Princeton University Department of Art & Archaeology


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Introduction to the Field of Art & Archaeology

The discipline of art history studies the history and development of the visual arts, including painting, sculpture, photography, architecture and the built environment; other arts such as ceramics, lacquer, glass, and textiles; and a wide range of images and visual phenomena or experiences, including cinema, performance, print culture, urbanism, scientific illustration, and mass media. While art history has traditionally focused on artifacts or media with a significant visual component, in recent years scholars in the discipline have responded to new modes of art making (e.g. sound art) by expanding the purview of the field and studying a wider array of material.

Art historians pursue their work in many different ways and through various means; the sheer diversity of art historical methods and approaches, and ongoing debates about them, is part of what makes the field exciting and vital. Some art historians focus on the history of style, others on the lives of artists, and yet others on the historical fabric of which a given work of art was a part, including consideration of the social, political, philosophical, economic, scientific, or religious history of a particular period, culture, or region. Art historians might explore the relationship between art and other forms of representation, such as literature, or they might examine the role that art or other kinds of images played in historical change or transformation, including scientific and political revolutions. Most often, the art historian focuses on many or all of these aspects in order to provide a thorough account of his or her object of study. Art-historical study is by nature interdisciplinary, for it draws on the ideas, information, theories, and resources of all branches of the humanities and the social sciences, from classics, history, and political science to anthropology, comparative literature, and philosophy. In certain cases, art historians collaborate with scholars in the sciences in order to answer a question or to advance an aspect of their research, and art historians often work closely with art conservators, who are responsible for the care and preservation of works of art and possess relevant scientific expertise. Studying the visual arts can be exhilarating precisely because it necessarily involves the investigation of so many different facets of history and culture and, as a result, yields a host of profound, often unexpected insights about human civilization.

The Department of Art and Archaeology is devoted to the study of the visual arts and the investigation of material artifacts from a wide range of cultures and periods. It is also where students interested in the practice of art (taught by faculty in the Program in Visual Arts) can pursue a major. Working closely with faculty members in small classes and often dealing directly with original objects and primary sources, students can explore subjects as diverse as Roman city planning, Chinese calligraphy, Greek archaeology, Renaissance architecture, 19th-century photography, and contemporary art.

Students in the Department of Art and Archaeology learn techniques for analyzing and interpreting the visual and material world. They also investigate the factors that influence artistic change (e.g., religious beliefs, economic constraints, patronage demands, and technological changes). Like any humanist or social scientist, they must evaluate evidence, form hypotheses, test data, and draw conclusions. Successful majors master the translation of visual perceptions into linguistic expression, develop visual memory, and make connections with a wide array of historical evidence. Students must have at least a C- average based on courses and independent work in order to graduate from the department.

A major in the Department of Art & Archaeology prepares students for a variety of careers and a range of graduate programs. Our majors have earned graduate degrees in art history, fine arts, art education, museum studies, architecture, archaeology, comparative literature, area studies (such as Classics, Asian Studies, African American Studies, Women and Gender Studies, European Studies), languages, and history. Majors regularly enter medical, law, public policy, and business schools. The
skills developed in the Department also can form the bases for careers in teaching, journalism, publishing, communication and media, museum work, not-for-profit organizations, architecture, design, advertising, and marketing.

Introduction to Independent Work in Art & Archaeology

Independent research is integral to undergraduate education at Princeton, and the Department of Art & Archaeology takes the University’s independent research requirements very seriously. Independent research is essential to developing proficiency in the discipline of art history; it is also an essential part of mastering the capacity for critical analysis and original thinking that is fundamental to Princeton’s educational mission and a key stepping stone to accomplishment, intellectual and otherwise, beyond the college years.

In a world that seems to be taking a “visual turn”—exponential growth in the production, consumption, and analysis of images of all kinds—understanding the history and workings of art and visual culture has assumed an increasing importance. First in coursework and then through their independent work, students in the department learn techniques for analyzing visual materials and locating them within time and place. They also investigate the factors that influence the form and direction of stylistic change (such as religious beliefs, economic constraints, patronage demands, technological change, and so forth). And as studio artists, they engage in the creative transformation of these observations and experiences into works of art. Like any social scientist or humanist, they must evaluate evidence (documentary, textual, or pictorial), form hypotheses, test their data, and draw conclusions. Art & Archaeology majors master the translation of visual perceptions into linguistic or material expression, develop their visual memory, and make connections with a wide array of other historical evidence. Above all, they develop the tools by which to investigate and describe the essential role of art making in history and culture and, by extension, they cultivate the ability to analyze critically and perceptively the products of human civilization and thought. In their independent research, majors explore how art offers not just a window onto the past and present but also how it has played and continues to play a vital role in shaping our world and the manner in which we see and understand it.

Independent work in Art & Archaeology begins in the junior year with a year-long project, initiated during ART 400, the required Junior Seminar, and continues into the spring with a faculty adviser. It consists of a research paper of approximately 30-40 pages on any topic related to visual and material culture. Assignments in ART 400 help students conceptualize and implement their research agendas. Students determine with whom they wish to work on the JIW in November; they do so by approaching this person to discuss the possibility of him/her serving as adviser to the project. The department recommends that students choose as advisers a faculty member with whom they have taken a course. Independent work culminates with the senior thesis and the Senior Comprehensive Exam. The thesis represents the most sophisticated original research and writing that one will undertake as an undergraduate at Princeton. The thesis consists of a year-long research project of approximately 60-80 pages on a topic selected by the student and developed in conjunction with the faculty adviser. The student selects a faculty adviser in the spring of the junior year and submits an outline and annotated bibliography to the adviser by mid-November of the senior year. Students should begin their research, including travel-based research, in the summer prior to the senior year.

