



**ART160/CLAS160: Introduction to Ancient and Medieval Art of the West**  
Macalester College, Fall 2015

Instructor

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Office hours: Wednesdays 1:10-2:10pm and by appointment, Art208 (shared with Gary Erickson, right by the ceramics studio)

Class Schedule

MWF 12-1pm in AC102

Texts

You **do** need a textbook for this class, but because they are all essentially the same, in the interest of saving money, you may choose any edition of the textbook(s) below as long as it is less than 5 years old:

1. Stokstad/Cothren, *Art History: Portable Edition, Ancient Art and Medieval Art* volumes  
**or**
2. Gardner's *Art through the Ages: A Global History, Vol. 1*

**AND**

D'Alleva, *Look! The Fundamentals of Art History* (any edition is fine; also on reserve)

**AND**

Additional readings on Moodle

Course Description

I have been drawn to ancient and medieval art as long as I can remember, largely because artwork is a primary remnant of these earlier civilizations and is essential to understanding cultural ideologies including religion, politics, economics and gender and class structures. Analyzing artworks allows us to engage with the past as part of our shared cultural heritage and consider the diverse contexts and purposes for which art was created and used (Many of which resonate today). We will also consider the later history of objects and how alteration and/or appropriation of objects and ideas can inform our understanding of multiple eras and cultures.

Art/Clas 160 is designed to introduce students to the discipline of Art History and ways of looking at and interpreting art and architecture for people and cultures who might otherwise have no voice. We will use *Writing Practice* as part of the process of thinking, discovering and interpreting through many low-stakes writing-to-learn exercises in and outside of class. These will include primarily object-based and/or comparative prompts for free-writing. Slightly more formal (but also relatively low-stakes) assignments will include exploring objects from a variety of perspectives and audiences. This course is designated as *Writing Practice (WP)*, which means that we will use *writing-to-learn* approach with regular, loosely structured, exploratory, low-stakes writing assignments to help clarify ideas, enhance critical thinking, and explore course content.

### **Goals, Expectations and Evaluation**

It is my hope that by the end of the semester, students will be competent and comfortable with how to:

- Use fundamental art historical principles including terminology, classifications, methods, materials and techniques
- “read” and critically analyze objects by observing stylistic and iconographic details, and interpret them by posing meaningful questions and critically applying multiple sources of information
- express their knowledge to others via written and oral communication

**The Class and Reading schedule** is posted on Moodle (check frequently for updates)

- For each era/culture, I will post a slide list and study guide outlining the order in which we will discuss objects. As we proceed, you should read along in the textbook(s) that you choose. I will assume that you have read the relevant textbook chapters **before** we discuss objects in class. Remember that the Slide List and Study guide will tell you what’s coming). Consult object lists on Moodle and/or talk to me if you have any questions about what/when to read. We will have periodic “textbook comparison days” for which you will be warned one class period in advance.
- Note that final due dates are listed above, but some projects will have multiple parts whose earlier due dates will be listed on the assignments and updated on Moodle.
- Please understand that you are responsible for all information on Moodle, including any date changes or additions, as well as ALL documents

### **GRADE BREAKDOWN**

**Attendance and Participation** = 10% of final grade

Your active participation in class discussions is a critical component in the success of the class. Every class, we will discuss themes, images and readings together. Consequently, you are required to be prepared and bring your notes on the reading to each class. I hope that everyone will join in our large class discussions. Ask questions. Share your thoughts. We all benefit from hearing from the diverse voices in our class.



Given that some people are more comfortable with speaking in front of a large group than others, we'll also break into small groups where all can make their ideas heard. Other components of class participation that will also be recorded but not graded individually, include (but are not limited to):

- **In-class freewriting.** I will frequently ask you to freewrite in class for a set amount of time in response to an object or idea. This is essential to thinking through ideas, problems and information and I will collect and comment upon these in order to ensure engagement and participation.
- **In-class writing,** which may include brief reflection papers, peer review or quizzes on important ideas or objects.
- **Minneapolis Institute of Art Object Response due Sept. 21** (note: this requires actually visiting the Mia)
- **Library Research info session** on Sept. 18
- **Library Manuscript visit** on Dec. 2 or 4
- **Informal Responses** (2 pages maximum). In order to encourage lively and robust discussion in class, I will ask you to prepare about 8 informal response papers over the course of the semester. This is a forum for *your* response to readings or questions presented in class and is meant to help you thoughtfully and critically and organize your thoughts before class. You might summarize the main point(s) and evidence, critique the argument, compare it to other readings, or propose new questions. Informal responses must be submitted in class on the date due for credit. *One may be skipped but none will be accepted late.* All articles will be posted on Moodle at least one week before the due date, but questions may be posed with short notice. NB: These are informal, but should always include a title and always refer to the author(s) by their last name(s).
  - These will not be “graded,” but I will hand them back with a ✓, ✓-, ✓+ to give you a sense of whether your response shows sufficient engagement with the material
- **2 Art/Archaeology Lecture Responses:** With the goal of promoting shared cultural and intellectual engagement outside of the classroom and getting a sense of original scholarly research, students are required to attend **2** archaeology or art history/cultural patrimony-related lectures during this semester and write an Informal Response to each. The options listed on Moodle and will updated throughout the semester. If you find an alternative event, please just ask me if it will work for this assignment. Additional lecture summaries may be done for extra credit. Due one week after the lectures that you choose. Please upload these to Moodle.



### Graded Assignments and Exams:

**Egyptian tomb presentations on Sept. 30 (Prelim. biblio. due 9/18) = 9% of final grade**  
This is an opportunity to apply course material to interpret a tomb not covered in class. Groups of 4-5 students will present each tomb to the class in a ppt/keynote/prezi presentation.

**Two 4-5 page papers due Oct. 13 & Nov. 12 (posted to Moodle) = 16% of final grade**  
Comparison paper: For this paper, students will compare an unknown object to pieces from class, utilizing formal and iconographic analysis.  
Contextual Paper: This paper will analyze the various contexts (creation, discovery, later/modern history) of an object discussed in class.

**Virtual Exhibition Project, due Nov. 2-Dec.11 = 15% of final grade**  
For this project, students will choose a broad theme that can incorporate multiple eras/cultures to create a virtual exhibit that will be shared with the class. The final project will include 10 objects dating before 1400 CE. Components of the assignment will be staggered over the course of the semester and will include: An exhibit proposal accompanied by an email aimed at “selling” the exhibit to a museum professional; short object labels for each, a descriptive wall text explaining the theme, and “catalogue essay” detailing the historical or thematic connection that the works have to each other, to the exhibit theme, and to this course.

**Midterm & Final exams, Oct. 21 (in class) & Dec. 15 (8-10am) = 50% of final grade**  
These slide exams provide the opportunity to synthesize the knowledge of formal and contextual characteristics of the art we have discussed in class. Exams will include, short IDs, comparisons and unknowns.

### FINAL (BUT IMPORTANT) THOUGHTS:

Please see the document on Moodle entitled “Syllabus Rules and Details” for more important information and “rules.” Two of note: **The use of electronic devices is not permitted in the classroom**, unless you need special accommodations. If this is the case, please see me as soon as possible so that I can help you succeed in this class. Similarly, I want to make my classroom as open and comfortable as possible for all students to be themselves regardless of race, gender or any other things that I can’t think of as I write this. Please do not hesitate to see me with any concerns about these issues or others!

