

## Form E-1-A for Boston College Core Curriculum

### Department/Program: Art History

- 1) **Have formal learning outcomes for the department's Core courses been developed? What are they?** (What specific sets of skills and knowledge does the department expect students completing its Core courses to have acquired?)

In 2022-2023 we streamlined our learning goals for the Arts Core in Art History to the following three criteria:

- Students will be able to analyze the relationship between art and its historical context in a broadly defined geographic area and time span.
- Students will be able to fluently describe the formal properties of objects and images, explaining how they construct and convey meaning.
- Students will be able to make logical, clearly reasoned arguments about the purpose and meaning of art in human history.

- 2) **Where are these learning outcomes published? Be specific.** (Where are the department's expected learning outcomes for its Core courses accessible: on the web, in the catalog, or in your department handouts?)

They are published on our department website: <https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/morrissey/departments/art/programs/art-history/major-minor.html#:~:text=Learning%20Outcomes-.Learning%20Outcomes,discipline's%20subfields%20across%20the%20globe.>

- 3) **Other than GPA, what data/evidence is used to determine whether students have achieved the stated outcomes for the Core requirement?** (What evidence and analytical approaches do you use to assess which of the student learning outcomes have been achieved more or less well?)

Last year we also changed out method of assessment. We decided to take a sampling of the required term papers in ARTH1101 and ARTH1102 and rate them against one of our new Learning Outcome questions.

This year we selected the following question: Students are able to analyze the relationship between art and its historical context in a broadly defined geographic area and time span. To what extent does the writing sample meet these goals? We evaluated the writing samples on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest.

- 4) **Who interprets the evidence? What is the process?** (Who in the department is responsible for interpreting the data and making recommendations for curriculum or assignment changes if appropriate? When does this occur?)

Art History faculty read a selection of the papers in May. The collected data is submitted the DUS (see below). The Art History faculty meet to discuss the results in the fall semester.

- 5) **What were the assessment results and what changes have been made as a result of using this data/evidence?** (What were the major assessment findings? Have there been any recent changes to your curriculum or program? How did the assessment data contribute to those changes?)

As stated above, this year we streamlined the Learning Outcomes for Arts Core.

- 6) **Date of the most recent program review.** (Your latest comprehensive departmental self-study and external review.)

2012 (external review)

### **Aurelia Campbell**

**Paper 1: Jenny (Yingxiao) Wang. Rating: 5/5. Comments:** This paper compares J. M. W. Turner's *The Slave Ship* to an excerpt from Thomas Clarkson's "The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade." The student appears to grasp the historical context of the painting and comes up with a strong thesis comparing the two works. Especially successful were the author's arguments about the strong emotions conveyed through both the painting and the text.

**Paper 2: Liam Conroy. Rating: 5/5. Comments:** This paper engages in a careful comparison between Seurat's *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte* to Ogden Rood's *Modern Chromatics*. The author makes many detailed comparisons between the painting and specific principles outlined within the book. He engages in close observation and appears to understand the ways in which color theory is incorporated into the painting. The author also extends the discussion to contemporary scientific discoveries, demonstrating the connections between art and science at this time.

### **Emine Fetvaci**

**Paper 1. Rating: 5/5. Comments:** The paper by Lawrence Shaw does an excellent job of connecting J. M. W. Turner's painting *The Slave Ship* to its historical context through reference to an 1839 text on the abolishment of the slave trade. The paper first describes the contents of the text, and then provides a good formal analysis of the painting, touching upon the topic, composition, colors and brushstrokes of the painting. At each possible moment the topic of the painting, which is intimately connected to historical events at the time, is brought into conversation with the historical text. The author argues that without recourse to the text the painting might be thought to depict a past event, but with reference to the text, it appears to be commenting on an ongoing and common situation. The paper thus carefully analyzes the connection between the painting and its historical context.

**Paper 2. Rating: 4/5. Comments:** The paper by Yuan Xu examines the famous painting “La Grande Jatte” by Georges Seurat, in conversation with a contemporaneous text, Ogden Rood’s “On the Mixture of Colors.” This paper’s discussion of the historical context surrounding “La Grande Jatte” was somewhat superficial, more could have been done to bring the written document analyzed as part of the assignment in conversation with the painting itself. The connection between the painting and the contemporaneous text was reiterated through repetition, rather than expanding on a number of salient aspects.