All seniors sit for the Senior Comprehensive Exam during reading period of the spring semester. The one-hour oral exam consists of two parts: 1) a thesis defense in which students summarize their findings and field questions about their thesis work from a committee of three faculty members (the
two thesis readers and a third faculty member) and 2) an examination based on the students coursework in the department.

The comprehensive exam complements a student’s independent work. It provides an opportunity for the student to receive feedback about the thesis and to discuss the topic, methodology, and significance to the field of art history of his/her thesis work. It also requires the student to return to the content of his/her coursework and to synthesize and bring new perspectives to this material— independently, without the oversight of a faculty member—in preparation for the faculty examination.

In general, most independent work in Art & Archaeology begins with the selection of an object or objects or a theme on which to focus. The student then develops an original argument about this material—one that does not already exist in the scholarly or critical literature and that employs modes of reasoning or methods that reflect original thinking—based on examination of the object of inquiry, review of the secondary literature, archival research, primary documents, and examination of other relevant or useful literature from other fields. A student’s particular course of research will be determined by the nature of his or her topic.

Goals

All independent work in Art & Archaeology has a basic set of purposes:

• To experiment with the process of forming a hypothesis and to understand how a hypothesis might change or transform in the course of one’s research.
• To develop expertise in a subject area and enter into a scholarly debate.
• To identify problems, puzzles, and conundra in the field that merit further discussion and analysis.
• To develop advanced research skills, including proficiency with secondary literature, primary documents, archival sources, and material artifacts.
• To identify and assess different forms of evidence.
• To formulate, organize, and defend an argument and to develop the capacity to consider one’s own arguments and the evidence on which they are based critically and reflectively.
• To explore multiple methods and ways of thinking, including those that do not come naturally or that seem contrary to one’s own convictions about successful argumentation and appropriate evidence.
• To assess the place of one’s own work in the larger field by understanding its relationship to previous or current studies of similar or analogous material.
• To understand both the historical and the conceptual/theoretical significance of one’s work and its contribution to the field.
• To develop a scholarly voice influenced by but not identical or beholden to that of one’s adviser or other scholars.
• To cultivate not just interest in but true enthusiasm and passion for the material and debates of the field.
• To write expressive and convincing prose.
There are two tracks of study within the Art & Archaeology major; requirements for independent work vary slightly among the two tracks. The information about independent work outlined in the previous sections and throughout this document applies mainly to the History of Art track; the requirements for the Practice of Art track independent work are summarized below. For more detailed information on Practice of Art independent work requirements, students should consult with the Director of the Visual Arts Program, Professor Martha Friedman.

**History of Art Track** – a concentration in art history that demands broad exposure to the visual arts produced in different time periods and cultures. As described in the previous paragraphs.

**Practice of Art Track** – a concentration combining art history with studio art that culminates in a senior thesis exhibition.

During their junior year, each student is assigned a studio work space in the Room 401 loft of 185 Nassau. In consultation with their faculty advisors, students prepare independent work in their studios. This year-long project culminates in an exhibition as part of the spring Junior Group Thesis Show.

Film students work with one adviser throughout their junior year to create a junior film.

By the end of the second week of the fall term of the senior year, students must have three advisers, including one from the Department of Art and Archaeology faculty. The senior independent work is a major studio project completed by the end of the spring term, which is done in consultation with the student's advisers. Students are assigned semiprivate studios on the second floor of 185 Nassau. Students present their work in an exhibition at the end of the year at the Lewis Center. The grade for the senior independent work represents an evaluation of the entire year's studio work and is the average of two grades: (1) the average of the grades given by the student's three advisers; and (2) the average of the grades given by the rest of the Program in Visual Arts faculty who view the senior exhibition. A separate grade is given for the student's oral defense of the thesis exhibition by his/her thesis advisers only.

The senior departmental examination takes the form of a one-hour critical discussion of the senior thesis exhibition with the student's three advisers in the latter half of the spring term, in the presence of each student's exhibition. The discussion is open to all Program in Visual Arts faculty and Practice of Art/Certificate students. The grade for the oral examination is the average of the three grades given by the advisers participating in the examination.

**Program in Archaeology** – an interdisciplinary certificate program combining academic training in archaeology with practical experience on excavations. One substantial piece of independent work must address an archaeological topic. This may take one of three forms: 1) a senior thesis with an archaeological component; 2) a junior paper on an archaeological topic; or 3) a 25-page research paper on an archaeological topic.

**The Process**

**Coursework Preparation**

In preparation for conducting independent research, Art & Archaeology majors take ART 400, the Junior Seminar, in the fall of their junior year. This course serves as an introduction to the discipline of
art history even as it builds on the training students have received in their previous coursework in art history or other humanities fields. It also guides students through the initial stages of developing a research plan. Students examine different methods that have been used to identify and explain works of art and other artifacts, and they read and evaluate key texts incorporating or critiquing such methods. Emphasis is placed on developing and honing research and critical analysis skills, formulating viable research questions and crafting original arguments, and productive utilization of resources such as the library, museum, archives, guest scholars, and digital databases.

Selecting an Adviser

Senior thesis advisers are selected in the spring of the junior year and JIW advisers are selected in the late fall of the junior year.

