

# Art History & Theory Writing and Research Guide

Programme in Art History & Theory  
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This guide is intended to assist you in refining your writing and research, skills that may be learnt and further developed with practice. These pages provide a guide to the commonly accepted conventions governing citation, usage, and editing employed in scholarly writing. It also provides guidance on the development of essays, carrying out research, and editing your writing. Written essays, including those in examinations, are the major component of assessment in Art History & Theory. These general guidelines should be used along with any specific instructions for assignments.

The most common problems with essays generally arise from the following: poor planning, inadequate preparation, haphazard and/or insufficient research, poor organisation of material, inadequate proofreading, sloppy and/or obscure arguments. These problems can be minimised, if not eliminated altogether.

Writing is a craft. In all your written work you will be expected to write in an articulate, coherent and logically structured manner. This guide will assist you in your completion of that task and the refinement of your skills. What follows focuses specifically on the preparation of essays for internal assessment essays. However, the principles apply to other written work, including honours essays, post-graduate theses and examination essays.

This guide is based upon *The Chicago Manual of Style*, the University of Otago History Department's writing guide, and the University of Rochester Art & Art History Department's writing guide.

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## 1. Developing Your Topic

There will usually be a choice of topics for essays. Your choice should be determined primarily by your interest in the topic. However, practical issues, such as available time, accessibility of the appropriate sources and non-academic commitments, may influence your choice. It is a good idea to begin thinking about your choice of essay topic as early as possible.

Be wary of selecting a topic that you think will be easy, because a lot has already been written about it. Such topics often require more intensive research and reading. The wealth of available sources can be quite overwhelming, as you will need to take extra care in sorting out which texts are authoritative and scholarly.

Once you decide upon a topic, you will need to spend some time thinking about what your subject requires you to do. This will enable you to direct your research and thinking so that your answer is relevant. It will also enable you to set limits to what you need to do in preparing an adequate essay.

If you are given set topics, take the time to analyse them. Be sure that you understand the meaning of key words and concepts. Look them up in a dictionary or other specialised reference works related to your subject. Consider what the topic will require you to do in order to answer it.

Here are some definitions of a couple of verbs that commonly appear in essay topics:

*Discuss:* Present all sides (or as many as you can discover) of a question or problem

*Examine:* Examine all aspects of a question or problem and arrive at a conclusion if appropriate

*Analyse:* Look at the various parts of the whole and explain how and why they fit together

*Contrast:* Examine the defining features of the entities in question to bring out their characteristic differences

*Compare:* Examine the defining features of the entities in question to bring out their characteristic similarities and differences.

## 2. Researching Your Topic

Most essays will require extensive further reading about a topic. While you may use course readings to stimulate your preliminary development of a topic, you will usually need to conduct research to locate both primary and secondary sources related to it.

It is important to appreciate the difference between *primary* and *secondary* sources. *Primary sources* refer to material contemporary with the time of which you write or to first hand reports or experiences of the art or events in question. *Secondary Sources* refer to writings and commentaries which are written at a later time by authors, usually without first hand experiences of the era in question. Secondary sources form the bulk of the materials available to students.

Wherever possible you are expected to make use of primary sources (including artworks) in composing your essay. However, you will also be expected to strike some balance between primary and secondary material so that a reasonable grasp of the subject matter and its development can be demonstrated. Use your sources critically, distinguishing between primary and secondary, between facts and opinions. Consider differing views on a subject, and then decide on your conclusion.

One key for successful research is knowing how to *effectively* and *appropriately* use basic research tools, such as the Library Catalogue or the Internet. The Library offers regularly scheduled free classes on using the catalogue, evaluating web sites, and using electronic databases. You are strongly encouraged to attend these hands-on courses.

Below is a checklist of possible research activities or strategies. Depending on the level of your coursework and the nature of your assignment, not all of these suggestions may be relevant.

