

Annual Assessment Report

Department: Art

Academic Year: 2019-2020

Date of Submission: 10-11-20

Department Chair: Lisa DeBoer (2019-2020) Nathan Huff (2020-2021)

I. Response to the previous year PRC's recommendations

There were no questions or recommendations resulting from our 2019 Annual Report

II A. Program Learning Outcome (PLO) assessment

Program Learning Outcome	PLO #1: Graduates will conceive, create and present technically and conceptually sophisticated work. (Factors relevant to achieving this goal include openness to process, exploration and discovery; engaging the relationships between concept, medium and form; engagement with the critique process; following through with appropriate presentation.)
Who is in Charge /Involved?	Data gathering for studio PLO: Faculty teaching Art 193 & 195 and all upper division studio classes Data gathering for art history PLO: Faculty teaching upper division art history classes Discussion and Analysis: The entire art faculty
<u>Direct Assessment Methods</u>	This year, all assessment will be direct. We will use faculty assessment of student work including senior projects, semester projects in upper division art history classes, and some targeted assignments in upper division studio classes.
<u>Indirect Assessment Methods</u>	
Major Findings	Art History: 82% of our majors earn some sort of B or above, on average, meeting our 75% departmental benchmark. Studio: Though our studio students meet our 75% benchmark for all the elements of our "Making" assessment, we notice that ideation continues to be the area in which we'd like to see students grow more. We note, however, that the changes we've made to our curriculum in the last decade seem to be having an impact. The increase in seniors' scores relative to "all art major" scores in both process and ideation show encouraging growth.

Closing the Loop Activities

At our September 8 department meeting, we discussed the data from our art history assessment, and determined that we would make no changes at this time. At our September 29 department meeting, we discussed the data from the studio assessment, and decided to schedule an “ideation mini-workshop” for some Friday afternoon this year, in order to get a better sense of the kinds of assignments and exercises we are using across the art curriculum to encourage growth in this higher order, conceptual skill.

Collaboration and Communication

2019-2020 Art Department Assessment

STUDIO MAJORS

PLO #1: Graduates will conceive, create and present technically and conceptually sophisticated work.¹

The department created a rubric for evaluating our “Making” PLO across four categories: ideation, process, dialogue & critique, and presentation. See Appendix 1 for the rubric. Using the rubric, we gathered information on art majors in our spring upper-division studio classes and in our senior seminar. Because Professor Huff was on sabbatical all of 2019-2020, we had fewer upper division studio classes than we would have had in a normal year. Nonetheless, we were able to have a meaningful discussion based on the data we were able to gather.

The data below were taken from the two upper division studio classes where there were a mix of seniors and first years/sophomores/juniors. Since Art 195 only enrolls seniors, there is no comparative data from those classes. The data show that in all four categories (ideation, process, dialogue & critique, presentation) our seniors outperform younger students, indicating that as students move through the program, they do indeed grow and mature in all these areas. While one might expect this result, it is encouraging to see the numbers back it up.

We set a departmental benchmark of 75% competence for each of these elements. We meet that criterion if we take into account all “Above Average/3,” “Strong/4,” and “Excellent/5” scores. Looking at only “Strong/4” and “Excellent/5” scores, however, our numbers are lower.

IDEATION	Class Overall Average	Non-seniors	Seniors Only	AbAve-Exc	Str-Exc
162	3.43	3.00	3.75	100%	29%
165	3.44	3.14	4.5	89%	44%
193/5			3.5	75%	46%
PROCESS					
162	3.43	3.00	4.25	100%	43%
165	3.56	3.14	5	67%	56%
193/5	--	--	3.66	92%	54%
DIALOGUE & CRITIQUE					
162	4.00	4.00	4	100%	100%
165	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
193/5	--	--	3.76	92%	54%
PRESENTATION					
162	4.14	4.00	4.75	100%	100%
165	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
193/5	--	--	3.86	100%	58%

¹ Factors relevant to achieving this goal include openness to process, exploration and discovery; engaging the relationships between concept, medium and form; engagement with the critique process; following through with appropriate presentation.

Art 162 enrolled 7 majors, 4 of them seniors
 Art 165 enrolled 9 majors, 2 of them seniors
 art 195 enrolled 12 students, all of them seniors

Combining all classes and all students, in our “all studio majors” pool, students do best with presentation, next best with dialogue & critique, and next best with process. The numbers are lowest for ideation. Among our seniors, the order is slightly different: presentation and process are nearly tied, with dialogue & critique next in order but, once again, the lowest average assessments for ideation.