Department of Art & Archaeology faculty normally do not direct more than three independent project, so you may need to consult more than one faculty member in order to find a supervisor. Faculty members in the Program in Visual Arts do not serve as advisers for History of Art theses and JIW. Full-time visiting faculty in the Department of Art & Archaeology may serve as senior thesis advisers, but part-time faculty (teaching only one course) do not.

It is not always possible or necessary to have an adviser whose area of expertise coincides with your proposed thesis topic. What is important is that you find an adviser who seems interested in you and your topic. You should also plan on consulting with other faculty in the department about your topic and research, as there might be several individuals that can offer advice or expertise related to your particular project. It is best to e-mail the faculty member in question in order to request an appointment; in your e-mail, identify yourself, sketch your interests, describe your thinking about a topic thus far, and suggest your rationale for wishing to work with him or her. It is recommended that you develop a topic on which you have had some prior coursework, with an adviser who has already taught you in a class.

Once you have selected your adviser and he/she has agreed to work with you, plan to meet with that adviser to discuss your timeline and expectations. Discuss things like deadlines and drafts, and decide how often you should meet during the course of your research (this can vary across a semester or a year). There is no “right” way to ensure a productive adviser-advisee relationship, but it is important to establish goals, expectations, and ways of proceeding at the outset so that you and your adviser are on the same page. Also be sure that both of you are aware of department deadlines so that you can meet them accordingly. Above all, and no matter what, stay in touch with your adviser; don’t disappear, don’t stop e-mailing, don’t expect him or her to check in or to find you. It is up to you to maintain contact and keep your adviser apprised of your progress. This is independent work, which means you are in the driver’s seat.

Formulating a Topic

The first step in pursuing independent work, and often the most challenging one, is the formulation of an appropriate and viable topic. Consider what ideas or questions have most interested you over the course of your career at Princeton thus far as well as material about which you are keenly curious but have yet to explore. At this point, your ideas may not be overly specific, and you may have in mind only the name of an artist, a particular work of art, a question raised in one of your classes, or something you found puzzling yet captivating. In many cases, you may find that doing preliminary reading, thumbing through a survey text, looking over your notes from previous classes, or visiting a museum will spark ideas about possible topics. Visits to various campus collections (listed below under resources) might
also inspire ideas about a potential topic. Try to figure out what about a particular subject or idea interests you the most; for example, if you have always been interested in landscape painting, identify what about landscape painting appeals to you or what questions it raises for you. You should also think about why these things might matter to someone other than yourself—will paying attention to them and writing about them potentially add something new to the general understanding of landscape painting? Your topic should have import and significance beyond your own interest in it; that is, it should promise to make a contribution to the scholarly literature.

Then try to turn your thoughts into a question, ranging from the specific (why did medieval illuminators fill their borders with fantastic animals?) to the general (how does a society’s perception of time influence the kind of art that it makes?). This question is your preliminary topic (not “Manet” but “Why did Manet frequently allude to previous works of art in his own pictures?”), and it will frame and guide your research. This question may also change as your research proceeds and it will most certainly lead to other queries. Formulating your topic as a question is the most effective way to organize the beginning of your research plan.

Also consider the state of the scholarly literature on your topic. Is there a scholarly literature on this topic? Is it miniscule, vast, or somewhere in between? Is there room for new ideas? Do you feel that you might have something to contribute? Is there a need for new thinking about this topic? What gaps or problems exist in the literature that might be addressed? Knowing what has been said but also what has not been said about a topic will help you refine the subject and scope of your project.

You will find it helpful to return to your notes from the freshman year Writing Seminar and to discussion of “motives.”

Your research question will inevitably change over time as you do more research and learn more about both your topic and the literature on it.

It is essential that you work with your adviser to narrow down your question/topic to a problem that you can assess in the time and space allotted to you, and to determine that you will be able to conduct your research using the facilities and resources available (libraries, archives, museums, objects, and so forth).

**Developing a Research Plan and Bibliography**

After formulating your topic in consultation with your adviser, the next stage involves reading as much of the literature (primary and secondary) on your topic as you can. Consult with your adviser for advice about sources but also ask for help from the Marquand or Firestone librarians, who are expert at identifying relevant material for a wide range of research topics. Learn the basic information about your topic and also identify the major scholars, arguments, and controversies as well as the major methodological strains that constitute the literature on your topic. As you do so, revise or refine your topic accordingly, and keep a list of the key issues and questions you wish to address, given what you have encountered in your reading. It is important to jot down your thoughts, ideas, and queries as you go, so you do not forget them along the way. Keep an open mind at this stage and be willing to entertain multiple even contradictory ways of seeing and considering your topic. Do not rely on the internet for your research.

Then, ask yourself: In order to answer my questions, what primary documents or archives might I need to consult? What evidence might there be in the historical record that will help me develop my argument?
To return to one of the above examples: How would I find out why medieval illuminators filled their borders with fantastic animals? What kind of evidence might I look for or examine? Where might answers lie? An original argument will arise only from a combination of existing scholarship and primary research. And, if you determine that little or no evidence exists, you will know that you need to revise or change your topic.