- ✓ Examine materials placed on reserve for the course
- ✓ Consult any additional bibliography provided by your lecturer
- ✓ Discuss your topic with your tutor and/or lecturer
- ✓ Visit the Art History & Theory Reference page on the Library Website
- ✓ Look up your subject in relevant reference works (encyclopaedias, dictionaries)
- ✓ Consult the Library catalogue for material related to your subject
- ✓ Discuss your research topic with a Reference Librarian at the Helpdesk
- ✓ Consult the catalogue of the Bill Robertson Library (Otago Polytechnic)
- ✓ Consult the catalogue of the Dunedin Public Library
- ✓ Consult Te Puna for other library holdings in New Zealand
- ✓ Order any materials outside of Dunedin via Document Delivery
- ✓ Visit local public art collections (DPAG, Hocken Pictorial Collections)
- ✓ Look up sources that are cited in footnotes and bibliographies in research materials that you locate
- ✓ Research your topic on the electronic journal databases
- ✓ Enrol in relevant Library information source courses to gain research skills
- ✓ Consult the writing and research guides listed at the end of this document
- ✓ Make use of the resources of the Student Learning Centre
- ✓ Discuss your topic with others engaged in related research or teaching

Once you have identified appropriate research sources, be sure to keep careful records and notes as you consult them. By keeping careful records from the very start of your project, you will save precious time in providing the necessary documentation of your sources in the final draft.

As you read, it is recommended that you record or take notes about:

- a) Complete bibliographic details of the work
- b) The author's main argument (and supporting points)
- c) The sources used by the author
- d) Any direct quotes that you find useful or appropriate for your own writing
- e) Your own reactions, criticisms and ideas about the author's work
- f) The criticisms/comments (about the work you are reading) made by other writers in book reviews and journal articles

For a larger research projects, you may want to set up a file system or binder to keep track of your notes and any photocopies.

### 3. Planning Your Essay

Selecting a topic, thinking, drafting and rewriting take time, even for a short paper that does not require library research. You may want to make a schedule, working backwards from the due date, to ensure that that you are not rushed at the crucial rewriting stages.

It is essential to formulate some sort of overall plan with which to guide your research, reading and writing. This may prove to be a little difficult in the early stages when the subject matter is still new to you. Once you have begun your preliminary reading, however, some planning should be done. The emphasis should be on mapping out the direction in which you want to go.

A plan is also useful in helping you to formulate a central theme for your essay. This will assist you to marshal your material or evidence in as effective a manner as possible. *Almost without exception, the difference between a good essay and a poor essay is the writer's ability to present a logical progression of ideas, drawn from a careful analysis of the appropriate evidence, to arrive at a clearly stated conclusion.*

Good essays do not just happen. They require adequate preparation, hard work, sound organisation and clarity of exposition. Above all, essay writing requires a willingness to *think critically* about the relevant issues. This last dimension is perhaps the most difficult of all. To be critical does not mean to limit yourself to offering a negative dismissal of either your sources or the issues. That is only one (perhaps the least important) aspect. Engaging in critical analysis also means demonstrating an awareness of the various strengths and weaknesses of the arguments, analyses and materials that you have used in preparing your essay. A good piece of critical analysis is one which shows an awareness of relevant arguments and controversies while at the same time attempting to build an alternative and more adequate argument or point of view.

As you begin your research, and before you start to write, think about the purpose of the paper and make your presentation appropriate. Establish your problem, thesis or point of view right away, in the first paragraph--in the title if you can--and develop it in the essay. Organise material logically (this does not always mean a chronological narrative) and provide your reader with the necessary signposts so they know where your argument is going.

## 4. Writing Your Essay

While writing style is a personal matter, here are a few general pointers that are worth observing.

### **Aim for Clarity of Language and Structure**

*The aim of your writing style should be clarity of exposition so that the reader is able to understand your argument.*

Take care in your choice of words, spelling, and use of grammar. Avoid unnecessarily long words when shorter words are available. Poor spelling and sloppy grammar can undermine otherwise good work by obscuring the meaning. *Use a dictionary to check problem words and to clarify your word choice.*

Make sure that your thoughts are expressed in literate sentences. Make sure that your sentences express the meaning that you want to convey to the reader. Make your sentences as concise as possible. Sentences should then be organised into paragraphs.

Paragraphs are the building blocks of an essay. Essentially they indicate to the reader that the writer is moving on to a new part of the topic. Avoid writing paragraphs that run on for pages. Thinking about your essay in terms of paragraphs, where each paragraph develops a new point, is often an effective means of planning and writing.

### **Avoid Jargon, Slang and Colloquial**

Wherever possible avoid unnecessary jargon. Essentially, jargon is language that excludes the reader. It inhibits rather than facilitates understanding. While it is sometimes necessary to use specialist terminology, be sure that it is appropriate and that its meaning is clear.

