

**Art History Writing Guidelines**  
**University of Northern Colorado**  
**Department of Visual Arts Art**

The following guidelines have been prepared for use in all art history classes at the University of Northern Colorado in art history, like other university classes in the liberal arts such as English, history and philosophy, require essay and paper writing. As a student in the university you are expected to adhere to correct format in such basic skills as spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure. The following guidelines refer to both basic writing skills and general paper format specific to art history.

**A. Basic Format Requirements:**

1. Papers are typed or computer printed on white paper and are double-spaced with one-inch margins on one side of 8-1/2 x 11 inch paper in 10 or 12-point type. Do not justify the right-hand margin.
2. Papers start with a separate title page with class name, number and section number if applicable. The title page also should include your name, date and the title of the paper.
3. Papers are stapled or secured. No plastic binders or covers should be used.
4. Pages must be numbered consecutively.

**B. Paper Text:**

1. Papers should begin with an introductory paragraph stating your thesis or intent, which explains your main idea and outlines your methodology. The paragraph guides your reader into the body of the paper. An example of a thesis statement follows:

Through investigations of 17<sup>th</sup> century scientific theory this paper will set out to prove that Jan Vermeer did indeed use the technique of *camera obscura* as a visual aid in his interior and landscape paintings. By comparing the science of optics at the time to techniques visible in Vermeer's actual canvasses, the paper will establish a strong case for this connection.

2. The body of your paper consists of paragraphs. Paragraphs are necessary as they organize and separate the ideas in your paper. Begin a new idea with a new paragraph which should be indented five spaces on the next line. The body is the main component of the paper where you develop ideas and explain them to your reader and prove your thesis statement.
3. Papers end with a one paragraph conclusion summarizing proof of your thesis statement. This is not a place to introduce new information.

**C. Referencing Artists, Titles, Exhibitions, Collections, Foreign Terminology, Biblical and Classical References, Numerals and Dates:**

1. Give full names of artists the first time they are mentioned; thereafter, last name only.
2. Titles of artworks should be capitalized and underlined or *italicized*.
3. Exhibition titles and titles of exhibition catalogues should be underlined or *italicized*.
4. Give the full name and place for museums or collections, i.e., National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C..
5. Foreign phrases used in art history, such as *trompe l'oeil*, *sfumato*, *passage* are *italicized* or underlined.
6. For biblical and classical references refer to the Chicago Manual of Style, 15<sup>th</sup> edition.  
General guidelines are as follows:

a. In text references to whole books of the Bible or whole psalms are spelled out. For example: "The opening Chapters of Ephesians constitutes Paul's most compelling sermon on love."

b. Exact references to scriptural passages, used in either text or notes, employ abbreviations and follow the following form: Book. Chapter: Verse (Gen.25:19). The version used, Vulgate, King James, etc. should also be noted.

c. For classic works with standardized systems use the subdivisions traditionally established, e.g. Odyssey 9.266

7. Generally whole numbers from one through ninety-nine are spelled out. Numerals are used for larger numbers. For example:

He was twenty-four years old when he began to paint.

The first edition of the text ran to 2,670 pages in three volumes, with 160 engraved illustrations.

Exceptions to these rules include percentages, references to currency and year dates where numerals are used (80%, \$75., 1945).

Centuries and decades can either be spelled out or denoted through numerals. Twentieth century and 20<sup>th</sup> century are both correct.

#### **D. Illustrations:**

1. Art history papers require reference illustrations which can be Xeroxes or scans.

2. When preparing illustrations do not include printed material from the book from which you are Xeroxing or scanning. This appears sloppy. Include only the art work and typed label information.
3. Label information or captions should include the following: figure #, artist's name or culture, title or description of work, date, medium and dimensions if known, and location. Sample caption: Fig. 1, Jasper Johns, Numbers in Color, 1965, encaustic and collage on canvas, 5'6-1/2" x 4'1-1/2", Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo.
4. References to illustrations should be made in the text of your paper in the following form: (Fig. 1), (Fig. 2), etc. Sample: Michelangelo's David exhibits an excellent understanding of human anatomy (see Fig. 9).
5. Use illustrations to make specific points in your paper. Refer to specific works of art. Make sure to point out the specific details in the work that you want your reader to notice.
6. Illustrations can be incorporated into the text or gathered at the back. Label information is placed under the image. Keep in mind that space used for in-text images does not count towards written page requirements.

