

Academic Degree Programs Assessment

Part I: Assessment Plan

College of Visual and Performing Arts

School of Art and Design

Undergraduate Degree Program

Art History (B.A.)

Authored by Professor Helen Nagata

February 2019

John Siblik, Director

1. Introduction

This report presents data on student learning outcomes for the division of Art History from academic years ending in 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018. It includes the current student learning outcomes assessment rubric, desired program-level student learning outcomes, the optional reflection on how the program's student learning outcomes align with the university baccalaureate student learning outcomes, as well as the optional curriculum map outlining how the scope and sequence of undergraduate courses in the art history program aligns with the degree program student learning outcomes.

After a summary of the program's evolution and current program goals, it will offer some reflections on how the current assessment plan can be tweaked to provide the program with strategically better, actionable data. It is safe to say that this latter reflection is something that needs further discussion by members of the division faculty to fine-tune methods of assessment and use of assessment data going forward. It is possible that some uncertainty about the purpose or function of assessment reports and specification of its recipients has paralyzed development or generation of fresh proposals on how to improve the program's assessment methods. This moment in the history of the program offers an interesting opportunity to take stock of the decreased enrollment suffered by the university and department and re-consider how assessment methods could help clarify program needs and lead to curricular improvements.

Relevant history/evolution of the program and the program goals as they are now

As the "Status Report" in Part II will show, there have been very few changes in the program's stated undergraduate student learning outcomes, program targets or methods of reporting or assessment over the past five years. There have, however, been a number of developments affecting the program, as in the following outlined below.

- *Declines in department and division enrollment* —university-wide, SOAD, CVPA, and as a result of creation of new GenEd programs— both in the way the PLUS programs require application, select particular courses for pathways, and increased the number of GenEd courses now being offered. Morale has been affected. Faculty have been charged with the responsibility of increasing enrollment or risk the continued existence of the program, criticized for the way courses have been structured or designed to meet what used to be higher enrollment numbers. Art history faculty put in extraordinary numbers of hours to put together PowerPoint presentations, research readings, and design assignments. In addition to feeling the pressure to plan, organize, and execute adjustments to curriculum immediately in a given academic year, the division has had to defend what it does rather than receive support to facilitate positive change. Nevertheless, in 2018 the division has seen 25% increase in admissions from the previous year.
- *Retirements of key faculty* in the past two years have also debilitated the reach and appeal of the program. The division lost its experts on Modern Art and Mesoamerican and African Art. It is inconceivable to think of a School of Art and Design without an expert on Modern Art. With the

loss of our Mesoamerican and African Art faculty, the division has lost important connections to the Anthropology, Archaeology, Latin American Studies programs on campus. Moreover, as one of the few programs in the U.S. with such an expert, we had consistently attracted undergraduate students interested in this area of specialization. Faculty are currently strapped with greater work load, expected to maintain a high number of courses while contributing more to SOAD recruitment activities, administrative tasks, and committee work.

- *Shifts in popular interest.* Art History may be less in demand by those seeking better job opportunities, especially with messages sent in the news about budget cuts, museums selling off works to improve financial challenges (The Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, MA, April 2018), university museum collections being liquidated or sold to raise money (La Salle University in Philadelphia, Jan. 2018) [MOBIA in New York [2015], the Fresno Metropolitan Museum of Art and Science in California [2010], the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., and the Higgins Armory Museum in Massachusetts] or art history departments closed since 2008 when the focus seemed on practical degrees that would lead immediately to jobs,

Positive Trends

- *Disciplinary need.* There will always be a need for this discipline as long as there are museums, private collections, galleries, an art market and auction houses, and a demand or need for research, expertise, and analysis whether in the form of publications, exhibitions, a need for educators at academic institutions, or other. The discipline is also vital to the study of visual and material culture and serves as a worthy collaborator or importance source of expertise for studies in almost all areas of the humanities and the arts. Despite current difficulties, the program was ranked eighth in *College Magazine* (<https://www.collegemagazine.com/top-10-midwestern-art-history-universities-crack-da-vinci-code/>).
- *External award recognition.* Museum exhibition activity generated by the art history program has resulted in awards from the Illinois Arts Council, donations of art and funding to the NIU Art Museum, School of Art and Design, and Center for Burma Studies, and collaborations between faculty in art history and dance, music, musicology, history, Studies in Southeast Asian art, Japan Studies, as well as special guest lectures and performances funded by the Elizabeth Allen Fund have enriched undergraduate curriculum and students' educational experience.