	All Student & All Courses Average	Non-seniors	Seniors Only	AbAve-Exc	Str-Exc
IDEATION	3.47	3.10	3.81	85%	44%
PROCESS	3.58	3.10	4.14	87%	54%
DIALOGUE & CRITIQUE	3.84	4.00	3.84	93%	67%
PRESENTATION	3.95	4.00	4.16	100%	70%

DISCUSSION: Due to the unusual nature of last spring--Nathan’s sabbatical and thus fewer upper division studio classes and the pandemic-necessitated messy end to the semester—we want to hold these numbers lightly. Nonetheless, we were glad to see that the numbers for our seniors indicate growth over time, and we were not entirely surprised to note that ideation remains the lowest-scored of the four elements we assessed for “making”—though significantly, for seniors, the gap between ideation and the other elements we assessed was much smaller, indicating again, more growth over time for our seniors than for the majors-at-large.

Ever since we began assessing our students’ growth in the early 2000s, “conceptual thinking” or “ideation” has been the holy grail of our work. In the mid-2000s we built in our sophomore project to give students a taste of this earlier in their college career. In the mid-2010s, we re-imagined our curriculum to pair conceptual growth with technical growth, integrating a new required course, Art 111: Intermedia, into the studio core, and dramatically shifting the content of Art 70: 3-D design. All these efforts have, in our view, improved our students’ achievement in this area, which is perhaps what we are seeing in the jump in average from 3.47 to 3.81 between “all majors” and “seniors.”

Ideation is a higher-order skill and is thus more challenging for many students than lower-order skills like kinds of technical competence or dialogue and critique. In reality, we can start students on this path, but true achievement in this area is really what MFA programs are for. We are pleased with the results we are seeing in our students' improvement. Still, in discussion, we decided to hold one of our Friday afternoon min-workshops to compare assignment prompts for our upper-division, open-ended studio projects. We may learn something interesting and useful from seeing what’s happening across the department. Besides, we enjoy each other’s company!

ART HISTORY MAJORS

PLO #1: Graduates will conceive, create and present technically and conceptually sophisticated work.

Because there are few Art History graduates relative to studio graduates, for this initial foray into art history assessment, we've **compiled data on the grades for semester projects** (not final course grades) **in upper-division art history courses for the last seven years**. We are using grades for semester projects rather than a rubric, as we are reaching back to 2014 for enough data and have few details on those projects other than their final grade.

Brief descriptions of the final project for each course are provided at the end of this document. Some art history majors took classes abroad. We don't have data for those classes. We also had an adjunct or two over the years to cover Art 128 while Professor DeBoer had course releases for chairing the department and/or other responsibilities. The grades for those semester projects are also unavailable.

The Data:

11 art history majors took 49 upper division classes between 2014 and 2020 with either Professor Larson or Professor DeBoer. We've entered the grades for those projects using numbers as stand-ins for letter grades. 1 = F and 12 = A. Flat B's, C's and D's are multiples of 3: A = 12; B=9; C=6; D=3. The average grade for the semester projects in all those classes was a flat B.

	124	126	127	128	129	131	132	133	Student Average	
Urbano				12	12	12	12	12	11.90	A
Klopfer			4.5	6		1	8		4.88	C-
VonGrey		8.6		8.6		9	10	9	9.04	B
Lowe	8	9		11		9	12	12	10.13	B+
Dawson	10					9	12	12	10.75	A-
Stack	11			12		10	12	12	11.30	A-
Strauss	10					5	11		8.67	B
Vasquez	10				6	9.5	6		7.88	B-
Master	0			11	12	0	0		4.54	D+
Galloway	12			9		12	12		11.25	A-
Ross	11				12	6	12		10.25	B+
TOTAL Average								9.20		

Of the 11 art history majors...

- 4 or 36% of art history majors averaged grades of A or A- on semester projects
- 5 or 46 % of art history majors averaged grades of B- to B+ on semester projects
- 2 or 18% averaged grades of D+ to C- on semester projects

9 or 82% of our majors earn some sort of B or above, on average, meeting our 75% departmental benchmark.

Of course with a small number of graduates, we know the student behind each of these numbers. In that lowest category, one student was, simply put, a very weak learner. This student tended to disengage. The student had no documented learning challenges. The other student in that category is a very intellectually capable student, but one who struggles with significant emotional and mental health challenges. Both students had difficulty completing assignments, but for very different reasons.

