**Museum Visit: EXTRA CREDIT ASSIGNMENT**

Most museums now have very complete web sites which can help you plan your trip before you get there. The National Gallery of Art, in D.C., has online “tours” with general explanatory information, lists of paintings in the collection to make up a tour, and material about some of the specific paintings. Other museums do not have “tours” but they do provide an overview of special exhibitions and their permanent collections. Below I’ve identified some of the current shows at museums in NYC and Washington DC which would be good to visit. Those of you who plan to go on the March 29 bus trip, you must buy your ticket from the Art Department office in Powell 205. Do it as soon as possible – the seats do sell out.

**National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.:** “Bronze and Boxwood”: if you’re interested in sculpture, visit this exhibition. Recommended for students in **ART216**.

“Crosscurrents: American and European Masterpieces from the Permanent Collection”: the focus of this show is late 18th cent. and early 19th century art, from the period of Romanticism and from the museum’s permanent collection. Recommended for students in **ART216**.

**also in D. C.: Smithsonian American Museum of Art:** the current exhibition, “Color as Field: American Painting, 1950-1975”: recommended for students in **ART428**

**National Museum of Women in the Arts**, also in D.C.: two shows, one of the work of Paula Rego and the other, the work of Louise Nevelson, recommended for students in **ART428**

**in NYC: Metropolitan Museum**: exhibition on “Poussin and the Landscape” – recommended for students in **ART216**;

“Jasper Johns’ Greys”: recommended for **ART428**;

newly reopened 19th and early 20th century galleries: recommended for both classes; the show on Courbet: recommended for students in **ART216**

**MoMA**: anything, the current show is also related to color, with a focus on late 20th century artists, recommended for **ART428**

**Whitney**: the Biennial show of contemporary art: recommended for everyone!

**Boston Museum of Fine Art**: the contemporary art collection, recommended for **ART428**

**Your assignment:**
One of the goals of your trip is to see art works in real life and to recognize the difference between the experience of seeing something up close and first hand versus a reproduction in a book or on a web site. A second goal is to see works which are related, either by artist, subject matter, or period, and recognize how seeing works in a larger context than one picture at a time adds or shapes your understanding of a single work. Your third goal is extra credit, and to do this, you need to write an essay.

**General guidelines:**
Your work must be typed, approximately 1500 word count. You should include any additional materials, your personal and hand-made maps of the galleries you visit, photographs you take, and any notes you took in the gallery, in a folder with your essay. All extra credit museum assignments are due no later than **April 8**.
Option 1. Your personal tour (works best for the National Gallery of Art, the Metropolitan Museum, and the Boston MFA)

Look at one of the National Gallery of Art “online tours” to see how they do it and then plan your own. Your tour should have a theme, it should include either a work we've studied in class or an artist we've studied or relate to a type of art we've studied.

Page one of your essay should contain a list of the artists and art works you choose to visit. For each art work, give the artist's name, the title of the work, the date, its materials and dimensions (this should be noted in the wall label), and its location in the museum (museums usually have numbered or named galleries. Which gallery is your work in? Which wall is it on?). Ideally, your works will be located in one or two galleries. Draw a floor plan of these galleries and indicate the location of your art works. If you have a digital camera, make a page with your pictures on it. Give each one a number and then put the number in your map.

[Note that the NGA DOES allow you take pictures and to use flash. However, you cannot do this in their special exhibitions, since the art work is on loan and does not belong to the NGA. Other museums will let you photograph works which the museum owns, without using flash. No museum ever lets you photograph works which are visiting, special exhibitions.]

Include 8 works in your tour, two of which will be analyzed in detail. Begin with an overview of the period or type of art, provide some commentary on the works in the tour, and then analyze two in depth, discussing the meaning, the formal (visual) qualities of those works, and why you chose for an indepth examination.

Some questions to think about: What is the theme of your tour? Are the works connected by artist? By subject matter? By time period? Or something else? Describe your theme, what makes it interesting (to you), and what makes it relevant to art history (personal interest is good but not enough!). Based on material we've studied in class, what can you tell me about this theme? What historical factors led to this type of art or subject matter? Why were these works good examples (or not good examples) of this theme? These questions are suggested; you do not have to list each question and answer it. Write a coherent discussion. This is the second page of your essay.

Which two works have you chosen for more study? Identify these works and study them in the museum. Take notes on their visual features, the impact of seeing them in real life: what does the paint look like? How does the work reflect qualities of other art works in the room? Is it more or less vibrant than you expected? Sometimes, seeing a work in real life is disappointing – you've imagined it larger, brighter, more outstanding for some reason than it really is. In other cases, the reverse happens – you're completely surprised by how much of an impact something makes when you see it in person. These unexpected responses are important and valid, regardless of whether they're positive or negative, so be sure to include them. This should be page 3 and probably page 4.

Conclusion: a summary of your overall experience. This might refer to other things you saw which you did not include in your “tour” but which had an impact on you, it might refer to the difference between studying art in a book or on a web site and seeing it in real life, or it might be a focused conclusion to your tour.

Option 2: Review an exhibition (which someone else has planned) and make your own exhibition brochure:

This is essentially a tour description but someone else has planned the “tour” for you.
1. Collect all the material made available by the museum. Prepare yourself with background work before you get there.

2. Things to take notes on:
what is the theme of the show? Is it organized around a single artist or a period in art or a movement or some other theme? What thematic devices are used to select and organize the work in the show? How does the show make these themes known to you? What was your first impression when you began walking through the exhibition? Did it change and if so, why and how?

3. What historical or contextual material is included in the show? What might have been included but isn't? (Assuming you did your background work, what else would you have liked to know with respect to the material in the show? This might take the form of seeing works by other artists or works from other periods of the artist's life, but for one or another reason, the exhibition did not include this.)

4. Focus on the art: what subjects does the artist paint? What characterizes the artist's style? What medium did the artist use? Which paintings have a particularly strong impact on you? Why? If it is a thematic show, how do the various artists in the show differ in their treatment of the theme?

Again, you should draw your own maps of the show, indicate the arrangements of works in the galleries and where your favorite works are located. You can't take pictures in special shows but you might be able to get postcards in the gallery shop.

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Regardless of which type of paper you write, you are writing a paper which is about 4 pages long (judge length by the word count) and you are going to include materials you collect at the museum. Additional research for the paper is not explicitly required but it may help, especially if the topic of the show is somewhat unfamiliar to you.

Remember, this is extra credit. You do not have to do it. If you do, it must be turned in by April 8. There are no extensions for extra credit!