Actions Taken to Improve Program, Increase Enrollment or Increase Retention

- Continuation of B.A. in Art History with departmental honors.
- Establishment of MA programs with different specializations: research, and teaching, with plans for a third "branch" in museum studies
- Introduction of a minor in Art History.
- Establishment of an Accelerated B.A./J.D. Program in Art History and the College of Law
- Developing articulation agreements with community colleges and advising individual transfer students to allow immediate access into advanced Art History course work.
- Paying close attention to distribution of graduate students in graduate courses clustered with undergraduate to encourage more stand-alone graduate courses

- *Developing Service Course to the School of Art and Design: Going On-Line* In Spring 2018 and Fall 2018, the division has created new online sections of ARTH 282, a required course for art history majors and minors, art and design education, as well as all B.F.A., B.A., and B.S. Art majors, while also functioning as a popular GenEd, honors, and elective course for students outside the SOAD. Standardization of all sections, online and traditional, is a mammoth task that has gotten more complicated not only with the creation of these new online sections, but also with the recent formation of a new section taught independently from the other sections and the continued employment of an adjunct faculty who teaches a section during the summer.
- An unexpected, positive curricular development that has occurred as a result of creating online sections, is that video presentations (lectures) prepared for the online students can now be used for assigned viewing by traditional classroom students. A faculty member involved in preparation of online teaching can now assign recorded presentations for homework and use class time discussion with students to check comprehension; introduce supplementary, new material fundamental to developing analytical and interpretive skills; and enhance student awareness of major themes, genres, and categories of art crucial to the discipline.
- Continuation of study-abroad and independent-study courses.
- Establishment of an "in-house" writing tutor, an M.A. graduate assistant, to help students with writing needs by appointment.

The changing programmatic landscape

- Introductory 200-level courses. Such a course would precede the classic world survey course currently offered through ARTH 282 Introduction to World Art
- Exploration of a possible new collaborative degree program for Art History and Art Therapy.
- Weighing the challenges of accepting international students (or even native English-language speakers) to the program if their language or writing skills are still developing. The Art History Division and the School of Art and Design have multiple networks to reach out to international students. In addition to language needs, international students present a host of new programmatic and assessment needs.
- Continue exploration of ways to reach out to the community, whether through programs for training or advising high school art history instruction; museum studies or art administration programs; or collaborating with area groups or institutions to share knowledge or expertise whether through lectures or curatorial projects.
- Study-abroad courses are often cancelled due to low enrollment or the workload burden placed on faculty to organize all aspects of a program and its promotion. Enrollment numbers could increase with more collaboration across disciplines and programs.

Identified Program Needs and Student Needs

- Although difficult to quantify or support with statistics, the academic skills of incoming students can be quite uneven, and this can affect how courses are taught and the depth of material reached.
- Although faculty are committed to teaching a range of courses intended to address different levels of students' needs, students who enroll in upper division courses (300- or 400-level) are

frequently beginners to the area and the discipline, taking the course as an elective. The practice of clustering 300- and 500-level (graduate level) courses has been discouraged in an attempt to encourage stand-alone graduate courses, but results are unclear. Graduate students continue to prefer or need 500-level courses.

- Research and writing skills, especially expository writing skills or the ability to analyze, interpret, and present a fully supported argument in essay format can be a huge challenge.

Reflection on Assessment Methods: New Initiatives that Tailor Program Content to Student Need

With a changing landscape of curriculum expectation, style of delivery, and student need, new assessment plans need to be discussed. This report can offer some thoughts on things the faculty might consider in continuing to develop the assessment tools used to generate feedback on the program. However, the program still needs to resolve assessment issues through a reflective process that will blend with the 2020 NASAD reporting.

