

**Course Information:** The Art of Everyday Life (AH 232) – Colorado College

Professor Rebecca Tucker

The Golden Age of Holland is famous as a time of innovation – 17<sup>th</sup>-century Dutch burghers witnessed the invention of the microscope, the first street lights and the first stock market crash, as well as a new style of art. This course focuses on the new and highly popular subject in Dutch art known as genre painting - images of everyday life. In this period of remarkable economic, cultural, and political growth, artists in the Netherlands created a new type of subject matter that appeared to document their everyday lives. Many artists devoted themselves to producing myriad images dealing with common subjects such as parties, concerts, love making, domestic life, children, brawls, and sports, among others. This course will examine the work of Lucas van Leyden, Pieter Bruegel, Hals, Rembrandt, and Vermeer, among others, and the rich cultural context of Baroque Europe. We will look in detail at the production of these works, their marketing and sale, their ownership, and study the nuances of interpretation that today perplex art historians. An exhibition project will address issues in today's understanding of Old Master works.

**Type:** Exhibition  
Oral presentation  
Research paper

**Level:** 200

**Block Plan Context:**

	S	M	T	W	R	F	S
1							
2							
3							
4							

### **Important Features of the Assignment:**

- The **staging** of writing a first draft of catalogue entries, labels, and introductory texts and then a final version introduces students to **writing as a process**. Students write in a variety of forms, for a variety of audiences, from scholars to general public.
- Writing catalog entries requires students to engage in **discipline specific research**.
- Students use **critical thinking skills** by addressing existing scholarship in their research, and then writing their own analysis of individual works.
- Students develop **expertise** as a curator in designing an exhibition, and have to think about how information is conveyed visually and spatially as well as in texts.
- Students study individual works as well as larger points about context and display, which **generates interpretation and insight**.
- This **Block Plan** enabled assignment allows students to propose, design, develop, and advertise a public project in a short period of time.

### **Description of Assignment:**

*Exhibition project*

**Goal:** to develop skills in writing about art and for audiences; to address issues of exhibition design and ideology; to gain experience in organizing visual material; to learn to effectively

address the public on visual issues.

### **Description:**

The students in AH232 will curate, together, an exhibition of Dutch genre painting to be hung in Packard and exhibited to the campus at the end of the block. The steps in this process include:

1. Writing an exhibition proposal. Students will, as a group, decide upon the major themes and issues that their exhibition will address, and set up the organization of the show and the groups. The proposal, of about 2 pages, should explain the overarching concepts of the show, and what the organizers (the student curators) expect to achieve. We'll visit the Fine Arts Center to discuss how and why curators do what they do.
2. Producing a list of objects that will make up the show. The students will research their themes or topics (discussed with Rebecca during first week), and put together as a group a list of paintings to be shown. [Please note that we will need decent color reproductions of these to make images for display: students will help in the production of these.]
3. Planning the layout of the exhibition.
4. Writing catalogue entries, labels, and introductory texts. Each painting will be fully researched and investigated by a student in a catalogue entry; each student will produce 3 catalogue entries. Label text will be written based on that research. Introductory texts will be prepared by each group for the different parts of the show. Information about writing catalogue entries will be provided.
5. Preparing tours of the show. Each group should be prepared to talk about the show to the general public/campus community.
6. Hanging the show, and advertising it.

### **Schedule:**

	DUE
1. Proposal	Thursday December 4
2. List of Objects	Monday December 8
3. Visit to Museum	Tuesday December 9
4. Layout	Friday December 12
5. Draft entries, labels, and intro texts	Friday December 12
6. Tours of show ready	Tuesday December 16
7. Hanging of show	Wednesday December 17
8. final versions entries, labels, and intro texts	Wednesday December 17
9. Opening of show; tours for public	Wednesday December 17

Please note that final drafts of labels and intro texts need to be ready for hanging on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Hand in a text copy to me, and prepare another to be hung. If the group wants to prepare flyers for the show, those should be ready by Monday 15<sup>th</sup> for distribution around campus.

### **Grades**

Students will be graded on the following:

- Group participation.
- Quality of group work (proposal, hanging, intro texts, tours). If I feel that one or more persons is not contributing equally to the group work, I will grade those people individually.
- Individual catalogue entries and labels.

## **Catalogue Entries and Labels**

A catalogue entry is the text about a painting that usually accompanies an illustration of the work in a published catalogue. A few examples are attached. Catalogue entries are usually the most complete research and information on a single work available. For the purposes of this class, an entry can be thought of as a research paper on a single object. It should include discussion of the work's visual characteristics (including any condition information that is relevant), information about the current interpretations and ideas about the work, comparisons with other works that illuminate certain points, and any background information that helps us better understand the painting. The catalogue entry should have a main point, or thesis, that ties the available information about a work together.

Each student will write, individually, three catalogue entries, complete with bibliography. These will be due in draft form on Friday December 12; revised final drafts will be due Wednesday December 17.

Examples of catalogue entries are attached: from Peter Sutton, Masters of 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Dutch Genre Painting (Philadelphia, 1984), and Christopher Brown, Images of a Golden Past (London, 1984)

### **Labels**

Labels are the texts that hang on the wall next to an exhibited work. They should not be more than a single page in length. As the main line of communication with the public, the label has an important role in an exhibition. The curator students will need to decide what sorts of information their labels will convey, and in what manner. Ideally, the major points of a catalogue entry could be condensed into a succinct, interesting, and engaging label.

### **Introductory Texts**

Introductory texts are the larger panels that often hang throughout an exhibit, indicating to the audience a change in the focus or theme of the show. These can be longer than labels, but no more than 3-5 pages of text. Intro texts should be written by each group, and focus on the "big picture" of their section. Introductory texts offer a chance for the curator(s) to explain to the audience how, and why, they arranged the material in the way they did. Also, intro texts can be a place to convey important background material, such as political or other information.

As a group we will visit area museums to discuss exhibition techniques, and look at examples of hangings, labels, and introductory texts.

**Timeline:**

<b>Wk</b>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Weekend</i>
<b>1</b>					Deadline to meet with Rebecca to discuss individual themes/topics and groups.	
<b>2</b>		Visit to local Museum.		Group Proposal due.		
<b>3</b>	List of objects due.				Layout due. Draft of texts (entries, labels and intro texts) due.	
<b>4</b>		Tours ready.	Hanging. Final versions entries, labels, and intro texts due. Opening! Tours			