

**Course Information:** Art and Culture (Art 151) – Cornell College

**Type:** Paper

Professor Christina McOmer, Consulting Librarian Greg Cotton, Writing Studio Associate David Strass.

**Level:** 100

**Block Plan Context:**

The course provides a historical survey of the visual arts, with a focus on the development of the concept of the modern artist, and introduces students to basic methods used by art historians. Students explore the relationship of form and subject matter by examining a few key works in class that function as models for their research projects. This is also an introductory writing course.

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### Important Features of the Assignments:

- The **staging** and **sequencing** of the four assignments allow for directed work on essay writing, including writing shorter essays that will eventually become components of a longer research paper.
- By writing the first essay using a pre-determined list of sources, students are exposed to **discipline-specific** materials and encouraged to **critically evaluate** secondary sources.
- The writing component of the course introduces students to the special requirements of writing as an art historian and prepares them for future research in the discipline.
- The assignments also introduce beginning students to **research and writing as a process** as well as to more general academic research concepts such as the importance using **citation manuals** and **avoiding plagiarism**.
- Self-selection of topics encourages a more personal interest in the topic and **discourages plagiarism**.
- The assignments require students to utilize the **expertise** of the professor, librarian, and writing studio associate.
- The **Block Plan** facilitates frequent appointments with individual students.

### Description of Assignment:

The descriptions of the four assignments as detailed to the students are listed below.

#### Assignment A (Week 1)

This assignment focuses on the iconography or subject matter of a work of art. Each writer considers the possible meaning and/or symbolism found in the Arnolfini Wedding Portrait and the social context. Read the articles and excerpts, dating from 1934 to 1996, and incorporate references to at least five of them in your essay. Although you only need to cite five sources in your text, I would encourage you to consider how you might address portions of most of the articles in the discussion of a single theme. Include Panofsky's article from 1934 and Carroll's presentation from 1993. These two articles will provide you with a sense of how approaches to the very same work of art have changed over time. The study of these differences is called historiography.

Make sure to begin your double-spaced, five-page essay with a clear thesis statement (A thesis is not the same as a topic. You must assert a particular view based on the written sources and the painting.). Defend the thesis with specific examples from your readings that are part of paragraphs that begin with topic sentences. Your opinion must be based on the assigned material you have read. The following bibliography follows the Chicago Manual of Style. But you should format your paper according to the **MLA style** guidelines included in Aaron's *The Little, Brown Essential Handbook for Writers*. You also can find a link to the guidelines on the Cole Library homepage.

### Sources

- Bedaux, Jan Baptist. "Reality of Symbols: The Question of Disguised Symbolism in Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait." *Simiolus* 16 (1986): 5-28.
- Carrier, David. "Naturalism and Allegory in Flemish Painting." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 45 (1987): 237-49.
- Carroll, Margaret. "In the Name of God and Profit: Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait." *Representations* 44 (1993): 96-132.
- Cassidy, Brendan. "Introduction: Iconography, Texts, and Audiences." In *Critical Perspectives on Art History*. Eds. J.C. McEnroe and D.F. Pokinski, 84-90. Upper Saddle, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002.
- Harbison, Craig. "Sexuality and Social Standing in Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Double Portrait." *Renaissance Quarterly* 43 (1990): 249-91.
- Jardine, Lisa. "Prologue to Worldly Goods." In *Critical Perspectives on Art History*. Eds. J.C. McEnroe and D.F. Pokinski, 90-91. Upper Saddle, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002.
- Panofsky, Erwin. "Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait." *Burlington Magazine*. 64 (1934): 117-27. \_\_\_\_\_ . *Early Netherlandish Painting*, Vol. 3. reprint ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1971, 201-204.
- Sandler, Lucy Freeman. "The Handclasp in the Arnolfini Wedding: A Manuscript Precedent." *Art Bulletin* 66 (1984): 488-91.
- Schabacker, Peter. "*De Matrimonio ad Morganticum Contracto*: Jan van Eyck's 'Arnolfini' Portrait Reconsidered." *Art Quarterly* 35 (1972): 375-98.
- Snyder, James. "Jan van Eyck and Adam's Apple." *Art Bulletin* 58 (1976): 511-15.

There are some unusual features related to art history papers. Titles for works of art must be underlined or placed in italics. Do not use quotation marks. Also, one must attach photocopies or scanned images of the works discussed to the back of each paper. Make sure that you use only one image per page and include your **own** typed caption with artist, title, medium, and date. When you make reference to an image in the body of your text, place the figure number within parentheses before the punctuation mark (Fig. 1).