To recognize the needs of students it is important to consider the BA Art History as also supporting modules of content that support a diverse range of student needs. These changes could include the following:

Identifying how assessment can inform strategic planning

The program recognizes the critical need to adopt change and strategically look ahead. Assessment cannot simply be reviewed as a dutiful reporting requirement; it must be conceived as providing *the program* with actionable data. New tools need to be developed to meet the following identified assessment needs:

- Initiate a gauge at the beginner/development level in order to track progress and generate data for a meaningful comparison with capstone results.
- do more to identify students in dire need of better education in writing, analysis and interpretation (expository writing) and either require existing curriculum in English analysis or writing or passing a test/requirement before being admitted to 300- or 400-level classes

To properly articulate a strategic vision and create new assessment tools will require a review of course objectives, relationship to assignments, work with university curriculum objectives, writing improvement projects to facilitate progress. In addition, such a review needs to inform significant factors that help in placing the assessment plan in context (e.g., a new minor, shifting demand, market forces, the need for revised student learning outcomes, the need for more appropriate/valid information, new accreditation standards, department organizational changes, retention issues, and the like). This is major work that is made more difficult by increasing demands placed on faculty as outlined at the beginning of this report.

2. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

The latest 2018 draft is essentially the same that has been used since 2014 but for some minimal tweaking and slight changing of order between SLO 2 and SLO 3. It is fair to say that the rubric defines the most important categories of skills and knowledge needed to be well-trained in the practice of art history.

B.A. Art History Learning Outcomes Assessment Rubric

Criteria	Proficient 4	Progressing 3	Progressing 2	Developing 1
<i>1. Identify and explain the significance of major works of art created in Europe, North America, and Asia at various periods from Antiquity to the late twentieth century.</i>	Demonstrates detailed and convincing knowledge of the breadth of art history.	Demonstrates sufficient knowledge of the breadth of art history.	Demonstrates some knowledge of the breadth of art history.	Knowledge of the breadth of art history is minimally developed.
<i>2. Familiarity with selected global visual cultures.</i>	Demonstrates detailed and convincing knowledge of selected global visual cultures	Demonstrates generalized knowledge of selected global visual cultures.	Demonstrates some knowledge of selected global visual cultures.	Basic knowledge of selected global visual cultures is minimally developed.
<i>3. Recognize, understand, and apply various art historical methods for critically evaluating the interconnections of art production with other aspects of historical and social development within particular cultures.</i>	Demonstrates broad yet theoretically-grounded understanding of the unique contributions of art to human cultures.	Demonstrates sufficient though generalized understanding of the contributions of art to human cultures.	Demonstrates some understanding of the contributions of art to human cultures.	Understanding of the contributions of art to human cultures is minimally developed.
<i>4. Identify and develop appropriate research topics and questions.</i>	Consistently employs basic skills in research and analysis.	Demonstrates sufficient skills in basic research and analysis.	Demonstrates adequate skills in research and analysis.	Demonstrates minimal understanding of skills necessary to research and analysis.
<i>5. Organize and express thoughts clearly and coherently both in writing and orally.</i>	Consistently employs informed judgment in verbal and written communication.	Communication skills inconsistently applied.	Communications skills insufficiently developed.	Minimal understanding of communication skills.

3. Program-by-Baccalaureate Student Learning Outcomes Matrix

Program Student Learning Outcome	Baccalaureate Student Learning Outcomes							
	A. Global inter-connections and inter-dependencies	B. Intercultural competencies	C. Analyze human life and natural world inter-connections	D. Critical, creative, and independent thought	E. Communicate clearly and effectively	F. Collaborate with others	G. Quantitative and qualitative reasoning	H. Apply knowledge/skills creatively
<i>1. Identify and explain the significance of major works of art created in Europe, North America, and Asia at various periods from Antiquity to the late twentieth century.</i>	S		M	S	S		M	M
<i>2. Familiarity with selected global visual cultures.</i>	S	S	M	M	S		M	M
<i>3. Recognize, understand, and apply various art historical methods for critically evaluating the intersections of art production with other aspects of historical and social development within particular cultures.</i>	M	M		M	S	M	S	S