#### **E. Bibliography or Works Cited Page:**

1. A note on bibliography style: the examples given below follow the format used in *The Chicago Manual of Style, 15<sup>th</sup> Edition*. You may encounter different styles in your research. *The Chicago Manual of Style* is used here because it is the style preferred by the College Art Association for *Art Journal* contributions and the style preferred by most book publishers. For difficult citation problems not outlined here please consult *The Chicago Manual of Style*. *The Chicago Manual* is also available online at [www.press.uchicago.edu](http://www.press.uchicago.edu)
2. Papers must include a separate bibliography or works cited page that cites all sources. The bibliography is attached at the end of your paper.
3. The bibliography is alphabetized by author's last name. Special problems may be solved by observing the following principles:
  - a. A single-author entry comes before a multi-author entry beginning with the same name.
  - b. Original works precede works edited, compiled or translated by the same person.
  - c. Works by the same person can be arranged chronologically by date of publication or alphabetically by title.
  - d. Works with an institutional author (for example, a museum or gallery) are listed with the institution in place of the author's name and are incorporated into the alphabetical list.

4. The bibliography of a paper is single-spaced with one blank line between entries. The first line of each entry is flush left, and any run-over lines are indented five spaces.
5. The title of a book or journal may be either underlined or *italicized* but should be consistent within your paper. Examples given are in italics but both are acceptable.
6. Citations for books, articles, electronic sources and exhibition catalogues differ. See the examples below.

**Sample citation – book:**

Rice, David Talbot. *Islamic Art*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1991.

**Sample citation – journal article:**

Gimbutas, Marija. "Achilleion: a Neolithic mound in Thessaly." *Journal of Field Archaeology*, vol I, 1974, 277-302.

**Sample citation – exhibition catalogue with institutional author:**

Walker Art Center. *De Stijl, 1917-31: Visions of Utopia* exh. cat., text by M. Friedman and others. Minneapolis, 1982.

**Sample citation – essay in exhibition catalogue or anthology:**

Maurer, Evan M.. "Dada and Surrealism." In *Primitivism in Twentieth Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*. exh. cat., New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984, 535-94.

**Sample citations – electronic source:**

Cooke, Lynne. *7000 Oaks*. [essay on-line]. New York: Dia Center for the Arts, 1995. Available from (<http://www.diacenter.org>.)

Jewell, Sarah Orne. 1997. *The Country of the Pointed Firs* [online]. New York: Columbia University, 1996. Available from (<http://www.columbia.edu/acis/bartleby/jewett>)

**F. Footnotes and Endnotes**

1. A note on footnote style: the examples given below follow the format used in *The Chicago Manual of Style, 15<sup>th</sup> Edition*. You may encounter different styles in your research. *The Chicago Manual of Style* is used here because it is the style preferred by the College Art Association for *Art Journal* contributions and the style preferred by most book publishers. For difficult citation problems not outlined here please consult *The Chicago Manual of Style*. *The Chicago Manual* is also available online at [www.press.uchicago.edu](http://www.press.uchicago.edu)

2. When you refer to ideas and insights of others, or directly quote from articles, books or other sources, you must cite these sources in a footnote or endnote. Choose one or the other. In other words if you appropriate phrases, whole passages, ideas or the logic of an argument from someone else you must acknowledge your source. To not do so is to plagiarize, a serious academic offense. You do not need to note anything that is considered common knowledge such as historical facts, definitions or location of works of art.
3. Footnotes are placed at the bottom of the page where the citation is made.
4. Endnotes are listed in numerical order on a separate page that follows the text but is placed before the bibliography. Endnotes are double-spaced between entries, flush left.
5. Footnote or endnote numbers in your text must be consecutive and indicated in superscript (a raised number) in your text. For example if you were to use the following quote from Franz Marc in your text it would look like this: “It is like a premonition of this war, horrible and shattering. I can hardly conceive that I painted it.”<sup>1</sup> The following citation in your text would use the raised number 2.
6. The footnote number should appear after the final punctuation of the sentence. You can place a footnote after a single phrase in a complex sentence or in a sentence with several references but generally these situations should be avoided.
7. Annotated footnotes (content footnotes) are used to give additional information that is not essential to the thesis of your paper, but important enough to refer to. See sample annotated footnotes listed below.
8. When you make subsequent references to a work you’ve already cited in full, you may shorten your note. Examples of both full citations and shortened citations are noted below. Do not refer to the previous note number and do not use *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*, or *ibid.*
9. The following abbreviations are commonly used in art historical footnotes: *trans.* for translated by, *ed.* for edited by, *exh. cat.* for exhibition catalogue, *rpt.* for reprinted.

**Sample notes – books:**

1. Carl Woodring, *Nature into Art: Cultural Transformations in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), 23.
2. Stephan Lackner, *Max Beckmann* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991), 56.

**Sample note – book, shortened for subsequent citation:**

3. Lackner, *Max Beckmann*, 57.

**Sample notes – articles:**

4. Timothy O. Benson, "Mysticism, Materialism and the Machine in Berlin Dada," *Art Journal* 46 (Spring 1987): 46-55.

5. Richard Bolton, "Art as Education," *New Art Examiner*, vol. 20, no. 5 (January 1993): 12.

**Sample note – article, shortened form for subsequent citation:**

6. Bolton, "Art as Education," 14-15.

**Sample note – exhibition catalogue:**

7. Sidra Stich, *Made in U.S.A.: An Americanization in Modern Art, the '50s and '60s*, exh. cat. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 157-158.

