

## ART THEORY AND CRITICISM (ARA315116)

In 2017 the Art Theory and Criticism course has continued to help students develop into critical, curious and academic learners within the visual arts. Success in this course is established through the yearlong exploration of visual art ideas and artworks. The major paper produced by each student is representative of this yearlong enquiry and the development of the paper should reflect this significant time allocation. The styles of writing and range of topics explored in 2017 showcased a diverse range of ideas and interests, with the majority of students producing compelling arguments explored through traditional or contemporary art contexts.

As a pre-tertiary subject, Art Theory and Criticism is designed to help nurture students into academic writers who can analyse art and form a critical and researched stance in relation to it. When producing their major papers, students are expected to follow protocols of academic integrity and citation as stated in the course description and folio guidelines available on the TASC website. Teachers must ensure students not only understand these expectations, but should help students utilise them to improve their writing.

Most students did a suitable job following citation standards by using referencing systems such as Chicago or Harvard Referencing. However, in several cases students were let down in the assessment of **Criterion 1** due to errors or oversights in regards to this referencing. Two simple factors negatively affected student achievement against this Criterion. Firstly, some students neglected to include both a bibliography and reference list. As stated in the course documents, it is a requirement that all students present both of these lists. Failing to do this significantly impacts the academic integrity of the paper by limiting opportunities for students to identify what sources of information were found and how these sources were used.

Secondly, the scope of research documented within the bibliography should encompass all avenues of enquiry undertaken, whether they are included in the final paper or not. Unfortunately, some students failed to show a significant portion of their initial or alternative research, including only citations for information that appears in the final paper. The development of the major paper topic begins in Term 1 and all research from that time is expected to be included in the bibliography. By highlighting the scope and refinement of information between the bibliography and reference list, students show they are critical evaluators of the information used. A list of illustrations, formatted using the same referencing system is also expected. Most students presented this without fault.

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Throughout all stages of development, students are expected to refer to a wide range of academic resources to help build their arguments. Some papers fell short against **Criterion 1 and 5** due to a limited range of sources, relying on secondary sources such as *The Art Story* or *Wikipedia* for the majority of their research. While these sites may contain useful information, the authenticity of the information often cannot be confirmed, unlike direct artist or critic accounts found in academic journals or books. It is expected that students develop competent research practices with the assistance of their teachers and librarians. Successful students gathered information for resources spanning art journals, visits to galleries, documentaries, interviews with artists, books, and websites.

Students are encouraged to utilise all resources available to them including their school libraries, local LINC libraries and University facilities as part of their research.

When writing a paper of this magnitude, it is vital that students structure the content of their arguments in a way that nurtures the understanding of the reader. Students that achieved high assessments against **Criteria 3** engaged the reader by producing concise and informative analysis of artworks that set the scene for later discussions. First and foremost, these successful students provided descriptions of artwork and artists before providing further detailed analysis, often following the DAIE format. Students are encouraged to provide this foundational information before launching into abstract concepts or criticising nuances in art. Many students also chose to break content up into chapters, allowing a framework to guide the dissection of ideas.

Unfortunately, some students neglected to include suitable analysis of artworks (lacking in understanding and detail) or did not provide analysis within the investigative scope of the paper. The context in which work is viewed and discussed is paramount to the success of the paper. Simply listing artworks without presenting a critical investigation or argument leaves the reader confused as to the intentions of the paper. Other issues also arose with some students relying on personal statements regarding art ideas that were only supported by artwork analysis as a closing point. More often than not, arguments should begin with the analysis, not end with it; this allows ideas to be explored through the specific lens in greater detail and aids the reader in comprehending the ideas expressed.

To assist the development of a topic for enquiry, students are encouraged to embrace and utilise experiences within local art communities; visit galleries and exhibitions, speak with curators and artists, and critique artworks with your peers. By immersing students within a tangible world of art, abstract concepts may become more relatable and thought-provoking. Art is best understood when students have a relationship with it. Many of the students that achieved high marks against **Criterion 4** showed evidence of this engagement through the development of personal arguments in support of their claims. By personally engaging with art, students were able to extrapolate their knowledge and apply it wider artistic contexts.

Successful students also approached the paper as an opportunity to critically examine art and to develop an authentic understanding of artistic concepts. These students didn't just present a historical paper, nor did they simply present a catalogue of artworks. Instead, students that achieved well against **Criterion 2** used historical and visual information as elements of a much larger investigation to help evaluate artist's intentions and audiences interpretations. Furthermore, successful students also applied similar reasoning to their own interpretation of artwork as viewers by referring to the context in which art can be viewed.

It is also important to note although the inclusion of direct quotes from artists and critics can provide unique and valuable insights, they should be used to support the arguments of the student, not to substitute them. The strength of the major paper relies on the writer's ability to decipher and disseminate this information within the specific scope of the paper.

All students produced essays beyond the minimum 4000 words, with many of the stronger essays sitting between 5000-6000 words. Writing towards the upper limits of the word count helped to provide students with more opportunities to explore nuances in concepts and to provide greater analysis of artists and artworks. Successful students also showed evidence of considered proof reading and care towards the readability of their papers. These papers presented a focused intention that was well expressed in the introduction, explored thoroughly in the body and summarised succinctly in the conclusion. Consistency across each section of the paper is vital!

Strong papers also provided suitable illustrations and appropriate captions. An example of this can be found in the 2015 Assessment Report located on the TASC website.

Major Papers covered a diverse range of topics; some of the titles have been listed below:

Art as Therapy

The Development of Polish Feminist Art from the 1950s -2000s

Blind and Vision Impaired Artists; Their Unique Ways of Working

The Art of Mass Persuasion

Ethnography to Fine Art: How African Tribal Art Influenced Contemporary Art

An Exploration of Body Horror in Art

Still Photography; Once the Decisive Moment is Gone

Modern Life in an Urban World

Sex and Violence in Straight Photography

Women at War

How did The First World War Spark the Evolution of German Expressionism?

Anarchy, Art and Dada

The Entwinement of Life and Death in Art

The Darker side of Art

Evolution as Inspiration

How is Art a Universal Language?

Blood and Self

The Powerful and Evocative Nature of Self Portraiture

Is There and Place for Etching in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Art?

The impact and influence of Japanese Animation on the Western World