

**Methodology Worksheet 3**

Using Semiotics and Marxism as a Method

Semiotics -identifies symbols in a work, and considers why they mean what they mean to interpret meaning

Marxism - considers economic factors related to Marx's theory of class and power to interpret meaning

Read the explanation of semiotics and examples of its use to interpret images at, <http://grammar.about.com/od/rs/g/semioticsterm.htm>.

Semiotics as a method begins with structuralism, which is a philosophical approach that analyzes society by looking at cultural phenomena, particularly signs, that have hidden underlying meanings that can be decoded. Semiotics is the study of signs, and why they mean what they mean. It relates to an iconographic approach, but differs in that it goes beyond identifying symbols and understanding their meaning in context and considers socio-cultural context. When using a semiotic approach, the viewer of a work deconstructs the meaning of signs within written language, speech, gestures, objects, etc.

Find a work made by a female artist. Identify two important signs in the work, and define their meaning. Next, consider the sociologic and cultural context of that meaning. What message does the socio-cultural context of that sign give to the subject of the work? Did the artist use the meaning of this sign to convey a broader message concerning a woman's place in the public realm, and/ or as a professional artist?

Title, artist, date - \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Read the explanation of Marxist theory as it relates to art at [anarthistoricalimpression.blogspot.com/2012/12/a-quick-discussion-on-marxism-and-art.html](http://anarthistoricalimpression.blogspot.com/2012/12/a-quick-discussion-on-marxism-and-art.html).



Marxism is the ideological and socioeconomic theory developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels including the belief that the struggle between social classes is a major force in history and that there should eventually be a society in which there are no classes. The fundamental ideology of communism, it holds that all people are entitled to enjoy the fruits of their labour but are prevented from doing so in a capitalist economic

system, which divides society into two classes: non-owning workers and non-working owners. Marx called the resulting situation "alienation," and he said that when the workers repossessed the fruits of their labour, alienation would be overcome and class divisions would cease. The Marxist theory of history posits class struggle as history's driving force, and sees capitalism as the most recent and most critical historical stage because at this stage the proletariat will at last arise united.

Find a work made by a female artist. What socio-economic classes are represented in the work? What visual clues convey this class distinction? Who would the artist have assumed would be the viewer of this work? What message would this work have conveyed to the viewer concerning class? What social class was the artist? Did her class have anything to do with her profession?

Title, artist, date - \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---