<i>4. Identify and develop appropriate research topics and questions.</i>	M	S			S		S	S
<i>5. Organize and express thoughts clearly and coherently both in writing and orally.</i>		M			S		S	S
Overall	S	S	M	M	S		S	S

4. Curriculum Map

Course	Program Student Learning Outcomes				
	<i>1. Identify and explain the significance of major works of art created in Europe, North America, and Asia at various periods from Antiquity</i>	<i>2. Familiarity with selected global visual cultures.</i>	<i>3. Recognize, understand, and apply various art historical methods for critically evaluating the intersections of art production with other aspects of historical and social development within particular cultures.</i>	<i>4. Identify and develop appropriate research topics and questions.</i>	<i>5. Organize and express thoughts clearly and coherently both in writing and orally.</i>
ARTH 282	B, D	B	B		D
ARTH 292	B, D	B	B		D
ARTH 294	B, D	B	B	B	D
ARTH 300-	D	D	B, D	D	D, P
ARTH 400-	D	D	B, D	D, P	D, P
ARTH 486	DP	DP	DP	D	D
ARTH 494	P	DP	D	D, P	D, P
Note. Course supports the outcome at the B=beginning, D=developing, or P=proficient level.					

5. Assessment Methods

Moving forward, the division is considering ways to collect data on student learning outcomes from our 200- and 300-level courses in order to better track the progression of skills achieved through the program (students, as well as courses) and work toward ensuring incremental mastery of fundamental academic skills leading up to the capstone sequence of courses (Part I, and Part II) at the 400-level.

Discussion has also begun on defining student learning outcomes so that they reflect a way to measure the expected progression of difficulty. Our list of five student outcomes, for example, progresses from basic skills of gaining new knowledge (1) and applying knowledge (2), to mastering skills of analysis and interpretation (3), applying analysis and learning skills toward creating new research (4), and finally working toward or mastering proficiency in communication (5). This revised list of student learning outcomes have been defined in the following way:

1. Understand the historical significance of major works of art and architecture.
2. Apply knowledge to global visual cultures.
3. Analyze and evaluate the intersections of art production with society and history.
4. Create new research topics and questions.
5. Communicate clearly and coherently in writing and speaking.

Still to come are plans for measuring, recording progress, and using data to review course assignments. In this new landscape, learning objectives 1 and 2 might correspond to our 200-level courses; learning objective 3 and 4 to our 300-level courses; and objectives 4 and 5 to our 400-level courses. Currently, however, all five of our student-learning outcomes are assessed during the students' capstone courses.

EXPLANATION OF ASSESSMENT METHODS TABLE

The tables below describe the assessment methods currently in use with slight revisions. Data has been collected annually from the program's capstone courses, ARTH 486 and ARTH 494. The first, ARTH 486, Art Historical Methodologies, is Capstone Course Sequence Part I, which undergraduate majors complete during the spring semester of their junior year. The second, ARTH 494, is the Undergraduate Seminar, Capstone Course Sequence Part II, to be taken during fall semester of the student's senior year.

As capstone experiences, all five student learning objectives defined for the program are important for completing the courses successfully, but ARTH 486 tracked results for student learning objectives one, two and three, while ARTH 494 stressed results for student learning objectives four and five. While student level achievement in both courses has in the past been defined as achieving level 4 (proficiency), with 85% program level target, this will likely change pending further discussion. For now, student level achievement for both courses has been defined as level 3 or better.

