

HON 307W/310W/316W

Short Research Project

Object: Each student will research and produce a tightly focused, roughly four- to five-page (1” margins, 12-point font) research paper on a specific work or works of Italian Renaissance art from the period 1300-1530. Your choice should be a significant work or works of painting, sculpture or architecture about which you are able to find sufficient primary and secondary source material to complete such a project. The final paper will include an introduction with a clear and strong interpretive thesis statement, plus 3-5 carefully crafted body paragraphs that make specific points, supported with appropriately specific evidence, to support your thesis, and a conclusion that clarifies the broader historical significance of your thesis and argument.

Research: In the research process, you will identify at least **one primary source** relevant to the study of the work that you have chosen. Many if not most students will find a relevant section of Giorgio Vasari’s classic *Lives of the Artists* to be helpful. There are several full-text editions of Vasari available online, including: <http://members.efn.org/~acd/vite/VasariLives.html>. There may in some cases be other relevant primary sources as well. Your primary source may or may not prove helpful in developing your thesis on this project, but you should in some way make at least one specific reference to your primary source in your paper.

Of greater significance in this project will likely be the secondary sources that you identify and use. You are expected to find at least **two significant scholarly journal articles** that offer specific arguments concerning the work or works that you have chosen. J-Stor and Academic Search Premier are two databases that may prove useful in your search. You may also use specific interpretations and ideas from the textbooks assigned for this class or from other books that you identify in our library or via online searches. In all cases, any secondary source that you use must be properly cited in your bibliography and appropriately footnoted when you use specific arguments drawn from them in the text of your final paper. Please note that the first two journal articles that you identify may NOT be the most appropriate ones for you to use in your paper. The research process will likely involve reading through and taking notes on several articles before you are able to identify the thesis/argumentative track that you wish to pursue in your project.

Thesis: The process of learning about your subject and thinking your way to a unique argumentative thesis is the most vital portion of this research project. The thesis statement that emerges from your research may concern thematic issues of the art’s content, technical innovations emerging from the artwork, and/or considerations of the social, political, or religious significance of the artwork. It may prove helpful to some to find secondary source journal articles that offer contradictory or different interpretations of the artwork(s) that you are studying.

Please note that your thesis should neither be a simple a matter of fact nor a simplistic statement of aesthetic admiration or criticism. For instance, the following would **not** be appropriate thesis statements for this project: "Leonardo da Vinci never completed his famed Milan equestrian statue project;" "Fra Angelico’s angels were the most beautiful paintings in the early Renaissance."

Instead, your thesis statement should outline a clear argumentative perspective that can be supported by specific evidence and examples that you will deploy within your body paragraphs. For example, the following statements might serve as effective thesis statements for a project such as this: "Donatello’s sculptures illustrate the ways in which Florentine political ambitions affected artistic production in the early fifteenth century;" "Raphael’s *Stanze della Segnatura* paintings symbolize the intimate tie between ancient Greek philosophy and Renaissance Italian aesthetics."

Topic Choice: You are strongly urged to explore research resources and choose a topic before the end of January. Your instructors are available to help in this process, either in office hours or via e-mail (or even just before or after class)

The “Preliminary Text” (20 pts. Due February 7):

Your preliminary text will consist of the following elements

Your name and the date in the upper-left corner

A prospective (and interesting!) title for your project, centered at top of page.

A prospective thesis statement (this should reflect a good deal of research and thought at this point—do not put this off until the last minute!!)

Three short (2-3 sentence) paragraphs identifying specific evidence and examples that you will use to support your thesis. These are a sort of trial-run first attempt at your body paragraphs. Please be specific in suggesting precisely how the evidence that you are discussing supports your thesis. Please also use complete sentences (i.e. no “bullet-points” here).

A properly formatted bibliography including your primary source and at least two relevant secondary source scholarly articles.

The “Final Paper” (80 pts., due February 28)

Your final paper should be submitted on Blackboard “Safe Assignment” before you come to class, and please bring a stapled hard copy printout of the essay to class on February 28

The paper should be roughly 4-5 pages in length, including footnotes.

The paper should have the following elements:

Name and date in upper-left corner

Interesting title, centered at top of page

Effective introduction paragraph closing with a strong thesis statement

3-5 well-organized body paragraphs that present specific evidence and examples to support your thesis

Effective conclusion paragraph that demonstrates the historical significance of the argument you have made.

Properly formatted bibliography

Footnotes should be in proper Turabian/Chicago Manual of Style format. It will also be helpful in most cases to include a printout image or two (or three) of the artistic work or works that you are discussing in your paper. These should be printed as an appendix to your paper—i.e. not included in the 4-5 page total of your essay.