

Essay 3
Using Formalism and Feminist Analysis to Understand Meaning

Read in *Reclaiming Female Agency*, “Depoliticizing Women: Female Agency, the French Revolution, and the Art of Boucher and David” and consider either Edmonia Lewis’s *Death of Cleopatra* (1876), Angelica Kauffmann’s *Cornelia Pointing to Her Children as Her Treasures* (c. 1785), or Paula Modersohn-Becker’s *Kneeling Mother and Child* (1906) relative to the argument developed in the essay.

Each of these artworks considers mythic or historic characters that convey so-called universal feminine themes. Identify the mythic type and discuss the feminine theme that is cultural understood and conveyed in the work. Does the woman artist comply to cultural measures of womanhood in her handling of the subject? Does the woman artist offer any counter to prevailing notions of womanhood in the work? Utilize formal description and visual analysis to identify material evidence that supports your position(s). Consider the position of women at the time, and within the culture, that the work was made in. Under what circumstances did the woman artist either comply or counter the cultural demands of womanhood? What did the artist risk or gain in her approach?

**Essays must cite two credible sources of information originating on paper in Chicago Manual of Style Footnotes (no Bibliography)