Your examination of relevant primary and secondary sources will help you bring more specificity and focus to your topic and it will also guide you to additional sources; in the course of your reading, you will encounter new or unexpected material or ideas that you can now investigate. You will also begin to understand that your topic might be illuminated through consulting sources that are seemingly off-topic. For instance, if you are researching an aspect of the Black Arts Movement, you might want to read recent theoretical writing on race or identity, even if this writing is not about art. Or, if you are writing about portraiture in the Renaissance, you might wish to read interesting or innovative writing about portraiture from other eras or geographic regions or writing that considers portraiture in other media, such as literature or music. You could also consider thinking about the self or the nature of humanity from the period, including philosophical and religious writing about personhood or the soul. In other words, your research and thinking should be equally historical and conceptual, attuned to the particulars of your subject and period but also attentive to larger themes and concerns as raised by your strategic and wide-ranging reading.

Think of your reading as a “T” – you want to read and research broadly and extensively: the top bar of the “T.” And you also want to burrow deep into your topic: the foot of the “T.”

**Writing**

By the time you begin to write, you should have a firm idea of what you wish to argue, but you should also bear in mind that your thinking and thus your argument may change as the writing progresses; this is a typical and exciting part of the process, and why it is so important to start early. Oftentimes it is not until one puts thoughts to paper that those thoughts synthesize and congeal into a concrete and focused analysis or interpretation. This may necessitate that you do some further reading and research to clarify certain points after you commence writing, which is also typical—all the more reason to begin writing as soon as possible.

There is no “right” place to begin your writing. In general, formulating a question and an outline of an argument will prove useful as a starting point.

For the thesis, it is recommended that you write your introduction and your conclusion last, so as to incorporate how your thinking develops as you write your chapters as well as your reflections about the project after you have drafted the bulk of it. Most theses have 3-5 body chapters; you might consider beginning with the chapter for which you have the most research and the best idea about what you want to say, or the one in which you are most interested. It helps to think of each thesis chapter as an independent term paper (such as one you would write for a seminar), with its own, self-contained thesis that relates to the larger topic and argument of the whole.

One cannot emphasize enough the importance of leaving ample time for your adviser to read a draft or drafts and for you to revise. The more you revise, the better your thinking and writing and thus your argument will be. For the thesis, be sure to budget time after you have completed each chapter for reconsidering the project as a whole—its subject, scope, purpose, and significance—and for drafting your introduction accordingly.
Advisers should be identified in late November or early December of the fall semester (you will be alerted of this by the Departmental Representative) and topics should be developed by early February. Each student should meet with his or her adviser before the end of the fall classes to set a timeline for research, writing, and draft review; at this point, students should discuss with their advisers a potential schedule of meetings and confirm the due date of the JIW. You should also discuss with your advisor any potential need for funding for research-related travel.

Fall Semester Timeline: Senior Thesis

During the fall semester, you should aim to complete most of the research for your thesis, produce a chapter outline, gather the illustrations, and begin to write your first chapter (or more, if possible). This means that you have about two months to identify the relevant literature on your topic and digest it, although many students begin over the summer and thus afford themselves more time. You will need to do bibliographical searches for articles and in some cases request inter-library loans or visit museum collections. In short, you should count on spending about ten hours per week just on your thesis, which is more time than you would spend on a normal course. You should also schedule regular appointments with your adviser; the frequency varies, but many students and advisers meet every two weeks, which is adequate for discussing and assessing progress. Meetings might occur with more frequency in the spring semester in order to discuss drafts and deadlines.

By the posted fall semester deadline (late September), you must submit to your advisor a brief (half-page) abstract of your thesis topic addressing its key question(s), scope, and significance. By the next posted deadline (early-mid November) you must submit to your adviser a detailed outline of your chapters (normally 2-3 pages) and an annotated bibliography (approximately 4-5 pages), which will be used to evaluate your first-semester work. At this time, advisers will complete a fall semester Senior Thesis Progress Report that will be sent to the Departmental Representative.

Intersession and Spring Semester Timeline: Senior Thesis

Concentrated writing of the thesis should continue during intersession and into February. In addition, you may need to travel to collections and libraries during the winter recess or intersession. By the beginning of the spring semester, you should have submitted at least one chapter to your adviser, and by the end of February, you should have largely completed your main text. Remember that your adviser needs at least a week (sometimes two weeks) to read and comment on any text you submit, so plan accordingly. If you know that you have difficulties with writing and organizing, then you need to complete a draft even earlier so that you can substantially rewrite. Every thesis will benefit from going through more than one draft, and your hard work will be rewarded in the end.

Your hypothesis and your argument will inevitably change as you write. Researching, writing, and thinking are interlocked, interrelated, and mutually constituting exercises. Your research will generate writing, and as you write, you will realize where you need more research.

The month of March should be spent editing the draft and completing the footnotes, bibliography, and illustrations for your thesis. Please see the “Department Style Sheet” (available as a PDF on the department website) for details on the required style and mode of presentation. Please note that your thesis must not be longer than 100 pages (not counting the notes and bibliography), and in most cases should be between 60-80 pages of main text.
Submission of the Thesis

One unbound copies of the thesis, in a temporary binder (notebook, binder clip, etc.), and one electronic copy in PDF format are due in the departmental office by 4:30 p.m. on the posted April date. No extensions will be granted, and all materials (including illustrations) must be complete. The electronic copy will be transmitted to the University Archives.

Standards and Evaluation

Style Guide

For information about style and formatting of independent work, please see the “Department Style Sheet” on the Art and Archaeology website.

Evaluation and Grading

JIW will be given a letter grade by the student’s JIW adviser.

