

AHIS-2010 – BIBLIOGRAPHY/ PROPOSAL: FINAL ESSAY

Basic Info/Requirements

- DUE: Tues, Nov 7th
- Proposes the topic, approach, and thesis of your final essay. Outlines the main ideas, claims, and arguments of your final essay and the way in which they will engage with the course-relevant themes/history/concepts and research it will use. Provides a bibliography of potential research.
- Proposal: ~ 700-1000 words.
- Bibliography of sources
 - 5 or more sources, minimum 3 external research sources
 - Formatted according to either MLA or Chicago Manual of Style

Proposal

The proposal of the final topic should elaborate/outline the ostensive subject of your final paper and your approach to that paper, and should include a synopsis of how the artworks and scholarly sources may be used. It should include a thesis statement: that is, a concrete claim that you make about the subject and that you intend to argue for in the essay. You can take as your subject general historical themes, or it can be directly art-historical, but in either case it must work substantially with appropriate artworks from the 19th century.

For example, a **topic** could be: women's gender roles in Impressionist painting. An **approach** could be: to use contemporary feminist scholarship (e.g. theories of the male gaze) to develop the topic. A **thesis** could be: that the impressionist's interest in daily life reinforces the normative performance of feminine gender stereotypes; or it could be the opposite, that by focusing on daily life, these works de-idealize the image of femininity in modern society. In articulating the topic, you should integrate mention of specific artworks and major scholarly sources you intend to use, and provide plausible evidence that they suit your intended topic. THE TOPIC, ETC. ABOVE MENTIONED CANNOT BE USED.

Potential general topics include: French Revolutions (1789, 1830, 1848, 1871); Neo-classicism; Romanticism; Realism; Symbolism; Impressionism; Post-impressionism; Art Nouveau; Arts and Crafts movement; early Modernism; 19th century history painting; genre painting; landscape; architecture (e.g. Neo-Gothic); sculpture; photography; print culture; fashion; 19th century allegory and iconography (political, mythological, etc.); propaganda; monumental art; colonial 19th Europe; orientalism, socialism, communism, anarchism, science in art in the 19th century; gender roles in 19th century society and art; homoeroticism in 19th c art, etc. Many of these can be combined in unique ways. **None of the above are specific enough in themselves, so only use them as a starting point.**

How to Think about the Final

Overview

The final essay is a scholarly essay on a topic of your choice, so long as it conforms to the range of material appropriate to the course. **Your topic should focus on the art history and/or the political, social history of the 19th Century.** It *must* discuss at least **two relevant works of art** in substantial ways. Generally, any topic dealing with the historical and/or artistic environment in the 19th century is relevant, so long as it includes use of artworks in a substantial way. It *does not* include works from the 18th century or 20th century *unless* as they are explicitly approved by me in advance or already covered in the course. If a work outside the 19th century is not relevant to something already covered, it will likely not be acceptable to use.

What NOT to do – Do not write an overview of a broad stylistic movement or period. For example, if you're interested in Romanticism, do NOT write a general summary of Romantic art.

What you should do – Instead, a good topic is highly specific, and is oriented by the direction your essay will argue in. In the case of Romanticism, a good topic would look something like this: “Monstrosity as social allegory in the works of Blake and Goya.”

Essay Writing and Structure

The essay should have a clear internal and independent structure. It should be motivated by a specific claim, a thesis. The structure of the essay is then dictated by the development of the argument for the thesis. This development can take many forms, but a common form is the following: Introduction, Body, and Conclusion.

The purpose of an Introduction is to state the thesis of the paper, to introduce a problem or thematic the thesis deals with, to tell us what the approach to the problem will be, and to briefly summarize the structure of the essay itself. The Introduction should also tell us how the argument of the essay handles the problem or thematic, and therefore should foreshadow the conclusion.

The Body section is the main portion of the work. It elaborates the argument and should be broken down into subsections which each deal with different parts of the argument. The structure of the Body itself can take many forms, but it should include an examination of the problem or thematic where necessary, information about relevant context, relevant analysis of text and artwork, and argument(s) combining the analysis and the context with the premises of the themes and problems

The Conclusion should use the evidence and argument(s) marshalled in the Body to forcefully demonstrate your thesis. It can sometimes be helpful to recapitulate the main features of the body before making your conclusion. However, be aware that there is a danger of redundancy here, so any recapitulation should be given the utmost attention and subjected to editorial criticism. Parsimony is always advisable over prolix.

General advice: If you do not outline your work (both before and as you write), the structure of the essay will be less clear to you and your reader, or the essay will lack real structure of its own.

Do not rely on recapitulating the proceeding of your research as the structure of your essay. This means avoiding ‘walking through’ your research in your own essay by simply summarizing it,

and relying on that summary for structure. This is what the précises are for, to a degree, but not essays. *Do* look at other essays in relevant fields to see how they tackle the issue of form: how they introduce topics and break up sections, how they start and end paragraphs, etc. More info on essay writing can be found here: <https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/essay-structure>

Further Resources

<https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/essay-structure>