Avoid the use of slang or colloquial expressions. Expressions such as "I feel", "In my opinion", "This writer believes", should be avoided as they are redundant. Abbreviations like "govt", and "dept" and contractions like "can't", "won't", "didn't", and "isn't" should also be avoided.

### **Use Non-Sexist Language**

This is a difficult and sensitive area. However, your use of language is expected to be precise and accurate. Using words and terminology which denigrate or exclude is not acceptable. You must pay proper attention to the context and choose your words accordingly.

As a general rule, if you intend to refer to both women and men, then choose words which make your intentions clear. The use of masculine only pronouns (i.e. 'he', 'him') and the supposedly generic 'man' should be avoided in contexts that are either sex-unspecific or sex-inclusive.

Your language use should treat women (and men where appropriate) as part of the rule rather than the exception. For example, word forms such as 'sculptress' and 'poetess' are not necessary when 'sculptor' and 'poet' can quite adequately refer to both women and men. Similarly, expressions like 'male nurse' or 'lady doctor', as designations of occupations, are inappropriate unless the context demands specifying the sex of the person concerned.

## 5. Proper Usage for Art History & Theory

Academic writing is shaped by certain conventions for proper usage. Below are some of the more common usage conventions that are relevant to Art History & Theory essay writing.

### Use of Words or Numerals

In general, write as words all whole numbers from one to nine and use numerals for all numbers 10 and over. Never begin a sentence with a numeral or date. Write the number out as a word.

### Dates

Be consistent in writing dates: use either 24 July 1994 or July 24, 1994, but not both. Spell out centuries in lowercase letters (the twentieth century) and hyphenate them when used as adjectives modifying a noun (twentieth-century modernism). Decades are usually written out without capitalisation (the eighties), but it is becoming acceptable to express them in figures (the 1980s or the `80s). Whichever form you use, be consistent.

### References to Individuals

When you first mention a modern artist or other individual, give his or her full name; afterwards it is appropriate to use the last name alone -- e.g., "Gauguin" or "Nevelson"; not "Mr. Rauschenberg," but also not "Pablo," "Georgia" or "Jackson."

Some pre-modern and early modern artists, however, have no surnames or are commonly referred to by their first names. Hence, Michelangelo Buonarotti is commonly referred to as "Michelangelo."

### Titles

NOTE: Underlining is used to **indicate** italics. Therefore, if your word processor offers the option to italicise, you may do so. Whatever you choose, be consistent throughout your essay (Italics will be used for the remainder of this guide.)

Italicise or underline titles of works of art, other than architecture: Michelangelo's *David*, van Gogh's *Sunflowers*, but the Empire State Building, First Church, the Palazzo Vecchio.

Italicise or underline titles of books other than holy works: *Art and Illusion*, *The Odyssey*, Genesis, the Bible, and the Koran.

Titles to be italicised or underlined include books, plays, long poems, pamphlets, periodicals, films, radio and television programs, record albums, ballets, operas, instrumental music, ships, aircraft, and spacecraft. Here are some examples:

*Photography in Print* (book)  
*Romeo and Juliet* (play)  
*Otago Daily Times* (newspaper)  
*Time* (magazine)  
*Whale Rider* (film)  
*Star Trek* (television program)  
*The Nutcracker* (ballet)  
*Rigoletto* (opera)

Use quotation marks for the titles of works published within larger works (the article "Crime Rate Declines" appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle*). Such titles include the names of articles, essays, short stories, short poems, chapters of books, and individual episodes of radio and television programs. Also use quotation marks for songs and for unpublished works, such as lectures and speeches.

### **Quotations**

While quotations are common and often effective in research essays, use them selectively. Quote only words, phrases, lines, and passages that are particularly interesting, vivid, unusual, or relevant, and keep all quotations as brief as possible. Whether you quote directly or paraphrase in your own words, be sure to credit your sources. See "Documenting Your Sources" below.

In general, a quotation, whether a word, phrase, sentence or more, should correspond exactly to its source in spelling, capitalisation, and punctuation. If you change it in any way, make the alteration clear to the reader, following the rules and recommendations explained below. If a prose quotation runs no more than four typed lines and requires no special emphasis, put it in quotation marks and incorporate it in the text: Jackson Pollock said "When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing. It is only after a sort of 'get acquainted' period that I see what I have been about."

Remember, though, that you do not always need to quote full sentences. Sometimes you may want to quote just a word or phrase as part of your sentence. Use brackets [ ] to enclose paraphrased material or pronouns or words you have supplied: As Pollock's action painting demonstrates, seeing "what I have been about" occurs in the process itself.