### **John Lansdowne**

**Paper 1: Farah Haskin. Rating: 5/5. Comments:** This paper contextualizes Seurat’s *La Grande Jatte* with Ogden Rood’s *On the Mixture of Colors*. It is very carefully written and organized, with many choice excerpts from Rood’s text, detailed visual analysis, description of Seurat’s distinctive technique, and numerous elegant turns-of-phrase. While the paper could use a stronger thesis statement at the outset as a means to tie this incredibly rich and complicated set of visual and textual material together, the evidence it provides—pertaining to light mixing and various principles / theories of visual perception—and the impressive way in which it is interwoven clearly demonstrates the author’s understanding of the “symbiotic” relationship linking the very specific painting technique of pointillism and the very specific scientific treatise offered by Rood, as well as the ability to place this “harmonious” “tapestry” within a broader interconnected history of art and science in the nineteenth century.

**Paper 2: Natalie Chen. Rating: 4/5. Comments:** This paper contextualizes Seurat’s *La Grande Jatte* with excerpts from Ogden Rood’s *On the Mixture of Colors*. I would have liked to have seen a thesis statement that more precisely states the specificity of the relationship between the painter/painting and the writer/treatise. It also would have been preferable to have the author’s study of and attention toward the painting and Seurat’s distinctive techniques more directly integrated with that of Ogden’s text, the excerpts from which are carefully selected, rich, and highly relevant. As presented here, Seurat’s painting and Ogden’s treatise appear to almost dance around one another; the nature of their relationship is indefinite, marked by an ambiguous “influence”. To the author’s credit, however, this relationship is also not overplayed and, overall, the paper succeeds in placing *La Grande Jatte* within a wider historical context.

### **Stephanie Leone**

**Paper 1. Rating: 4. Comments:** The student demonstrates a strong ability to interpret the relationship between the painting and the historical document but doesn’t place this comparison into the historical period until after making these connections and never directly addresses the geographical area. One important conclusion is that this painting and document show both the artist’s knowledge of tradition and innovation. This would be strengthened if the “tradition” of the historical period were defined.

**Paper 2. Rating: 3. Comments:** This student also makes convincing connections between the painting and the historical document. The student starts with the historical situation so that

helps to clarify the broader context but the precise relationship between the subject of the painting (a scene from the late 1700s) and the 1839 document that pertains to Great Britain's attempt to abolish slavery remains murky. Is the throwing of slaves overboard in Turner's painting indeed motivated by the same historical concerns as the British Parliament offering rewards for capturing slave ships in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century?

### Kevin Lotery

**Paper 1. Rating: 3.5. Comments:** The text examines the relationship between Ogden Rood's color theory and Georges Seurat's development of the divisionist ("pointillist") technique. The author demonstrates a solid understanding of Rood's color theory (though there are a few minor ambiguities that could use some clarification), especially when it comes to the key issue of "optical mixture." I agree that this is one of the key ideas conditioning Seurat's divisionism. That said, I don't think the author reckons adequately with the differences between the scientific theory and the painterly technique. She does mention the problems in mediating between colored light and colored pigment, but I was curious what else she thinks Seurat does to the painterly gesture itself in order to make it approach Rood's theory (the reduction of the stroke to a mechanical mark, the repetition of the stroke, the removal of line altogether, etc.). I also think more could have been done with Seurat's relationship to Impressionist technique. This could have been done either via the question of gesture or the issue of subject matter. The latter is only briefly mentioned near the end of the piece, but can we explore this further to see if a critical relationship to science, industry, and leisure might be unpacked here?

**Paper 2. Rating: 4.5. Comments.** This text investigates the relationship between JMW Turner's *The Slave Ship* (1841) and Thomas Clarkson's abolitionist text of 1839. The essay does a nice job of articulating the ways in which both the text and the painting are involved in a larger historical struggle, while also attending to the different strategies deployed. The author includes an efficient analysis of the Clarkson text and a well-written iconographical treatment of the painting. He makes an important point about how both mobilize a historical event (the Zong atrocity) as a "call to action" in the present. I do think, however, that the text could have extended its iconographical analysis to an investigation of form and technique. This might have given us more to think about when it comes to those "loose brushstrokes" that are brought up only in the final line of the paper.

### Oliver Wunsch

**Paper 1. Rating: 5. Comments:** The student convincingly situated both Turner's painting and Clarkson's document within their respective contexts. The student then established clear links between them while acknowledging the ways in which the painting diverged from the text. Visual and textual evidence supported each claim.

**Paper 2. Rating: 4.5. Comments:** The student uses ample visual and textual evidence to highlight similarities between Turner's painting and Clarkson's text. The discussion of the Turner painting could be improved with a little more context about what the painting depicts

(e.g. explicitly identifying the ship as the Zong), which would lead to a greater understanding of how the painting and the text diverge. But the overall analysis of the commonalities between the painting and the document is strong.