**Samples of annotated or content footnotes:**

8. Stan Brakhage, "Metaphors on Vision," *Film Culture*, no. 30 (1963), 120. Brakhage wrote this essay as early as 1960. Viola discovered the films of Brakhage, Hollis, Frampton, Michael Snow and others while he was a student at Syracuse.

9. See Stephen Bann, *Paul Delaroche: History Painted* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 118, who notes Delaroche's attempts at reform of the Salon jury system which failed in 1834 and, again, in 1836. He resigned from the Salon jury, as did Horace Vernet.

**Sample citations – electronic sources:**

10. Lynne Cooke, *7000 Oaks*, (New York: Dia Center for the Arts, 1995) [essay on-line]; available from <http://www.diacenter.org>.

11. Gail Mortimer, *The William Faulkner Society Home Page*, 16 September 1996; available from <http://www.utep.edu/mortimer/faulkner>

**G. Quotations:**

1. Quotations under four lines are integrated into the text of your paper and require quotation marks. All punctuation falls within the quotation marks.

2. Quotations over four lines are not integrated. These quotes start on the next line, are indented five spaces at both margins, are single-spaced and do not require quotation marks.

3. All quotes require footnotes or endnotes.

4. Do not overly rely on direct quotes in your paper. Try to interpret and analyze the issues in your own words whenever possible. Use direct quotes when they add color, state a point eloquently or emphatically, or when what someone says is the direct focus of your discussion.

## H. Common Mistakes and Problems in Style:

Listed below are common mistakes made in paper writing in art history classes. This list is by no means comprehensive. For further information consult *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

1. Spelling Errors. Do not rely entirely on spell-check computer functions. Check spelling over yourself and use a dictionary to check not only spelling but also, the meaning of words. Homonyms are trouble: cite, sight and site, for example.
2. Incomplete Sentences. Sentences must contain a subject and a verb.
3. “It’s” means “it is.” The possessive pronouns – hers, yours, ours, its – do not need an apostrophe. “It’s color appears red” is incorrect and should read “Its color appears red.”
4. Capitalize the first letter of places (America, the West), nationalities (Native Americans, Europeans) and art movements (Cubism) except when used as an adjective (The painting is cubist in style).
5. Punctuation. Commas, semi-colons, colons and dashes need to be correctly applied. Consult references for proper usage.
6. Double space between sentences in a paragraph.
7. Keep tense consistent. Don’t switch from past to present tense or vice versa within a single sentence. An incorrect example is “Caravaggio utilizes light in a new way and created new emotional possibilities.” The correct sentence reads “Caravaggio utilized light in a new way and created new emotional possibilities.”
8. Subject and verbs must agree. The verb form must be singular if the subject is singular, or plural if the subject is plural. “The most telltale signs of the painter’s personal style is absent.” is incorrect. The sentence should read “The most telltale signs of the painter’s personal style are absent.”
9. Use possessive apostrophes properly. For example, “the artist’s work” (for work belonging to one artist) and “the artists’ work” (for work belonging to several artists).
10. Do not use apostrophes when noting a decade or century. “The 1950’s were marked by consensus.” is incorrect. “The 1950s were marked by consensus.” is correct.
11. Run-on sentences (R-O). A run-on sentence is two complete sentences joined together as if they were one. For example, “He did not appreciate the painting he was blind to its beauty.” is a run-on sentence and is incorrect. Correct this by dividing the sentence into two – “He did not appreciate the painting. He was blind to its beauty.” You can also use a semi-colon – “He did not appreciate the painting; he was blind to its beauty.”

12. Avoid the word “being” unless you use it as a verb. “Being that Picasso was Spanish,” is incorrect. “Since Picasso was Spanish,” is correct.

13. Be aware of passive voice. Excessive use of “had been” creates unclear, awkward writing. Place your subject at the beginning of the sentence.

14. Sentence fragments (FRAG). “Such as Rembrandt’s color and composition,” is a sentence fragment and is incorrect.

15. Do not rely excessively on quoted material; quotes should support your own statements, not replace what you need to write yourself. Don’t use a quote just because it sounds better than what you can write.

16. It’s very useful to ask another person to read over your paper before printing out the final copy to check for any further technical errors and general clarity. Try to read your paper out loud; this technique helps to point out confusing or awkward passages. Work towards clarity, organization and simplicity in your writing.

17. When finished with your rough draft on a computer, always make a print out of the draft, since this is much easier to check for errors than when the paper appears on the screen. Rewriting and revision is expected. Working from a basic outline is helpful.

18. A final reminder: check with the UNC Writing Center, run by the Department of English, in regard to questions and problems you may have. Check the UNC directory for location.

### **I. Grading Criteria:**

Grading criteria will differ from class to class based upon class level and the specifics of assignments. However, in all art history classes, grades will be based, in part, on correct writing format, spelling, grammar and style.