If a quotation runs to more than four typed lines, set it off from your text by beginning a new line, indenting the entire quotation five spaces from the left margin, typing it single-spaced and without quotation marks:

When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing. It is only after a sort of "get acquainted" period that I see what I have been about. I have no fears about making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through. It is only when I lose contact with the painting that the result is a mess. Otherwise there is pure harmony, an easy give and take, and the painting comes out well.

### **Ellipsis (three spaced periods...)**

When you wish to omit a word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph from a quoted passage, you should be guided by two principles: 1) fairness to the intent of the author quoted and 2) the grammatical integrity of your own text.

Original text from Vincent van Gogh:

In my picture of the Night Café, I have tried to express the idea that a cafe is a place where one can ruin oneself, run mad, or commit a crime. I have tried to express the terrible passions of humanity by means of red and green. The room is blood-red and dark yellow, with a green billiard table in the middle; there are four lemon-yellow lamps with a glow of orange and green. Everywhere there is a clash and contrast of the most alien reds and greens in the figures of little sleeping hooligans in the empty dreary room, in violet and blue.

Text with ellipsis in the middle and end of the quote:

"I have tried to express the terrible passions of humanity by means of red and green...a clash and contrast of the most alien reds and greens in the figures of little sleeping hooligans in the empty dreary room...." [ellipsis plus period]

### **Punctuation with Quotations**

Use a colon before a quotation if you formally introduce it, but either no punctuation or a comma before a quotation you integrate into the sentence.

Francis Bacon argued thus: "There is no excellent Beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion."

or

Francis Bacon thought "there is no excellent Beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion."

## **6. Common Usage Errors**

**The Apostrophe:** To form the possessive of a name, add 's even if the name already ends with a sibilant (-s, -x, -cks, -z):

El Greco's colours

Rubens's models

Velazquez's subjects

Augustus John's sketches (last name is John)

Jasper Johns's recent work (last name is Johns)

**Its versus it's** "Its" is the possessive form of "it"  
"It's" is a contraction for the phrase "it is"

The sculpture extends into its space. (possessive)

It's an aggressive sculpture because it extends into the viewer's space.

*Note:* "It's" is very informal and should be avoided in academic writing

**Use of Possessives** Peasant's revolt = one peasant, one revolt  
Peasant's revolts = one peasant, multiple revolts  
Peasants' revolt = multiple peasants, one revolt  
Peasants' revolts = multiple peasants, multiple revolts

**Subject/verb agreement:**

The painting hangs in the Louvre.

The paintings hang in the Louvre.

**Comparative form:** Many comparatives are formed by adding -er.

harsh - harsher (not - more harsh)

blue - bluer (not - more blue)

clear - clearer (not - more clear)



**Misused Commas** Students frequently use commas when full stops are needed.

*Poor:* King Henry VIII smelled terrible, this was because he never bathed.

*Better:* King Henry VIII smelled terrible. This was because he never bathed.

*Best:* King Henry VIII smelled terrible because he never bathed.

**Active versus Passive Voice:** Active voice creates clear and direct expression without the use of an auxiliary verb like "to have" or "to be." Do not use the passive voice unless the action rather than the actor is to be emphasised. Make sure you are not avoiding the issue of who was acting.

I will always remember my first visit to Egypt. (*active*)

My first visit to Egypt will always be remembered by me. (*passive, weak*)

Viewers at the Armory Show did not appreciate abstract art. (*active*)

European abstract art was not appreciated by viewers at the Armory Show. (*passive and weak*)

European abstract art was presented to the public at large for the first time at the Armory show. (*passive with an emphasis on the action*)

**Wrong Word** sight – cite – site

*Sight* refers to vision; you *cite* a reference; a *site* is a place.

too – to – two

You can have *too* much, or go *to* a place, or have *two* beers.

**People versus other subjects:** Take care to distinguish between people and other subjects:

Who and whom refer only to persons.

Which and that refer to animals and things.

I like the vase which/that appeared in the exhibit.

I like the ceramic artist who made the vase.

**Double Dashes** Avoid overuse of double dashes to insert a phrase into a sentence; in most cases commas are the appropriate punctuation.

