup> Author's Name, *Title* (Place of Publication: Publisher, date), page numbers.

• Article

• <sup>2</sup> Author's Name, "Article Title," *Journal Title* (date): page numbers.

• Article in Online Journal

• <sup>3</sup> Author's Name, "Article Title," *Journal Title* Volume, number (date): page numbers, access date, URL or doi.

• Website

• <sup>4</sup> "Page Title," *Website Title*, date last modified, URL.

Read *Were the First Artists Mostly Women?* and consider either of the following.

What historical evidence suggests that *The Woman of Willendorf*, and other figurines like it, may have been crafted by a woman? Why do we customarily assume that artwork from any period was made by a male artist? When we assume that *The Woman of Willendorf* was made by a heterosexual male, what interpretations do we easily leap to? When we suppose that the work was made by a woman, do we arrive at alternative interpretations? What physical clues indicate that this sculpture represents a prehistoric concept of womanhood, the power of her reproductive system, and/or reverence for womanliness rather than a specific individual woman?

- or -

Why was this embroidered work created? Who likely commissioned the piece, and what historical events does it document? Weigh the evidence and general logic behind each argument - that *The Bayeux Tapestry* was created (or at least designed) by a group of rare male embroiderers, and that the work was entirely created by female Opus Anglicanum embroiderers. There is a tendency in art history to describe works made by men as "art" and things made by women as "craft." Consider the distinction between the two categories and how it relates to Late Medieval and Renaissance prohibitions of women's memberships in guilds as a mechanism of sexism. Finally, discuss how the debate on the gender of the artists who crafted The Bayeux Tapestry reflects the patriarchal order in western civilization.