

History of Art: Prehistory to the Modern Era
Fall 2019

Final essay assignment

Due: **Monday, December 9.**

Length: **5 pages [maximum], double-spaced.**

Chose one object (painting, sculpture, graphic work; architectural structure) in a New York collection, and discuss your object in a carefully organized, carefully argued five-page essay. You may choose any object that is currently on view in an area collection, or any historically significant building that you may visit in person. See page two of this handout for a list of area museums and collections. You should choose an object that dates before 1980.

In your essay, you must cite at least three legitimate sources other than your textbook. These citations must come from scholarly books or peer-reviewed journals, and they may consist of empirical, theoretical, or primary source information. You will find an extensive bibliography at the end of your textbook, and at the Stevens library you may avail yourself of JSTOR, a scholarly indexing service for articles and essays. We can also work with you on finding research materials.

Provide a careful formal analysis (the task of the first two writing assignments) of your object before discussing the resources you have selected. In doing so, be sure to use the most appropriate terminology and vocabulary. You should aim to demonstrate your mastery of the course material. What access do your chosen sources provide you to the object ?

Be sure to formulate a clear thesis, and to complete your essay with the aim of convincing your reader of your thesis. Your introductory paragraph should include your thesis statement and a comment or two regarding the importance of your investigation: Why have you written your essay ? Why did this object seem important ? Here, you should draw into consideration the general material from your textbook and/or class lectures and discussions.

Consider the following:

Not a thesis statement

The contemporary art world is a mess !!

Thesis statement

Since the 1950s, the art world experienced a number of upheavals given internationalism, global capitalism, and powerful shifts in cultural relations.

With the second, the reader understands that your essay will develop a discussion of those three key points. Thus, it is termed a thesis statement. The first is merely a conversation starter, and an uninteresting one at that.

You may, of course, take a critical view of your sources and argue against them in the body of your paper. Keep in mind that your essay will attempt an intervention in the discourses that already define your object, be those museum labels, exhibition installations, or scholarly writing.

As is always the case, be sure to carefully footnote all citations.

Do not fail to paginate or to staple the pages of your essay together.

Include clear copies or downloaded images for your primary object and for any comparative material.

Be sure to include a descriptive title for your essay.

Museums and Collections in the New York Area

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, including The Cloisters

The Museum of Modern Art

The Whitney Museum of American Art

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

The Frick Collection

The Morgan Library

The Jewish Museum

El Museo del Barrio

The Museum of the City of New York – selected exhibitions; please check with instructor.

The New York Historical Society - selected exhibitions; please check with instructor.

The Brooklyn Museum of Art

The Newark Museum

The New York Hispanic Society – they hold a painting by Francisco Goya, *Portrait of the Duchess of Alba*, 1797