This guide--from the Art and Art History Department--will help you to avoid needless errors. (*a bit too journalistic*)

This guide, from the Art and Art History Department, will help you to avoid needless errors. (*better*)

**Woman/Women** Woman (singular) vs. women (plural)  
Possessive plural form: women's clothing, women's rugby

## 7. Documenting Your Sources: Footnotes and Endnotes

Sources must always be acknowledged. Whether your use of sources is in the form of direct quotations or the borrowing of ideas, methods or other materials you must acknowledge them. It is your responsibility to avoid even unintentional plagiarism. Always acknowledge sources of information and ideas, as well as direct quotations.

Acknowledgment of quotations, ideas, statistics, paraphrasing, and so on, must be done using an appropriate citation method (described below). Failure to provide proper acknowledgment of your sources is known as **PLAGIARISM**. Intentional plagiarism is cheating. If you are caught plagiarising you will almost certainly receive zero for your essay. In some cases there may be other penalties involved.

We prefer that you present the notes and the bibliography in accordance with the following guidelines, which are adopted in many art historical scholarly journals. This form is called the Chicago style. It is based on in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

*It is not sufficient merely to insert page references into your text, even if you do this in other kinds of essays. Be sure that you understand and use the proper format for art historical writing.*

### **Footnotes and Endnotes**

Notes placed at the bottom of the page are *footnotes*. Those collected together at the end of an essay but before the bibliography are *endnotes*. They are numbered consecutively throughout the assignment. The superscript numerals (i.e. '1, 2, 3...') should be inserted at the end of a quotation, or the end of a sentence, or if appropriate at the end of a paragraph. The number follows after any punctuation. Here are some examples of footnotes:

#### **First reference to a book:**

1. Erik Olssen, *Building the New World: Work, Politics and Society in Caversham, 1880s-1920s* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1995), 52.

Note that the author's name is presented in the normal order, with the given name first. At the end of the citation, the specific page number cited is given. You need not use the abbreviations 'p.' or 'pp.'.

#### **First reference to an article:**

2. Brian Moloughney and John Stenhouse, "'Drug-besotten, sin-begotten fiends of filth': New Zealanders and the Oriental other, 1850-1920," *The New Zealand Journal of History* 33, no. 1 (April 1999), 43.

**Second and subsequent references to the same work** need only give the author's surname and the relevant page number(s). Thus

3. Olssen, 161.

Where you have cited more than one work by the same author, distinguish the works by using abbreviated titles. For example:

4. Olssen, *Building the New World*, 161.
5. Olssen, *History of Otago*, 76.

Reference to a later edition of a book:

6. Tom Brooking and Paul Enright, *Milestones: Turning Points in New Zealand History*, 2nd ed. (Palmerston North, N.Z.: Dunmore Press, 1999), 23-25.

Reference to a book with more than one author

7. John M. Rosenfield and Shujiro Shimada, *Traditions of Japanese Art* (Cambridge, MA: Fogg Museum, 1970), 55.

Reference to an edited or translated book:

8. *The Letters of Peter Paul Rubens*, trans. and ed. Ruth Magurn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955), 238.

Reference to an exhibition catalogue

9. Elizabeth Cropper, *Pietro Testa, 1612–1650*, exh. cat., Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Mass., 1988, 246.

Reference to an entry in an encyclopaedia or other reference work

10. Anne Hagopian Van Buren, “Eyck, van,” *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner, vol. 10 (New York: Grove, 1996), 703-715.

Reference to a multivolume work:

11. Caeli Love Petersping and Ian Mills Michaelson, eds., *The Flowering of Harmonious Internationalism* (Chicago: Marmer, 1990-93) 3: 143-62.

Reference to an essay in an anthology:

12. Paul Antony Hayward, “Demystifying the role of sanctity in Western Christendom,” in *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown*, ed. James Howard-Johnston and Paul Antony Hayward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 120.

Reference to a direct quotation from one work as quoted in another:

*Note:* It is good practice to cite not only the book or article or website you used, but also, if possible, the original source cited by your reference.

13. Jackson Pollock, statement in the film *Jackson Pollock, 1951* by Hans Namuth and Paul Falkenberg; reprinted in Herschell Chipp, ed., *Theories of Modern Art* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1968), 548

Reference to a review

14. Pepe Karmel, review of Calvin Tomkins, "Off the Wall: Robert Rauschenberg and the Art World of Our Time" (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), *New Republic* (June 21, 1980), 38.

