

## General Guidelines for Writing an Art History Term Paper:

### ***Topic statement and definition:***

Your topic is related to the art work or thematic focus of your paper. You should also have a thesis statement which more specifically tells the reader what you intend to do. The best thesis statements set up a condition which is not immediately apparent or factual. The paper follows from this statement, becoming the “proof” (or rejection) of the thesis. Reminder: these are good web sites for writing a thesis statement:

<http://writing2.richmond.edu/WRITING/wweb/thesis.html>

<http://www.sdst.org/shs/library/thesis.html>

[http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis\\_statement.shtml](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis_statement.shtml)

Your topic should have been approved by me before you begin working on the paper itself.

### ***Description of artwork or issue chosen for paper:***

Whether you deal with a theme or a specific art work, you should describe it in detail and the reasons for studying it. This is usually part of the introduction, following from your initial statement and paragraph about the overall focus of the paper.

### ***Context and analysis:***

Context includes several things and varies depending on your topic. In scientific research, this is often the “review of literature” telling the reader what other studies have already been done and which led to the study you’re reading. In the case of an art historical or humanities paper, the context may be material about the historic period in question, the artist’s background, previous approaches to analysis of your question, interpretations of the work, and so on. Whether science of humanities, this is where you show your familiarity with what other people have written about your subject. Since I do not accept papers which are biographies of artists, any useful information about the artist’s life might be considered context. It should only be included if it helps to explain your subsequent analysis of the art work.

The analysis also varies, depending on your topic. If your paper is based on a comparison (between two approaches to the same subject, for example), the analysis would be the place where you carefully identify the differences between your two works (or your two interpretations). If your paper is an in-depth study of a single work, the analysis is precisely that: an analysis of the art work, from a formal point of view (what it looks like, its composition, its style, its visual characteristics) and from the point of view of the interpretations you have chosen to focus on.

### ***Significance, conclusion***

Here you discuss the importance, meaning and value of the particular artwork or thematic question chosen for this paper. This is also where you should include your own point of view which is either related to these positions or rejects them for reasons related to their failure as critical theories. This is an important part of the paper precisely because it is where you tell the

reader what you, in contrast to other people, think. You therefore want to make sure that your point of view is clearly distinguishable from those of the writers or sources you've looked at. One way to do this is to make sure you have been diligent in attributing other ideas to the people who had them. When you don't give a footnote, I can then assume that it is your own thinking. Another way is to be very blunt and say something along the lines of: "In my own response to this work, I noticed that..." or: "I disagree with X's position that....because of the following reasons...."

### ***Writing style and organization:***

- grammar is correct; spelling is correct
- paper is well-organized and understandable
- more than one source of information is used to arrive at a new point of view
- **when the ideas of other writers are used, acknowledgment is made with footnotes and quotation marks, when appropriate; very long quotations should not be used in a short paper** – summarize the words of someone else in your own words and give credit to the person who had the idea first

Do not plagiarize! You are allowed to use the ideas of other writers – if you give a citation. Putting it into your own words is important and is more than just changing one word. But you should avoid quoting needlessly. Basic facts do not need to be quoted; neither do descriptions. You can describe things with your own words. If the description you read brought your attention to something you hadn't noticed, then tell the reader that.

### ***Pictures***

Art papers benefit from the inclusion of illustrations. This lets me know what you are talking about and it also lets me know that you've looked at the work yourself. The inclusion of reproductions of the primary art work in your paper is required. Secondary artworks may also be included but how many depends on how important they are to your argument.

There is a correct format for including the pictures. The first time you mention an art work, give its name (*in italics*), the artist's name, and the date, and in parentheses, write Figure X, with X referring to the number of the figure. Number them **in order of appearance. At the end of your paper**, include the reproductions of each figure, labeled correctly and with the figure number underneath. These should not be thumbnails.

**Notes and Bibliography:** the Documentation style is described below. I do expect you to use Chicago Style and your paper will lose points if you do not. As far as the actual books, etc., in your bibliography, survey textbooks cannot be used as research sources. Art appreciation textbooks cannot be used. I do not accept encyclopedias. Articles must be taken from academic, refereed journals. In other words, newspapers are not acceptable; neither is *Time*, *Atlantic Monthly* or magazines intended for popular reading. The only time a web site is acceptable is if it is a fully documented web site which provides detailed information about the author and has references included in the material. If you have a web site which falls into this category, you must print it out and submit it with your paper.