ARTH 486: Art Historical Methodologies, *Capstone, Part I*, for spring semester of the student's junior year

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement	Program-Level Target	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs

<p>Capstone sequence, Part I, ARTH 486</p> <p>ARTH 486 is a critical survey of the ideas that have engaged art historians in the past and continue to engage them today. The course introduces students to the discipline's various methodological approaches through close readings of primary and secondary sources, a term project requiring completion of an annotated bibliography, research proposal and oral presentation.</p>	<p>Students are asked to complete weekly analytical summaries of readings; research an annotated bibliography tracing the history of an art historical sub-field; formulate a research proposal; and make an oral presentation to the class on the state of the chosen field and proposed contribution to the field.</p> <p>1) show knowledge of the historical significance of major works of art and architecture</p> <p>2) Apply knowledge to global visual cultures.</p> <p>3) Analyze and evaluate the intersections of art production with society and history</p> <p>4) Create new research topics and questions.</p> <p>5) Communicate clearly and coherently in writing and speaking.</p>	<p>A student will receive a score of Level 3 or better on SLOs 1, 2, 3</p>	<p>85% of all students will meet the student-level target</p>	<p>During the last week of spring semester</p>	<p>Course instructor</p>	<p>1, 2, 3</p>
---	--	--	---	--	--------------------------	----------------

ARTH 494 Undergraduate Seminar, *Capstone Course Sequence*, Part Two for fall semester of student's senior year

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement	Program-Level Target	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs
<p>Capstone sequence, Part II, ARTH 494</p> <p>ARTH 494 is open only to upper-division students admitted to honors work in art history and art history majors. The course addresses special problems in the analysis of art and includes an in-class presentation of a completed research project. Topics vary by instructor.</p>	<p>Assignments have included active participation in class discussion, short assignments with oral and written components, and a multipart research project, the results of which were presented orally to the class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) show knowledge of the historical significance of major works of art and architecture 2) Apply knowledge to global visual cultures. 3) Analyze and evaluate the intersections of art production with society and history 4) Create new research topics and questions. 5) Communicate clearly and coherently in writing and speaking. 	<p>A student will receive a score of Level 3 or better on SLOs 4, 5</p>	<p>85% of all students will meet the student-level target</p>	<p>During the last week of fall semester</p>	<p>Course instructor</p>	<p>4, 5</p>

ASSESSMENT METHODS-BY-OUTCOMES MATRIX

Following the general flow of courses listed in the curriculum map, it is possible to identify key places in the curriculum where assessment data could be captured to measure program student-learning outcomes from the progression of 200- to 400-level courses. As noted above, assessment data has only been gathered heretofore for the Capstone Course Sequence I and II (ARTH 486 and 494). Information listed in the matrix for any other courses represents a hypothetical revision or improvement of current assessment methods.

Assessment Method	Program Student Learning Outcome				
	<i>1. Identify and explain the significance of major works of art created in Europe, North America, and Asia at various periods from Antiquity</i>	<i>2. Familiarity with selected global visual cultures.</i>	<i>3. Recognize, understand, and apply various art historical methods for critically evaluating the intersections of art production with other aspects of historical and social development within particular cultures.</i>	<i>4. Identify and develop appropriate research topics and questions.</i>	<i>5. Organize and express thoughts clearly and coherently both in writing and orally.</i>
ARTH 282, 292, 294 Unit Tests	F, D	F, D			
ARTH 300- Tests	F, D	F, D	F, D		
ARTH 300- Term Paper			F, D	F, D	F, D
ARTH 400- Term Paper with Presentations			S, D	S, D	S, D

Assessment Method	Program Student Learning Outcome				
	<i>1. Identify and explain the significance of major works of art created in Europe, North America, and Asia at various periods from Antiquity</i>	<i>2. Familiarity with selected global visual cultures.</i>	<i>3. Recognize, understand, and apply various art historical methods for critically evaluating the intersections of art production with other aspects of historical and social development within particular cultures.</i>	<i>4. Identify and develop appropriate research topics and questions.</i>	<i>5. Organize and express thoughts clearly and coherently both in writing and orally.</i>
ARTH 486 Research Project with Presentation	S, D	S, D	S, D		
ARTH 494 Research Project with Presentation				S, D	S, D
Alumni Survey	S, I	S, I	S, I	S, I	S, I
Note. F=formative assessment, S=summative assessment, D=direct assessment, and I=indirect assessment. See the paragraph above for an explanation of each type of assessment.					