Reference to a newspaper

15. Bertha Brody, "Illegal Immigrant Sculptor Allowed to Stay," *The New York Times*, 4 July 1980.

Reference to an anonymous entry in a newspaper

16. "Portraits Stolen Again," *Washington Post*, 30 June 1990.

Reference to a text reproduced in a course reader:

17. William of Malmesbury, *Historia Novella*, 36, quoted in "Paul Hayward, History 331: Reader" (University of Otago, 2002), 100-1.

Reference to a theses or dissertation:

18. Dorothy Ross, "The Irish-Catholic Immigrant, 1880-1900: A Study in Social Mobility" (master's thesis, Columbia University, 1980), 142-145.

Reference to a website:

19. G. James Jones, *The Godfather of Computing – Charles Babbage*, 16 October 2001, <[http://www.systemtoolbox.com/article.php?history\\_id=2](http://www.systemtoolbox.com/article.php?history_id=2)> (11 December 2001), History.

Note that the format is: author's name, document title, date of internet publication, <URL> (date of access), text division. Be especially careful to cite the address (URL) accurately, and to include the date on which you accessed the source. Your citation should provide sufficient information to allow the reader to locate the source you used and to gain a sense of what sort of site provided your information.

The date of access allows us to track the specific version of the webpage you cite: as the internet is constantly updated and revised, this information is essential to tracking your research accurately. The text division is usually the name of the link you followed to get to the specific page of your citation: it can be anything from the home page to any of the named links.

## 8. Documenting Your Sources: The Bibliography

Many instructors require a bibliography even for a short essay so that they can see at a glance the student's source material. If the bibliography is extensive, it may be advisable to divide it into two parts, Primary Materials and Secondary Materials.

A bibliography is arranged alphabetically by author so the last name is given first; subsequent lines are indented. For more suggestions see Sylvan Barnet, *A Short Guide to Writing About Art* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993).

Various examples follow:

Caviness, Madeline Harrison. *The Early Stained Glass of Canterbury Cathedral*.  
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977.

Goldwater, Robert, and Marco Treves, eds. *Artists on Art*. New York: Pantheon, 1945.

Livingstone, Jane and John Beardsley. "The Poetics and Politics of Hispanic Art: A New Perspective." *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, eds. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 1991, 104-120.

Rosenfield, John M., and Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis. *Journey of the Three Jewels: Japanese Buddhist Paintings from Western Collections*. New York: Asia Society, 1979.

Two or more works by the same author:

Cahill, James. *Chinese Painting*. Geneva: Skira, 1960.

----- . *Scholar Painters of Japan: The Nanga School*. New York: Asia House, 1972.

Reference to a periodical in a bibliography:

Mitchell, Dolores. "The 'New Woman' as Prometheus: Women Artists Depict Women Smoking." *Women's Art Journal* 12 (Spring/Summer 1991): 2-9.

## 9. Documenting Your Sources: Visual Material

The main aim of Art History and Theory is the study of visual material. Hence, the discussion of specific art works is usually expected in essays. Works of art should be cited to back up and provide visual emphasis to a particular point or to provide a telling contrast with another artwork under discussion. Here are a few pointers on how to cite visual material:

### References to Artworks within Your Essay

Always *italicise* or underline the titles of artworks (just as you treat books).

When you first mention a work, provide the date, location and collection in parentheses immediately after the title. The location is sometimes essential for clarity. You may also include the medium after the date. Some examples:

Cezanne's *Mont Sainte-Victoire* (1904-1906, Philadelphia Museum of Art) is one of many paintings of this natural landmark near the artist's home in Aix-en-Provence.

Lorenzo Lotto, *Young Man in His Study* (c.1528, oil on canvas, Venice, Academia).

Benevuto Cellini, *Salt Cellar* (1540-3, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum).