Students often wonder about when to cite sources with parenthetical notations, footnotes, or endnotes. This concern is justified, as **plagiarism** is a serious offense. I reserve the right to fail any paper, even if the plagiarism is due to carelessness alone. We are talking about the stealing of ideas in an academic context. You may want to check out [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r\\_plagiar.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html). There are three primary areas that should include some form of a citation.

1. If you use the exact works of an author, use a citation. Place the words within quotation marks.
2. If you draw upon the ideas, arguments, or observations of others, use citations.
3. If you include facts not widely available or known, use citations.

### **Assignment B (Week 2)**

This essay eventually will become part of a ten-page research paper; therefore, you will want to choose a topic with which you are fascinated. The assignment requires that you compose a three to four-page essay about the **medium** and **style** of a single work of art. You must employ a formal analysis that does not consider the subject matter or iconography. Your paper should answer the question, “**What does it look like?**” Describe how the image or structure appears. Do not panic, because even a formal analysis allows you to consider a stylistic context for the work. In other words, you may compare the form or style to that of other works of art. You should attach a bibliography and figures to the end of this paper.

The best place to begin thinking about your research paper is by looking at your textbook. General texts often introduce you to questions and controversies that may be of interest. This and related reference sources have useful bibliographies and notes that will direct you toward other material. In most cases, you will include periodical literature and books in your bibliography. Consider the holdings of the Cole Library and those articles included on EBSCO in Art Abstracts. Although there is no set number of required sources for the assignment, your paper should investigate a wide range of materials. Avoid using your textbook as a source. It may be a great reference guide, but it is too general to be used as a bibliographic source for your research project. We will meet with the consulting librarian to discuss how to begin your research project as a class, but an individual appointment should be scheduled during the second week of class.

The instructions for Assignment A apply here as well, except for one requirement. Instead of using MLA style guidelines, I would like for you to use those listed in the **Chicago Manual of Style** as guidelines for Assignments B-D. The format appears in the Aaron text, and a website link is available on the Cole Library homepage.

### **Assignment C (Week 3)**

This five to six-page paper finally addresses the iconography of a single work of art. For this paper, you should avoid lengthy discussions of the style and medium. You may want to compare the work to those of others using the same subject matter or theme. This is the moment where you introduce your ideas about the meaning or purpose behind the work. Your paper will answer the question, “**What does it represent?**” Place the work within the historical context in which it was produced. Do not forget to privilege **primary sources** over secondary ones. Avoid lengthy quotes from secondary sources, but continue to follow the stylistic guidelines that you employed for Assignment B for citations. Omit biographical material unless directly relevant to your thesis.

### **Assignment D (Week 4)**

This double-spaced, ten to twelve-page paper combines Assignments B and C under a single thesis that includes an introduction that maps out the relationship between the topics of your earlier papers that addressed style and iconography (form and content). This means that you will revise both essays as part of this larger and more complex research project. You will need to write a new introduction, draw stronger connections between the two parts of the paper, and write a new conclusion. The paper should begin with a description of the work. Your goal will be to demonstrate how style and iconography are interrelated. In other words, the question you will be answering with this paper is “**Why does it look the way it does?**” The two approaches, when combined, will lead the viewer toward a greater understanding of the object under consideration. Your completed paper will consist of four parts in the following sequence: text, endnotes, bibliography, and illustrations.

**Timeline:**

<b>Wk</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Weekend</b>
<b>1</b>		<i>Lecture</i>  Writing Studio workshop: reading skills. <sup>1</sup>	<i>Lecture</i>  Writing Studio workshop: developing a thesis.	<i>Lecture</i>  Writing Studio workshop: citing sources.	<i>Lecture</i>  Assignment A due.	
<b>2</b>	<i>Lecture</i>  Instruction session with librarian on locating and evaluating sources. <sup>2</sup>	<i>Lecture</i>  Writing Studio workshop: choosing a topic.	<i>Midterm</i>  <i>Lecture</i>	<i>Lecture</i>  Writing Studio workshop: description / drafts.	<i>Lecture</i>  Assignment B due.	
<b>3</b>	<i>Lecture</i>	<i>Lecture</i>	<i>Lecture</i>  Writing Studio workshop: meaning / drafts.	<i>Lecture</i>  Assignment C due.	<i>Final</i>  Individual appointments with McOmer.	
<b>4</b>	Writing Studio workshop: revising paper.  Individual appointments with McOmer or Strass.	Individual appointments with McOmer or Strass.	Assignment D due.			

<sup>1</sup> Workshops last approximately one hour.

<sup>2</sup> Students also schedule individual appointments with the consulting librarian.

