

ART HISTORY CRASH COURSE

From the Students

Part One: General Class Rules

1. Go to class - Professors emphasize what you need to know, so you aren't digging through the whole book trying to figure out what's what.
2. Take notes in class - It makes it easier to study later, since you know what's important.
3. Read the textbook – The textbook and class work together to teach you everything. It's not necessary to take notes on the textbook, but it has helpful context to review for essays.

Part Two: Studying

1. Start early – Professors usually put the slides and terms out at least two to three weeks early. Start studying right away and do a little bit each day.
2. Art history is not a subject you can cram for.
3. Make flashcards – It is a great way to learn some of the basic facts. It's worth the time and aggravation. Since art history is a discipline that requires two kinds of thinking, try enhancing your flashcards. Write the important things like artist, title, date, culture, medium, etc. Then go beyond that – write down key facts about the work of art so you can use them in your essays – maybe who it was made for, why it was made, what it says about the culture, key terms/definitions that have been discussed in class, and more!
4. A little bit a day – Don't start the night before, start now. Take maybe 30 minutes a day, to make the flashcards. Once they're done, take about 30 minutes a day to review them. Break it up! Carry them with you! It's super easy to look at them in your campus ride or your wait between classes.
5. Re-read the sections in the textbook that are appropriate in order to review context for essays.

Part Three: Exam Day

1. Make sure you sleep the night before. It's cliché, but you can't take an exam exhausted.
2. Don't forget your pens and pencils.
3. Stay calm.
4. Trust your instincts – the exams are timed, and there is only so much time allotted for each segment, so you don't have time to second guess yourself. Trust that your studying has paid off, write it down, write it well, and move on.
5. The different parts of the exam
 - a. Terms – During your lecture, your professor will give you vocabulary that you can use to discuss art. When you identify terms, say what it is, what its purpose is, and give an example of a place it was used. Then it is clear you know both what it is and how it works.
 - b. Slide ID's – Writing down the artist, title, and date, as well as culture/period and location (depending on if it applies), is the fastest way to score points on the exam. Don't second guess yourself, just write it down, and **study these extra. THIS IS THE EASIEST WAY TO PASS.**
 - c. Visual Analysis – Pull together everything you know. Describe how it appears using the formal elements, and use how it appears to support what you know about the context to create an interpretation. Example: The use of light and value emphasizes the drama of the scene. The formal elements and the context work together. Don't forget an introduction with a thesis, and a conclusion. Be specific in your observations and explain things in detail!
 - d. Thematic Essay – Think about themes that develop through art history over time. In this essay, you have to pull examples of works of art to consider how ideas and representations change over time. Don't forget an introduction with a thesis, and a conclusion.
 - e. Comparison (Arts of Asia only) – Identify the two images on the screen, and compare both how they look and what they mean. Write an essay with an introduction with a thesis, then explain what each one is and how it appears, before explaining how the two things are similar and different, and then a conclusion. You also need to bring in an outside example to support your point. The goal is to point out the similarities and the differences between all of the things you are considering, both with how they appear and what they mean.

ART HISTORY SURVEY: STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

From Professor Anderson

Art history is a discipline that requires a mixture of specific knowledge and contextual understanding. My hope is that you are able to identify important objects and discuss their importance, both as individual pieces and as parts of the larger development of global art. Knowing the objects without understanding the context makes you little more than a trivia buff, and understanding the context without being able to use illustrative examples leaves you in a cloud of unsubstantiated theorizing.

In this regard, there are two main categories of preparation: getting to know the objects, and developing a sophisticated voice of analysis.

GETTING TO KNOW THE OBJECTS

Alas, this requires repetition and memorization. We will see several hundred objects during the term, and keeping them straight is not something that can be successfully accomplished the night before the exam. Here's what has worked for successful students in the past:

1. Don't miss class. I spend a good deal of time on individual pieces, and this will help you get to know them.
2. Take good notes. At very least, you should identify what the pieces are and why they are significant.
3. Read your textbook. If you do this before class, my lectures will supplement what you already know. Note that I do not just restate what's written in the textbook- exams will cover both what is written and what is covered in class.
4. Make flash cards and use them regularly. Flash cards are excellent ways of building up your memory, especially if you make them a part of your daily routine. Include basic identifying information (title, artist, date, location) as well as a few sentences about what makes the object or monument significant.
5. Work with a partner or a group. This can be a good way to drill with flash cards or discuss general themes.

DEVELOPING A SOPHISTICATED VOICE OF ANALYSIS

Here, you need to think about big-picture issues, such as development of techniques, influence and reception, the function of the objects, etc.

1. Don't miss class. I can't stress this enough.
2. Make a list of key points discussed in each lecture.
3. Contextualize your pieces; learn to see them as groups with common themes.
4. Think about discussing, rather than describing, when you analyze objects.
5. Make a list of major points that go along with each chapter. For example, you could outline 'Major Themes in Roman Art', and use that to help understand the individual pieces.