

INTRODUCTION TO ART HISTORICAL RESEARCH

“THE BIBLIOGRAPHY PROJECT”

This project will introduce you to library services and help you develop an effective plan for conducting research in your art history courses, but the basic ideas will be useful in other classes as well. As you begin this project, keep in mind the following:

- The historian is a detective searching for the buried clues of the past. The search is part of the fun as well as the challenge. In any art history class, the quality of your research—that search for clues—will count for about 1/3 of your paper’s grade. Therefore, it is essential that you learn to do research effectively and thoroughly.
- Your search must have breadth and context as well as depth and specifics. One book (or even 2 or 3) is not sufficient for writing a research paper.
- Your search must have quality. Coffee-table or picture books are not sufficient. Juvenile books and those meant for the general public are not sufficient. You need to use specialized books, called scholarly monographs, for your research. Here are some characteristics of the scholarly monograph:
 - It’s written by a specialist in the field with an advanced degree, usually a Ph.D.
 - It’s written on a narrowly defined and very specific topic.
 - The author wrote the book based on original research in libraries, archives, museums, an examination of the actual work, the artist’s private papers, etc.
 - It usually relies heavily on primary sources, including the actual works, letters, journals, the writings of contemporary critics, etc.
 - It has extensive documentation, including footnotes, bibliographies (often comprehensive), archival material, entries on individual works.
 - It is published by a university press, a museum, or a specialty art publishing house (for example, Rizzoli or Thames & Hudson)
 - It is written to share exciting new research and ideas with fellow scholars. Its purpose is not to educate the general public, but in the art field there is a large educated audience for such books.
- The public library is not going to have many scholarly monographs. You need to learn to use Crumb Library. You also have borrowing privileges at Saint Lawrence and Clarkson as well as all SUNY libraries. We have a very efficient interlibrary loan system that you need to learn to use.
- Just like any detective on *CSI*, you need to track down the latest, most up-to-date information on your subject.
- However, you also need to find some of the classic works on your subject. Consider the field of physics: do today’s physicists experiment on the basics of gravity? No, they don’t need to because they accept Newton’s ideas on the subject. Similarly,

some books and articles in art history are considered classics, and we still read them even though they might have been published 50 or 500 years ago. Top-quality research papers will include a mixture of older classics and the latest ideas.

You also need to keep in mind that art history, like other scholarly disciplines, tends to go in cycles. Many articles were written on Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art in the 1960s, but few have been written on those subjects during the last 15 years. It is very important to remember this.

When you have finished this multi-stage project, you will have a comprehensive bibliography for a research paper on the cultural and historical significance of a single artwork.

For this assignment, you will first need to select an object of inquiry. You should begin by choosing an artist who worked between the Renaissance and the Second World War. You may not choose Dali, Escher, or Norman Rockwell. The artist may be a painter, sculptor, printmaker, architect, or photographer, but he or she must be a professional artist of historical importance. You might begin by browsing through your textbook for images that interest you. After you have chosen your artist, you will have to choose a specific object.

DUE DATE: _____

STAGE ONE:

Use very general research tools to identify the basic specifications of your object: who, what, where, and when. Fill in the blanks on the form handed out in class.

1. Who made it?
2. When was it made? You want to know the date and you want to determine how scholars categorize your piece: for example, Baroque, Renaissance, Impressionism.
4. What country was your artist from? If you have difficulty determining this, consult online encyclopediae like the **Columbia Encyclopedia**, located on the library's web site under "research tools."

DUE DATE: _____

STAGE TWO:

For this stage your assignment is to write a bibliography on your chosen topic as if you were going to do a research paper on that topic.

Locate resources by researching each of the topics enumerated above. Search **BEARCAT** and **WorldCat** for books. For these databases, you will need to search in more numerous and creative ways beyond keywords. One helpful trick is to search a citation you know you will use and click on one or more of the Subject links for that entry; this will quickly locate many resources on similar topics. These databases are also much larger, so you'll need to execute more precise searches, especially on the colossal WorldCat. WorldCat is also extremely helpful because it tells you whether or not Potsdam owns a particular text; for the two article databases, each "hit" features a link that allows you to determine whether you will obtain that resource at Potsdam or through Interlibrary Loan.

1. Locate scholarship on your artist. You should include at least 5 books. One can be a biography but the other four must be scholarly monographs on the artist's work.

2. Find art historical texts on the timeframe for or the art styles and movements associated with your work. You should have at least 2 books.

Lawrence Nees, Early Medieval Art. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Leah Dickerman, Dada. Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art in Association with DAP, 2005.

3. Find 2 books on the art of the country from which your artist came or the country in which he worked.

Roy C. Craven, Concise History of Indian Art. New York: Thames & Hudson, 1997.

4. Find an exhibition catalog pertaining to your artist. You need at least one catalog.

For each citation, document which resource you used (this will also be necessary if you request these materials through ILL), and include the Library of Congress catalog number below the citation.

DUE: _____

STAGE THREE:

For this stage your assignment is to write a bibliography of scholarly journal articles.

You must search the Art Index.

1. Using the internet database known as Art Index, find 4 recent articles that relate to your object or your artist. Note that these must relate in some way to your object. For example, if your painting is a Cubist work by Picasso, then you cannot use an article on Picasso and Surrealism.

The periodicals must be scholarly, not popular or even general interest.

Some scholarly journals: *The Art Bulletin*, *Art Journal*, *Art Quarterly*, *The Burlington Magazine*, *Apollo*, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, *October*, *Art History*, museum journals like *J. Paul Getty Museum Journal*, *Renaissance Studies*, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*

Periodicals NOT acceptable would include: *Smithsonian*, *National Geographic*, etc. as well as *Time*, *Rolling Stone*, *New York*.

REMEMBER THAT YOU CANNOT USE: book reviews, film reviews, exhibition reviews, auction notices, brief notes (1-3 page articles), popular magazines (*Time*, *Smithsonian*, *National Geographic*), newspapers.

Some periodicals are popular magazines with some scholarly articles: *Art in America*, *Art News*, *Artforum*. Use your judgment: How long is the article? Is it a review or an article? How specific is the title?

2. Find 2 articles on the styles, movements, or timeframes of your object.

The articles can either treat the artist's work or the general period in which the artist worked. For example, if you were doing Botticelli, you could include an article on "The Influence of Neo-Platonic Philosophy on Early Renaissance Painting" or "The Female Nude in Florentine Painting."

3. Find 3 articles published before 1980 that relate to your subject. At least one must be on the style, movement, timeframe, or nation.

As before, you should list under the citation

--the Library of Congress number for the journal; or the information for an e-journal; or ILL

--the source that you used to find the citation.

DUE: _____