It's noteworthy that any one student tended to receive a variety of grades for semester projects over the course of their major. It's the rare student that earns A's across the board. This reflects a number of factors:

- A student's intellectual growth over time
- Particular circumstances during a given semester (both personal and local, like fires, mudslides and pandemics)
- The varied aims and challenges of each semester project. Professor Larson and Professor DeBoer intentionally vary the nature of each course's semester project to let students practice a range of skills. Assignment descriptions are included at the end of this report. Additionally, Professor DeBoer typically uses multi-stage projects, and offers feedback and opportunities for re-writing at every stage.

DISCUSSION: Even without the benefit of a rubric, which would have been impossible to apply to semester projects from years ago, in reviewing our gradebooks for these classes, these projects and these students, we noticed the following patterns

- Students who consistently earned a B+ or above were able to engage the content with depth and nuance, wrote clearly, documented sources correctly and met deadlines.
- Students in the B/B- range fell into two groups.
 - Students who demonstrated intellectual growth over the course of their time at Westmont, but whose overall average was pulled down by earlier, weaker performances.
 - Students who were erratic. The "erratics" in general had the capacity to do well, but also had a more casual attitude toward editing and deadlines. For the most part, they were a cheerful lot, who made their choices and took the consequences.
- Students at the bottom of the range also fell into two groups:
 - Weak students who, even with much support and coaching did not make much progress
 - Students whose emotional/mental health struggles made completing assignments, and occasionally entire courses, impossible.

One question this exercise has raised, is whether the intentional variation in assignments prevents students from practicing certain kinds of long-form writing on a regular basis. After reviewing assignment descriptions and discussing this question as a department, we decided to leave things as is, viewing the variation more beneficial than the potential downside.

We also noted, in discussion, that students continue to need coaching on what counts as appropriate citation, and what counts as proper documentation. *As we move ahead assessing our Art History courses, we will develop rubrics. However, given the small number of AH majors, and our continued need to use this 2014-present “semester project” data set, we won’t be able to make meaningful use of them for some years yet.*

Appendix 1: Studio “Making” Rubric

Course: _____

Assignment: _____

Student Name: _____

Art Department “Making” rubric:

Graduates will conceive, create and present technically and conceptually sophisticated work.

	Excellent (5)	Strong (4)	Above Average (3)	Below Average (2)	Weak/Poor (1)
Ideation	Sophisticated concept that grows out of sustained dialog with form and medium.	Strong concept with integral connection to form and medium.	Above average concept with clear connection to form and medium	Concept is conventional and connection to medium and form arbitrary	Concept is problematic and there’s no connection between concept, medium and form.
Process	Sophisticated visuals resulting from extended time for exploration and discovery	Strong visuals, and adequate time for exploration and discovery.	Above average visuals that could have been pushed much farther with more time.	Below average visuals, inadequate time for exploration and discovery	Visuals are problematic and little time was devoted to process.
Critique and Dialogue	Sophisticated participation in critique, every suggestion taken seriously, though not all may be acted on	Strong participation in critique. Some suggestions heeded.	Above average engagement with critique. Some suggestions heeded, some resistance to hearing other views	Missed opportunities and overt resistance to the critique process	Indifference to the critique process.
Professional Presentation	Sophisticated presentation and artisanship (as it relates to the medium of the work).	Strong presentation and artisanship (as it relates to the medium of the work).	Adequate presentation and artisanship (as it relates to the medium of the work).	Inferior presentation and artisanship (as it relates to the medium of the work).	The work does not meet presentation and artisanship (as it relates to the medium).

Appendix 2: Studio and Art History Assignment descriptions

Studio Assignment Descriptions

ART-165 Digital Painting
Spring 2020

COVID-38 assignment

For your first remote assignment, I think it's important that we address our current zeitgeist.

The year is 2042, and the world is now in recovery mode from COVID-38, which proved to be a far more virulent and contagious mutation of our original COVID-19. You are to paint a self-portrait of yourself as a resident of this new post-viral apocalypse world.

Note that your take does not necessarily have to be dystopian or bleak—it can actually be a utopian take, where science and ingenuity have not only conquered this disease, but have actually now protected us from all future viruses. It can reflect a society that has met these challenges and defeated them. Or, you can go full-on Mad Max with it—it's totally up to you.

Your portrait here must at least be what is called a head bust—it should be chest-level up at minimum, and feel free to even have your entire torso and upper legs visible if that helps with an action pose. The piece must have cropping of your figure, to ensure there's some compositional interest.

You will take photo reference for this piece. Make sure you actually pose for this—consider what your body language will communicate in terms of storytelling. If you're looking off to the side, figure out in your mind what it is you're looking at. This can be a cool comic book cover style pose if you want, or it can be very sedated, but the pose should tell a story.