### Illustrations of Artworks

If you use photocopied illustrations in your essay, collect them in order of your discussion at the end. In the text refer to each image consecutively: figure 1, figure 2, and so on (or fig. 1, fig. 2). Under each illustration you should provide a figure caption providing full information about the image. Alternately, you may provide a numbered list of illustrations before the start of your illustrations and simply number each image. For example:



Figure 1. Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, circa 1504, oil on panel, Paris, Louvre

Dimensions, and number from a catalogue raisonné may be included if relevant, for example:

Claude Monet, *Gare Saint-Lazare*, 1877, 75 x 100 cm., W. 438, Paris, Musée d'Orsay

## 10. Proofreading and Revising Your Work

Standard writing guides seldom mention the most important mechanical consideration -- proofreading. Word processing makes it easy to turn out a clean-looking page of type, check spellings and perform other routine chores. Many students think that computers have eliminated the need for proofreading. However, computers only catch the obvious mistakes. They do not know the difference between words that sound alike but are spelled differently, such as "their" and "there" or "too" and "to". By carefully reading over each draft, the author alone can make sure that everything is in order, even if it means correcting mistakes by hand at the last minute. A few handwritten insertions are greatly preferable to a seemingly impeccable copy that turns out, on closer examination, to be full of misspellings, typographical errors, and grammatical mistakes.

A good way to begin editing is to read your paper aloud, first to yourself and then to a friend. Does your audience get the point early, follow the argument, and understand the method of study and the manner of organising material? Is your final paragraph conclusive without being repetitive? Does the audience seem interested? Does the language feel natural to you? Does your essay hold up under scrutiny?

Is your essay the correct length? Part of the discipline of academic writing is to achieve a rounded argument or analysis of the topic with enough supporting evidence *without exceeding the word limit*. Be sure to follow the instructions for your assignment. If an assignment specifies a 2-3 page (500-750 word) double-spaced paper, do not hand in 1200 words of single spaced text on 3 pages. You will be marked down for not following the instructions.

Be prepared to edit for clarity and precision, and rewrite some sections several times if necessary. A short paper is often harder to write than a long, rambling one. Check the final draft for proofreading errors, misspellings and misuse of words, forgotten footnotes, missing pages. A sloppy result indicates careless preparation and cannot earn a top grade. Make the effort to present a paper that is as good as you can make it.

### **Questions to Ask Yourself When Revising an Essay:**

(from Sylvan Barnet's *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*, inside cover)

1. Have I studied the object with sufficient care so that I understand what qualities in it caused my initial response, and have I studied it with sufficient care so that I have deepened or otherwise changed that response?
2. Is the title of my essay at least moderately informative?
3. Is the opening paragraph interesting, and by its end, have I focused on the topic?
4. Is the work of art identified as precisely as possible (artist, material, location, date, etc.)?
5. Do I state my point (thesis) soon enough--perhaps even in the title--and do I keep it in view?
6. Is the organization reasonable? Does each point lead into the next, without irrelevancies and without anticlimaxes?
7. Is each paragraph unified by a topic sentence or topic idea?
8. Are generalizations and assertions about personal responses supported by references to concrete details in the work?

9. Are the sentences concise, clear, and emphatic? Are needless words and inflated language eliminated?
10. Is the concluding paragraph conclusive without being repetitive?
11. Are the dates and quotations accurate? Is credit given to sources? Are photocopies of works of art included and properly captioned?
12. Are the long quotations really necessary? Can some be shortened (either by ellipses or by summarizing them) without loss?
13. Has the essay been proofread? Are the spelling and punctuation correct? Is the title of the essay in proper form? Are the titles of works of art--other than architecture--underlined? If there are any footnotes, are they in proper form?

## 11. Presentation of Your Essay

Finished essays should contain the following elements:

- ✓ A title page that includes:
  - The title of your essay
  - Your name and student number
  - The course number and name of the course
  - Your tutor's (or lecturer's) name
  - Your tutorial group number and meeting time
  - The essay topic as given or approved by your lecturer (or tutor)
  - The due date
- ✓ **Text, typed clearly, double-spaced with adequate margins and in a standard academic font (i.e., 12 point Times New Roman)**
- ✓ Page numbers on every page except the title page
- ✓ Footnotes or endnotes in standard form (see Section 6 above)
- ✓ Bibliography in standard form (see Section 7 above)
- ✓ Any accompanying illustrations after the bibliography (see Section 8 above)
- ✓ Staple the pages together at the top left hand corner (*do not use pins*)
- ✓ Hand in the original paper, but **keep a copy for yourself**

*Note:* Students are discouraged from placing their essays in plastic report covers. These covers are removed and sometimes discarded during the marking process as they get in the way of writing comments. Save your money and the environment!



## 12. A Note on Evaluating Web Sites

First ask whether you should be using a web site for your research. As the bulk of material on the Internet is fairly recent in origin, the web may not be your best research source.

- Consider why you are using a web site rather than some other source.
- If the site provides information not available elsewhere or provides the information in a more convenient or up-to-date manner, then it may be worth using.

