

Paper Abstract Guidelines

Generally an abstract provides a synopsis (before you've written your paper!) of what you plan to demonstrate in your paper, how you will do it, and what your conclusions will be. Abstracts are usually limited in length to approximately 2 pages or less. Since you haven't written your papers yet, here are some guidelines to help with the abstract:

1. Which topic/artist have you chosen? Indicate the larger topic area and the more specific focus you will take. For example, if your topic is the investigation of a significant work of art or monument, which one did you choose and why? Why is this an important topic? Your reason may be personal as well as historic.

2. Thesis statement: In order to have a thesis statement, you must ask a question. Abstracts tell the reader what question you want to answer and generally indicate what the answer will be or what you intend to prove. Some papers are not guided by thesis statements. These are usually papers which are examining different responses and/or interpretations of some issue or work. In this case, the thesis statement may be replaced by a general statement describing the major points of view to be examined in the paper.

3. How will you develop the paper? What background or context do you need to examine in order to answer your main question? Some of the other questions to answer include: What questions are you going to answer, what works will you compare, what techniques will you use? Note that you may not have the answers to your questions at this time, but having the questions is an important step in planning the paper.

4a. History of Photography papers: an important part of your paper will consist of your analysis of the photographer's work in general plus an analysis of the work you plan to recreate. You should also provide an overview of the photographer's body of work and your outline/plan should indicate some organization to this. It is also important to indicate which work or works you've chosen and provide some reasons for your choice. How will you do the recreation? If your artist works with large installations and you can't replicate one, what adaptations will you make?

4b. American Art and Architecture: because your projects are group projects, you need to provide an indication of how you plan to divide the work and how it will come together as a cohesive paper. If there are 3 people in your group, what will each paper consist of? For this stage, you should have a paragraph plan or individual outline for each of the component parts.

Another important part of your project is the visual material. What will you be preparing for the presentation: a model? Detailed drawings? Photographs taken by members of the group? Be specific.

5. Annotated Bibliography: for each resource, you should indicate your reason for using it. Some of your resources are primarily used for illustrative material, some provide documentation of technical issues, some relate to the context and so on. Generally, one or two

sentences are sufficient to identify the key value and reliability of your source.

I recommend having at least 5 entries at this point. They may be journal articles (from refereed journals) and/or books. The journals may be electronic – in other words, you access the articles online but the journals are published journals, not web sites. Some web sites will be acceptable, primarily for contemporary photographers, but in all cases, you should include the url and indicate some research you've done to determine that the web site is reliable. Reliable web sites have an author with appropriate training or degrees; gallery web sites are not reliable other than as sources of visual material.

For American Art & Arch. groups, each person will undoubtedly be using different resources. Combine the annotations with the individual paper break-downs so we can see who is reading what and why.

I am not grading these on writing quality and I expect that in some cases you won't know the answers yet. But I also expect to see evidence of serious consideration of these questions and your overall topic – enough consideration to enable me to give you feedback. 15 points towards your overall class grade plus the opportunity to find out that you're on the right track with your papers and projects.

Some of you are making good progress already and would like to submit drafts. Think of the abstract as a preliminary draft and then give me a complete draft when it's complete.

Deadlines:

Abstract: no later than November 9 at noon

Drafts, if desired: Nov. 30 (Amer. Art and Arch: you probably don't need a draft since your class presentation will provide feedback before completion of the project)