Art 158: Paper Assignment
Visual Analysis of a Museum Object
Due May 7, 2019

Part I (Visual Analysis): Attend the class field trip to the San Diego Museum of Man in Balboa Park on March 12, 2019. We will be meeting in front of the Museum of Man at 12:00 pm, sharp. Select one work of art that interests you and that you would like to look at and analyze in detail. It must come from the geographical areas and time periods covered by our class. Examine the work carefully, and take notes on the questions listed below.

If you are unable to attend the class field trip to the Museum of Man, as an alternate assignment you will need to go on your own time. The museum’s phone number and website are listed on the back. You may also ask for approval from me to go to another museum or gallery.

Part II (Research): Visit the library at MiraCosta College, or your local public library, and find three scholarly sources that deal with the work of art, the artist, the culture which the work comes from, or the period of time for the work that you have selected. Of these three sources, only one can be an appropriate website. (This does not include online versions of print-based media such as books or journals.) Your textbooks are not valid sources for this paper. Wikipedia and other encyclopedias are also not valid sources, and will not be counted. If you are uncertain about a source, please ask me. We will be having a library orientation on April 18, 2019, to help you with the research portion of the assignment.

Part III: Write a detailed analysis in four to five double-spaced type-written pages. Devote approximately one and a half pages to a visual analysis of the work of art that you have selected. Thoroughly answer the questions listed below under “Part I.” In the remaining pages, discuss the work in terms of its artistic and historical context as it appears in your research from the three sources that you have chosen. You will be graded on spelling, grammar and writing skills, so please make sure to proofread your work. Please make sure not to unintentionally plagiarize from your sources: if you quote or paraphrase another author’s ideas, you will need to make a citation to that source. If you use the same wording as the author does, you will need to directly quote from the source, and provide a citation. You will also need to include a bibliography.

I highly recommend visiting the MiraCosta College Writing Center for this assignment.

For Part I (Visual Analysis), consider the following issues:

Scale: What is its approximate size in relationship to you? Is it hand-sized, half your size, person-sized, larger than you, etc.? How does this affect your relationship to the work?

Material: What is the work made of? Do the materials that it is made of affect its appearance?

Subject Matter: What is the subject of the piece? Is its subject characteristic of the period and/or culture in which it was made (i.e. Are many other artists at this time or in this culture making works with similar subjects)?

Composition: How are the forms arranged or organized? Consider the forms as a two-dimensional design on the surface of the canvas, or as three-dimensional forms in space. Is there a particular element that serves as the visual focus? Why is your eye led to this area? Are
the different parts of the composition linked in such a way as to guide the eye around the piece? How is this achieved?

**The Human Figure:** If your work includes human figures, how are they depicted? Are they naturalistically or abstractly rendered? Are the bodies proportioned and portrayed realistically? Are their poses natural? Are they clothed and/or decorated?

**For Part II (Research), consider the following issues:**

**Context:** When and where was the piece created? Do you think that this work is typical of its period and/or culture? Why or why not? What important historical events were happening in the time and place where the artist was working? How might these events have influenced the artist in making this artwork?

**Function:** What was this work’s function? How might it’s intended use have determined it’s formal and visual characteristics? Does this work look like other objects used for a similar purpose?

**Artist:** What information do we have about the artist who made this work? Was there anything important culturally (such as politics, religion, or philosophy) that might have influenced this artist? Do we know why making this work was important to the culture from which it comes?

**Other:** Please feel free to include other important information that interests you about this artist, artwork, culture, or style of art making.

**Grading:**

You will be graded upon how successfully you perform both portions of this assignment, as well as upon how clearly you present your ideas. An excellent paper will have a detailed visual analysis of a single work of art, and specific research that gives the context for the creation of this artwork. It will be well-written, without grammar or spelling errors. The research portion will provide appropriate citations (either as footnotes, endnotes, or as in-text citations) to other authors’ ideas, and there will be a correct bibliography. The paper will be clear, concise and organized.

**Museum Information:**

For information about The San Diego Museum of Man, including hours and location, please either call: (619) 239–2001, or visit the museum’s website: [www.museumofman.org](http://www.museumofman.org).

**DUE DATE** May 7, 2019 at the beginning of class. Late papers will be marked down 1/3 of a letter grade for EVERY CLASS MEETING they are past due.

**Library Orientation, April 18, 2019.**

**Museum of Man Field Trip, March 12, 2019, 12:00 pm.**

**If you would like to propose a different paper topic, you must discuss it with me first**