Keep in mind that there is a difference between the material you use as sources for footnotes and ideas, and the material you consult for more general background information (like your textbook). You may include this second type of material under a heading called "Additional Sources." This tells me that they were not your primary research materials but you want to acknowledge that you used them. These do not take the place of your bibliography; they are in addition to it.

**Format:** Include a title page and give your paper a title. Staple it! Do not print on both sides of the paper and please use double spacing (or 1.5 spacing). The word count is given in the syllabus. You must print out the document information which contains the word count and it should NOT include notes and bibliography. Word will give you this information.

### **Documentation Style for Your Term Paper**

*Chicago Style* is required for your paper. I will explain it here and give examples but note that the library also includes a web site with color-coded charts telling you how to do it.

#### Footnotes and Endnotes

Chicago style can be used with both footnotes and endnotes. The only thing that changes is where the note is located. A footnote comes at the bottom of the page and an endnote comes at the end of the paper (which is what I prefer). Most people will still call this a footnote. For simplicity, let's call it a "note."

The note is indicated in the essay by a number, preferably in superscript, at the end of the sentence. The actual information is included in the note. Now here is the most important characteristic of Chicago style notes: every note in Chicago style gets its own, unique number, in number order. **You're numbering your use of other books, not the book.** This is one of the biggest differences between Chicago style and other styles. What it means is that **if you have 5 quotations from the same book, you will have 5 different numbers – one for every time you quote from that book.** You do not number the books!!! A paper with Chicago style notes might have 5 bibliographic sources but 25 different footnote numbers.

#### How to do it:

When you need to give a citation, you place a reference number in superscript, usually at the end of the sentence or paragraph which deserves the citation. The note itself comes at the end of the text. The notes are not the same thing as a bibliography, so the information below gives you the format for both: **the note (indicated by N) and the bibliographic entry (indicated by B).** DO NOT use the letter N or the letter B in your notes and bibliography. They are here in this document in order to demonstrate the differences! The primary difference is that the note gives the author's name the way we say it (first name followed by last name) while the bib. entry puts the last name first. Another difference is the use of parentheses around the publishing information (used in the note but not in the bibliographic entry).

Online sources that are analogous to print sources (such as articles published in online journals, magazines, or newspapers) should be cited similarly to their print counterparts. Although the

url is technically included, I do not require it for electronic journal articles. If you are using a web site (but I don't allow them!), then you must include the url and the access date.

**In the examples below, I've labeled them as "note style" (or N) and "bibliography style" (or B). Those labels are included here so you know what you're looking at. You DO NOT include them in the actual note or bibliographic entry.**

Book: One author

Note style:

1. Wendy Doniger, *Splitting the Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 65.

Bibliography style:

Doniger, Wendy. *Splitting the Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

**Note the differences here – in particular, the note has a page number at the end. The bibliographic entry does not, assuming that you used more than one page in the book.**

Two authors

Note:

6. Guy Cowlshaw and Robin Dunbar, *Primate Conservation Biology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 104–7.

Bibliography:

Cowlshaw, Guy, and Robin Dunbar. *Primate Conservation Biology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Chapter or other part of a book

Note:

5. Andrew Wiese, "The House I Live In': Race, Class, and African American Suburban Dreams in the Postwar United States," in *The New Suburban History*, ed. Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 101–2.

Bibliography:

Wiese, Andrew. "The House I Live In': Race, Class, and African American Suburban Dreams in the Postwar United States." In *The New Suburban History*, edited by Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue, 99–119. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Article in a print journal

Note:

8. John Maynard Smith, "The Origin of Altruism," *Nature* 393 (1998): 639.

Bib:

Smith, John Maynard. "The Origin of Altruism." *Nature* 393 (1998): 639–40.

I got my information from the Chicago Manual of Style Web site. It includes many more examples than you see here; for more information, go to:

**[http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)**

Another web site which has useful information is the University of Pennsylvania Library:

**<http://gethelp.library.upenn.edu/PORT/documentation/docindex.html>**

The Penn website also includes information about **how to paraphrase without plagiarizing**.

Finally, you can use the McConnell library page on the Radford web site!

**<http://lib.radford.edu/resources/handouts/styleguides-chicago.asp>**