If you have determined that the web is a suitable source for your research, then you need to evaluate what you find there. As with print information, web based information should be appraised for credibility, authority, currency, accuracy and bias. Here are some criteria evaluating web sites from the Study Skills web pages of the University of Otago's Student Learning Centre:

### Credibility

- Does the site give author information? Author's name?
- Title / position? Credentials?
- Does it provide contact information?

### Authority & Site Information

- Does the site have authority for its claims?
- Does it link to an organisational affiliation?
- Does it provide contact information?
- Look for a header or footer identifying the sponsor or affiliation of the site eg the URL can provide source information <http://www.fbi.gov>
- Check the domain - .edu .com .ac .gov .org .net

### Currency

- Is the information up-to-date enough for your purpose?
- Is the page dated? When was it last updated?
- Are the links within it current or expired?

### Accuracy

- Is the information factual, detailed, exact and comprehensive?
- Is it credible, probable or possible?
- Can the information be verified in other sources?

### Bias / Purpose

- Is the information balanced and objective?
- Who is the intended audience? (academics, potential customers?)
- Is there advertising on the page?
- Is the language used designed to sway opinion?
- Does the author have any connection to an organisation or institution that may influence their treatment of the topic?

### 13. Latin Terminology You May Encounter

In some of your reading you may encounter Latin terminology, especially in footnote citations. While this terminology is less commonly used in contemporary academic writing, it is important that you understand it. Here are some of the more common terms, abbreviations and their meanings:

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Latin</b>	<b>English</b>
<i>c. or ca</i>	<i>circa</i>	about, approximately
<i>cf.</i>	<i>confer</i>	compare
<i>e.g.</i>	<i>exempli gratia</i>	for example, for instance
<i>et al.</i>	<i>et alii, et alia</i>	and other people/things
<i>etc.</i>	<i>et cetera</i>	and so on, and other things
<i>et seq.</i>	<i>et sequens</i>	and the following pages
<i>ff.</i>	<i>foliis</i>	on the following pages
<i>ib, ibid.</i>	<i>ibidem</i>	in the same place, author
<i>i.e.</i>	<i>id est</i>	that is to say
	<i>infra</i>	below
	<i>inter alia</i>	amongst other things
<i>loc. cit.</i>	<i>loco citato</i>	in the place cited/mentioned
<i>N.B.</i>	<i>nota bene</i>	note well/carefully
<i>op. cit.</i>	<i>opere citato</i>	in the work already cited
<i>P.S.</i>	<i>post scriptum</i>	after writing
	<i>passim</i>	here & there, in several places
<i>pro tem.</i>	<i>pro tempore</i>	for the time, temporarily
<i>q.v.</i>	<i>quod vide</i>	which see, elsewhere in the same book
	<i>recto</i>	front of folio or page
<i>sc.</i>	<i>scilicet</i>	that is to say
	<i>sic</i>	thus used, spelt, etc.
	<i>stet</i>	as it was originally
	<i>supra</i>	above
<i>v., vs.</i>	<i>versus</i>	against
	<i>verso</i>	back of folio or page
	<i>vide</i>	see
<i>viz.</i>	<i>videlicet</i>	namely, that is to say
<i>v.v.</i>	<i>vice versa</i>	the other way round

## 14. Additional Resources for Writing and Research

### Books

Anson, Christopher, Robert Schwegler and Marcia Muth. *The Longman Writer's Companion*. 3rd edition. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2005.

Barnet, Sylvan. *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*. 7th edition. New York: Longman, 2003.

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 6th edition. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2003.

Sayre, Henry M. *Writing About Art*. 4th edition. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2002.

Strunk, William, and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 3rd edition. New York: Macmillan, 1979.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 6th edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

University of Chicago Press. *The Chicago Manual of Style*. 15th edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

### Selected University of Otago Web Resources for Research & Writing

Art History & Theory Subject Guide, University of Otago Library

[http://www.library.otago.ac.nz/subject\\_guides/art-history.html](http://www.library.otago.ac.nz/subject_guides/art-history.html)

Electronic Reference page of the University of Otago Library

<http://www.library.otago.ac.nz/resources/virtref.html>

On-line Study Skills page of the Student Learning Centre

<http://slc.otago.ac.nz/studyskills/studyskills.asp>

Department of History Writing Guide

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/history/studyskills/essays.html>