You must have some kind of costuming elements for your piece. You are allowed to either invent your own costuming, or you can cobble together elements from online reference. You can even essentially manufacture a body from various online reference (as long as it's from multiple pieces), and then take photo reference of your own head and shoulders, and then graft that reference all together in Photoshop. You're doing some world-building concept art here—really create a backstory that explains what you're wearing, what kind of gear or tools you might hold, what your role is in this society, etc. Every detail should be informed by a sense of story.

You must have some indication of background elements. Give us a sense of the world you're inhabiting—a dystopian nightmare, or a utopian dream, or something more complex in between?

When this piece is finished, you will have something visual to always remind yourself of this historic moment we've found ourselves in.

Art 124: Italian Renaissance Art

Over the course of five short papers, students analyze the images selected by two prominent art historians (Frederick Hartt and David Wilkins) meant to create an **“Italian Renaissance Portfolio.”** The **“Renaissance Portfolio Project”** requires analysis of a visual argument, evaluation of that argument, and the presentation of an alternate argument. The act of judging and selecting is a key theme of Art 124. These actions constitute not just central skills in the emergence of what we today identify as **“renaissance,”** they are also the activities that gave shape to the discipline of art history and to the Western canon.

Art 126: Early Modern Art

Art 126 moves geographically through the major traditions of the 17th century and early 18th century in Europe. The semester project, **“Theme and Variation”** unfolds over two stages, where the student chooses a theme, and then traces the function/development/usefulness of that theme as it plays out in two different regions. Themes include understandings of and uses for the classical tradition; the role of the artist at court; the relationship of painting to the practice of faith; the relationship between painting and drawing; the relationship between painting and literary sources, and the like.

Art 127: Nineteenth Century Art

The **“Interpretive Lenses”** project for this class takes place in four steps. At the outset of the class, students choose a set of four images of the same genre. They then apply various interpretive frameworks to those images: close reading, monographic, socio/economic, gender/race, technical, for example, and consider the ways in which the discipline makes sense of imagery that is now considered **“art”** in a way that earlier imagery was not.

Art 128: Modern and Contemporary Art

The **“Past/Present Portfolio”** asks students to assess the value of art’s history in contemporary practice. Students choose five contemporary/emerging artists, and investigate each artist’s body of work, self-presentation and the critical response to their works in order to discern the extent to which that artist is consciously or unconsciously engaging art’s history, and if so, which part of art’s history. The student then takes a position for him/herself, as to the value of the history of art for contemporary practice.

Art 129: Issues in Contemporary Art

Students write a 15-10 page research paper on an issue of their choosing. Suggested topics include **“understanding contemporary abstraction,” “globalization and crossing cultures,” “contemporary art and activism,” “contemporary art and spirituality.”**

Art 131: Theory and Criticism in the Arts

The **“Criticism Project”** in Theory & Crit asks students to select some artist/movement/genre that they really enjoy. These can range from rock bands, video games, or novels, to films, or musicals, or artists, composers or playwrights. Students then gather reviews and critiques of their chosen subject, and analyze those reviews and critiques to discern the extent to which the classic concerns of western art criticism (morality, skill, knowledge, truth, beauty, subjectivity or objectivity, intentionality, form, expression, tradition, commerce, singularity, originality,

reception, etc.) which we explore in class are in circulation in the criticism of their chosen artist/artform.

Art 132: Museum Studies

Students prepare a 20 minute presentation and a 10 page paper on a current issue in the contemporary museum world. Topics include: museums during wartime, practices of collection and display in ethnographic museums, disputed works (i.e. the Parthenon marbles, Benin bronzes), theft & recovery, censorship, museums and “national branding” (i.e. UAE, Dubai), architectures of display, mission shift, trends in philanthropy and museum finance, etc.

Art 133: Art, Theology & Worship

While there are other writing assignments in Art 133, the main semester project is a joint, class project: a **grant proposal**. Based on their reading and discussion, students brainstorm an idea for campus that would benefit Westmont and mesh with the aims of the “Vital Worship” grant program run by the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship. Once students have landed on their core idea, they divvy up the various parts of the proposal request according to their strengths and other studies (description, rationale, sources, budget, timeline, assessment, etc.) and pull together a coherent and unified grant proposal. If all goes well (and mostly it does) this is a group project and all students receive the same final grade. If, however, someone drops the ball, I do take note of that and on occasion have issued separate grades for students who’ve, for whatever reason, not pulled their weight.