The senior thesis is read and graded by your thesis adviser and a second reader assigned by the department (the list of second readers is kept confidential until the senior oral exam). The final thesis grade is the numerical average of the two readers’ grades (except when their grades are more than ten points apart, in which case the department assigns a third reader and the final grade is the average of the three grades). The adviser and second reader each prepare a reader report that includes a detailed summary and evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis (approximately 1 page, single spaced). The two reader reports and the final thesis grade are given to the student at the Senior Comprehensive Exam (held during the reading period). The penalty for late submission of the thesis is one point subtracted from the final numerical grade for each day or part of a day that the thesis is overdue (including the weekends).

All seniors sit for Senior Comprehensive Exams during reading period of the spring semester. The one-hour oral exam consists of two parts: 1) a thesis defense in which students summarize their findings and field questions about their thesis work from a committee of three faculty members (the two thesis readers and a third faculty member) and 2) an examination based on students’ coursework in the department. The grade for the oral exam consists of the average of the grades given for the exam by the three faculty examiners. The Comprehensive Exam measures a student’s overall proficiency in the discipline of art history. He/she is evaluated on his/her ability to do the following:

• Convey basic information about the material of the field (based on coursework)

• Analyze and think critically about this material

• Demonstrate an understanding of the nature and relevance of the secondary literature

• Demonstrate basic visual literacy and facility in speaking critically and analytically about works of art and other relevant material

• Articulate the goals and results of the thesis project including successes as well as problems

• Discuss how the thesis reflected the place of a student’s work in the field
• Discuss the approach or methodologies employed in the thesis work

• Exhibit a capacity for original thinking about the material under discussion

Please see the section on Forms and Sample Assignments, below, for more detailed information about the format of the Senior Comprehensive Exam.

The grading standards for the **Comprehensive Exam** are as follows:

**A:** An A exam demonstrates mastery of the material and methods of the discipline of art history. The student can recall and discuss in detail and depth the content of his/her courses but can also comment on and analyze this material independently in his/her own voice, apart from the information conveyed in his/her courses and the opinions/arguments of his/her professors. The student demonstrates familiarity with the relevant secondary literature but can also speak about particular works of art—subject matter, content, context, and formal properties—thoroughly, articulately, and in a sophisticated manner without relying on the interpretations of other scholars. The student is able to think on his/her feet and successfully answer faculty questions, including those he/she did not anticipate. In discussing the thesis, the student has a clear and thorough grasp of the nature of his/her topic and argument, can address successfully faculty queries about and critiques of the project, can situate his/her work with regard to the work of other scholars, and can discuss with ease and eloquence the strengths but also the possible shortcomings of his/her thesis work. The student is able to think and speak beyond what is written in the thesis and can productively consider new ideas or issues that are raised in the context of the exam.

**B:** A B exam is similar in many ways to an A exam, but the student may not answer all faculty queries thoroughly or successfully. Some answers may be superficial or not reflect an understanding of the question, but most of the discussion demonstrates the student’s grasp of the content of his/her coursework and his/her proficiency in the material and methods of the discipline of art history. The student may not always be able to speak independently of the secondary literature or to think on his/her feet when confronted with an unanticipated query, but he/she attempts to do so and succeeds most of the time. In discussing the thesis, the student has a basic grasp of the nature and significance of his/her topic but has some trouble addressing questions that require him/her to consider this topic beyond what he/she has written about it. The student may demonstrate that he/she is not aware of certain key aspects of the topic in the course of questioning, but can address and reflect on these things intelligently on the spot.

**C:** A C exam is similar in many ways to a B exam, but the student has trouble answering many of the faculty member’s questions successfully and eloquently. The student does not have a full grasp of the material of his/her coursework and does not demonstrate full proficiency in the material and methods of the discipline of art history. The student has a hard time thinking on his/her feet and answering questions that may stray from the exact content of his/her courses. The student is not fully adept at looking at a work of art and discussing its formal qualities with precision and accuracy and he/she cannot account for or is unaware of key aspects of the works of art discussed in the exam. In discussing the thesis, the student is unable to articulate in clear language the nature of his/her argument and cannot fully situate this argument with regard to the secondary literature. He/she is unable to answer many of the questions asked about the content and methods of the thesis and he/she is unable to assume a critical perspective in discussing his/her thesis work; that is, if a faculty member presents a critique, the student may not understand the critique or may be unable to address it.
D: A D exam is similar in many ways to a C exam, but the problems outlined above occur with more frequency and severity. The student answers only a minority of the questions successfully and exhibits little ability to talk proficiently and expertly about works of art and their possible interpretations; the student has trouble describing and analyzing the works of art featured in the exam. In discussing the thesis, the student cannot articulate his/her argument lucidly or may demonstrate that he/she does not have an argument; he/she cannot answer or address the majority of the faculty’s questions about the thesis or is unable to comprehend fully these queries and critiques.

F: An F exam exhibits a serious lack of proficiency in the basic skills of art historical description and analysis, an inability to discuss the content of coursework, little or no grasp of how to look at and analyze a work of art, and little or no capacity for discussing basic aspects of the thesis topic and/or argument.

The grading standards for Art & Archaeology independent work (the junior paper and the senior thesis) are as follows:

A: A thesis in the A range advances a compelling, viable, and original argument; clearly establishes and articulates the significance and originality of the study; displays mastery of the fundamentals of research in art history; demonstrates mastery of the fundamentals of academic writing; is written in a clear, sophisticated manner and exhibits eloquence of expression; adopts a logical and progressive structure from start to finish; analyzes primary evidence in depth and with great insight; productively draws on but does not overuse or recycle the arguments of the secondary literature; and convinces the reader that the argument and conclusions of the thesis are vital for advancing the understanding of a particular area of the discipline of art history.

B: A thesis in the B range resembles an A-range thesis in certain ways, but exhibits shortcomings such as the following: a promising or potentially interesting but ill-defined, unclear, or inconsistently articulated main argument; a functional but elusive or insignificant focus or motive (it is clear why the thesis author chose his/her topic and main argument but the importance or significance of the topic and argument is less clear); a logical but somewhat disorganized or unsystematic structure; well-chosen but under-analyzed evidence; interesting but unsubstantiated claims; a secure grasp of but also an overreliance on secondary literature; ungrammatical or clumsy prose in places or throughout.

C: A thesis in the C range resembles a B-range thesis in certain ways, but exhibits shortcomings such as the following: a confusing or overly simple main argument; more description and summary than analysis; a trivial or nonexistent focus or motive (it is unclear why the thesis author chose his/her topic and main argument and why the thesis is important or significant); lacks a coherent and logical, progressive structure; fails to present substantial or adequate evidence to support the author’s claims; the evidence that is presented is insufficiently analyzed or not analyzed at all; uses secondary sources illogically without explaining why they are necessary or relevant, or uses the arguments of other scholars as evidence; writing is unclear, ungrammatical and/or technically flawed.

D: A D thesis (there is no D+ or D- at Princeton) resembles a C-range thesis but exhibits shortcomings such as the following: the thesis is purely descriptive in its approach; there is no argument or the argument is so obvious as to be simply descriptive, e.g. “Manet painted modern life” or “Gothic cathedrals symbolize the religious beliefs of their builders”; displays an unfocused, confusing, or rambling structure; utilizes little or no evidence to support claims and relies mainly or solely on secondary sources; reflects little understanding of the task of researching and writing a thesis; reflects little awareness of the nature of art-historical research and writing or the basic conventions of academic
discourse and style, but does show some signs of attempting to engage with the requirements and demands of writing a thesis.

F: An F thesis is similar to a D thesis but addresses the topic superficially, exhibits a fundamental lack of proficiency in art-historical research, argumentation, and writing, and may be significantly shorter than the assigned length.

All independent work should include the following in the main body of the text, although the manner of its presentation will vary pending the organization of your writing and your adviser's suggestions:

- A description of your topic and your research questions (i.e., the problem or puzzle)
- A description of why your topic and your questions are important and what contributions your analysis and your approach to the material will make
- A review of the existing literature on your topic and how your analysis relates to this literature
- A discussion of the methods or approaches taken in your analysis, including the types of evidence on which you will base your claims
- The analysis itself, including your conclusions
- A brief discussion of possible future directions of research

Resources

Departmental Research Support

JIW Funding

There is a very limited amount of funding available to students to support spring JIW research. There must exist a pressing need for such funding (e.g. essential travel for archival research) and the JIW project must be original and significant. Applications should be made to the Departmental Representative in consultation with one’s JIW adviser (there is no official application form). Awards will be decided on a case-by-case basis and will depend on the quality of the proposal and project and the availability of funding from year to year.

Senior Thesis Funding

The Department of Art & Archaeology awards grants on a competitive basis for support of research travel for the Senior Thesis. Students applying for funds for research travel during the October or January break periods of the senior year or the summer prior to the senior year should apply through SAFE, per the Dean of the College’s instructions (e-mailed to all juniors and seniors). Department travel grants are normally limited to $1500 maximum and are for air and ground transport and lodging only (not meals); students may apply to other sources of funding across campus through SAFE, as well. The number of awards given each year will depend on the availability of funds and the quality of the applications. Travel monies normally are only payable upon the presentation of receipts, including boarding passes for air travel. Students are required to travel coach class, make their own travel arrangements, and register the trip in CONCUR.
The Writing Center

Located in Lauritzen Hall, the Writing Center offers free one-on-one conferences with experienced fellow writers trained to consult on assignments in any discipline. Special conferences are available for JP and Senior Thesis writers, who may sign up to work with a graduate student fellow from the department of their choice. The Writing Center also holds regular conferences seven days a week, and drop-in hours Sunday through Thursday evenings. Since the Writing Center does not discuss grammar, the Department suggests that students read the appropriate manuals (see the Style sheet).

Princeton University Faculty

Your adviser will be the most important and involved interlocutor during the process of completing your independent work. But you should also make use of the expertise of other professors in the Department of Art & Archaeology as well as the expertise of faculty in other departments across campus. Your research will be more strategic and productive and your thinking will be richer and more nuanced if you discuss your work with a range of scholars with relevant but varying expertise, perspectives, and approaches.

Marquand Library

Established in 1908, Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology is one of the oldest and most extensive art libraries in America. It serves the Princeton University Community and scholars from around the world. The non-circulating collection of some 500,000 volumes covers Western and Eastern art from antiquity to the present, including rare book holdings. Marquand supports research in the fine, decorative, and media arts, photography, architecture, and archaeology.

Every senior in the Department of Art & Archaeology is entitled to a private carrel with a desk and bookcase. Junior majors can ask for a designated shelf to store books charged for research on the junior independent projects.

Visual Resources Collection

The Visual Resources Collection (207 McCormick Hall) administers the collections of digital images, slides, and photographic prints to support the departmental teaching curriculum and to provide resources for study and research. Digital images are available in Almagest and ARTstor that are accessible to the Princeton University community for teaching, research and study purposes. More than 150,000 images from the department Visual Resources Collection are available in the Almagest system. ARTstor offers more than 1,800,000 images. The collection of about 600,000 slides is also available for use.

Photographic prints and materials from the Princeton-sponsored archaeological expeditions can be consulted, as well.

Index of Medieval Art

The Index of Medieval Art was founded in 1917 by Charles Rufus Morey, chairman of the Department of Art & Archaeology. Located in the ground floor of McCormick Hall (opposite the entrance to the departmental offices), it is a unique repository of considerable use especially for students of Western art history. It offers, in text and image formats, over 28,000 subjects in medieval art from the Early Christian period to the middle of sixteenth century. The Index is currently available in both manual and electronic
formats, with approximately one third of the holdings available on the electronic database. The Index also offers a small non-circulating library as well as several electronic publications not available elsewhere on campus.

Princeton University Art Museum

The permanent collections of the Art Museum range from ancient to contemporary art and concentrates geographically on the Mediterranean regions, Western Europe, China, the United States, and Latin America. There is an outstanding collection of Greek and Roman antiquities, including ceramics, marbles, bronzes, and Roman mosaics from Princeton University’s excavations at Antioch. Medieval Europe is represented by sculpture, metalwork, and stained glass. The collection of Western European paintings includes important examples from the early Renaissance through the nineteenth century, and there is a growing collection of twentieth-century and contemporary art. Significant loans amplify the collection in many areas. Among the greatest strengths of the Museum are its collections of Chinese art, with important holdings in bronzes, tomb figures, painting, calligraphy, and pre-Columbian art, with remarkable examples of the art of the Olmec and Maya. The Museum also has important collections of old master prints and drawings and a comprehensive collection of original photographs. African art is represented, as well as Northwest Coast Indian art, the latter on loan to the Museum from the Department of Geology.

Special study rooms exist for prints and drawings, photographs, and Pre-Columbian art. All Princeton students can make appointments to see original works of art not on display by contacting the curators of the respective areas (see the ART Undergraduate Handbook for contact information). The Museum’s online database catalogs a majority of its holdings. Students can access museum and object files by contacting the museum registrar’s office.

Tang Center

The P. Y. and Kinmay W. Tang Center for East Asian Art was established in 2001 to advance the understanding of East Asian art and culture. A sponsor and facilitator of scholarly exchange, the Tang Center brings together scholars, students, and the general public through interdisciplinary programs, including lectures and symposia, film series, publications, graduate education, museum development and exhibitions. Building on Princeton University’s long history of activity, scholarship, and leadership in the field of East Asian art, the Tang Center supports and encourages continuing inquiry into those issues that help to shape East Asian art.

Firestone Library

Most students know Firestone Library as the place to go for research materials, but many are not aware of its extensive holdings in the visual arts. Manuscripts, prints, photographs, and even some paintings and sculptures are located within the department of Rare Books and Special Collections, which are normally consulted in the reading room located on the C floor. Normally, materials that appear in the on-line catalogue for Firestone Library can be immediately consulted, although it is often helpful to request materials in Rare Books and Special Collections in advance; materials in the Cotsen Library, as well as uncatalogued materials, can be consulted only by prior appointment. Some of the most important collections for Art & Archaeology majors are the following:
Manuscripts Division

The Manuscripts Division contains 8500 linear feet of materials ranging from 1300 cuneiform tablets to Man Ray photographs. It has the largest collection of Islamic manuscripts in North America (11,000 volumes) as well as very significant collections of Western textual and illuminated manuscripts ranging in date from the 9th to 16th centuries, with special strength in the English, French, Italian, and Byzantine world. Other particular treasures are the photographic albums of Charles Dodgson (Lewis Carroll), some 700 items; 900 Middle Eastern photographs by Felix Bonfils; 130 Beardsley drawings; and the Sylvia Beach Collection.

Graphic Arts Collection

The Graphic Arts Collection includes artists’ and private press books, as well as materials for the study of paper and papermaking, printing, calligraphy, printmaking, fine binding, typography, and book design. Of special interest are the Sinclair Hamilton Collection of American Illustrated Books; 18th- and 19th-century British artists and illustrators (particularly George and Robert Cruikshank, Thomas Rowlandson, and William Hogarth); and the Charles Rahn Fry Pochoir Collection. The collection includes reference works on the history of the book and printing. Among the primary source materials are over 20,000 drawings, prints, paintings, and photographs related to the history of book illustration, vintage printing presses and type, approximately 350 blocks and plates for printmaking, and 100 linear feet of printed ephemera such as bookplates, trade cards, and postcards.

Cotsen Children’s Library

An unusual collection of illustrated children’s books, manuscripts, original artwork, prints, and educational toys from the 15th century to the present day, the Cotsen Library has over 60,000 items dating from the first primers to the latest anime cartoons. For anyone interested in the history of childhood, popular culture, and the often forgotten involvement of fine artists such as Kandinsky, El Lissitzky, and Edward Steichen in children’s book illustration, this is a treasure trove.

Western Americana Collection

The Western Americana Collection includes prints, photographs, paintings, and illustrated books of the Western territories and states, including amateur albums by explorers and early settlers.

Numismatics Collection

Twenty-five-thousand objects with particular strengths in Greek and Roman coins.

Other Princeton Resources for Art Majors

Seeley G. Mudd Library is home to the Princeton University archives, which contain historic photographs, prints, and portraits relating to Princeton. Other libraries on campus that contain original drawings, prints and photographs include the School of Architecture Library and the East Asian Library and Gest Collection, with over 102,000 early string-bound Chinese books. Films and videos by leading directors are found in the Humanities Resource Center (011 East Pyne).
Forms and Sample Senior Comprehensive Exam Instructions

**Forms**

For all departmental forms, please see the ART Undergraduate Handbook, available in PDF form on the Department of Art & Archaeology website. For all other forms (e.g. course enrollment, summer course approval, etc.) see the “Forms Library” on the Dean of the College website ([https://odoc.princeton.edu/resources/forms](https://odoc.princeton.edu/resources/forms)). Course enrollment forms are also available on the Registrar’s website ([https://registrar.princeton.edu/student-services/course-enrollment-workshe/](https://registrar.princeton.edu/student-services/course-enrollment-workshe/)). The residential colleges also post forms on their websites.

**Sample Instructions for the Senior Comprehensive Exam**

The Senior Comprehensive Exam in the Department of Art & Archaeology consists of a one-hour oral exam with three members of the faculty, including the thesis adviser and the second reader, plus an additional faculty member.

The exam will begin with a discussion of your senior thesis. You will be asked to give a very brief summary of your topic and conclusions, and then the examiners will ask you a series of questions about your thesis work.

This portion of the exam will be followed by questions based on your coursework, as follows: You should come to the exam prepared to discuss five of the departmental History of Art/Archaeology courses you have taken in this department (any five of your choice, representing a range of periods and cultures).

From each of three of these courses, you should select a specific major work that you are prepared to talk about (a major work is one that would be included in an introductory textbook). From each of the other two of these courses, you should pick a major theme or issue that was emphasized in the course (and could thus be related to many works). You should print on a sheet the names of the five courses, the three works, and the two themes/issues that you have selected. Please make four copies of this list (one for yourself and one for each of the three examiners). The list will be distributed to the examiners at the beginning of the oral exam.

Please bring, in a PowerPoint file, images related to your thesis topic, the three major works you are proposing, and also images to be used as illustrations for the two thematic discussions (3-4 images for each theme). The faculty will not know your topics in advance and will therefore not have any images available during the exam. The staff in Visual Resources will help you with images and will be contacting you directly about downloading your PowerPoint onto computers prior to the exam. You will also bring your images with you on a flash drive when you come to your exam as a backup.

Each faculty examiner will select one of your five proposed subjects (thus, you will be examined only on a percentage of your choices). You should plan to begin your discussion with a short (approximately five-minute) introduction to the object (what is it? when was it created? what culture does it represent? who was the artist? why it is important?) or the theme (explain your theme and why it was important, then show your first image and start to talk about how it embodies or exemplifies your theme; you or your examiners may decide when you should move on to another example). You should select objects and topics that excite you and that you discussed in some detail in your class and/or precepts. Please
limit your initial discussion to five minutes; expect your examiners to stop you after five minutes and begin to ask questions about the work or the theme.

Samples of major works might be the Arch of Constantine, the Bayeux Tapestry, Duchamp’s *The Large Glass*, Rembrandt’s *Night Watch*, and so forth. Themes might be iconographical (the representation of the Virgin in Quattrocento art; imperial power and Roman art; consumer culture and Pop art; the image of the artist during a particular period); formal or stylistic (the influence of classical art on the Renaissance; the representation of space in the Baroque period; the impact of changing print media on representation); or historical (theories of the avant-garde in the twentieth century; the impact of science on nineteenth-century American painting; Zen influences on Japanese painting; issues of gender or patronage in a particular culture or period; contemporary art and globalization; and so forth). A theme could also be imagined as an essay question on a midterm or final exam; in effect, you are answering such a question orally rather than in writing.

To prepare, you should consult your class notes, readings, and textbooks. You will need to verify information about the major objects you selected. We are trying to see if you can talk about images in a thoughtful way and consider the types of questions that art historians ask. It helps if you have a good sense of the context of an object or if you have already thought about a theme (if you know about only one painting by Bronzino, then it may not be a good idea to pick a Bronzino as your object or as an example for a theme). Always make sure you can describe what it is you are seeing—how the object was made, how large it is, where it was originally displayed, what story the artist is trying to tell, why the forms are distributed the way they are, why the object is significant or interesting, and how the style contributes to meaning. Formal analysis remains important here, and knowing the identity and meaning of depicted objects/forms is also vital (for example, if one of your examiners asks you who the figure to the left of the Virgin is and why he is there, you should be able to answer that question).

For a theme, you will need to start with a brief statement about what your theme is and how that theme might be elaborated through specific examples (your images). The faculty may interrupt you after a few minutes and begin to ask you questions. For example, if you were talking about the importance of papal patronage for High Renaissance art, you might start talking about the Raphael *Stanze* in the Vatican, and the examiner might then ask you about how papal patronage was different from other kinds of patronage at the time, or about the range of papal patronage (where do portraits fit into this story? Did a given Pope patronize artists of different styles at the same time, such as Raphael and Michelangelo? And so forth). Think of yourself as a teacher explaining the work or topic to a college student or the general public.

You should know that you will have examiners from a variety of fields (not just the area of your senior thesis), and that your examiners will not necessarily be professors with whom you have had classes.