

Qualifying Paper Guidelines

Master's Art History
The George Washington University
2018–19

By the spring of their first year (or upon completion of 18 credit-hours of graduate-level coursework for BA-MA students or those attending part-time), Art History graduate students typically select a seminar paper from the first or second semester that they want to work on further for the Qualifying Paper. It is also possible to select a paper from the Summer semester. Students must meet with the appropriate faculty member(s) to make sure that the seminar paper will serve as a viable foundation for researching and writing a substantial Qualifying Paper. Students must submit a 300-word written proposal of their QP topic to their First Reader and the DGS at this time (typically the end of the Spring semester of their first year). No later than the beginning of their second year, in consultation with the first reader and Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), students must also find two other readers willing to comment on their next draft. The readers' names should be submitted to the DGS, who will approve them or make changes, if necessary. At this time, student must also submit an Annotated Bibliography and QP outline to their faculty readers and to the DGS.

A first draft of the QP will be due October 25, 2018. This draft will be read by all three readers. One reader may be from outside the department, whether in another department at GW, a visiting professor, or an adjunct professor who is not full-time faculty.

Final drafts will be due March 7, 2019. The entire full-time art history faculty will read all the papers and meet to discuss them. Students will be notified about the results after Spring Break. They will thus have time to revise papers, if necessary.

Professors should not be asked to read additional drafts of the papers. They will, however, be available to discuss papers, whether during office hours or by appointment, over the course of the academic year.

Timeline Overview

Spring–Summer 2018: Choose a paper to revise. Meet or email the professor for whom you wrote the paper in order to make sure that the paper will serve as a viable foundation for the Qualifying Paper. If that professor is not a member of the full-time faculty, the student must confirm the decision to use that paper as the basis of the Qualifying Paper with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).

Spring–Fall 2018: In consultation with the first reader and DGS, select and contact two additional readers.

Sept. 6, 2018: Readers' names must be submitted to DGS for approval absolutely no later than this date.

Oct. 25, 2018: First draft due by close of business day. Three hard copies to the front desk of Smith Hall of Art 101 (black and white images accompanying hard copies OK). An electronic copy to art@gwu.edu (must include color images).

Building upon the seminar paper, this “first draft” already should have a high degree of finish better enabling faculty readers to provide extensive, constructive feedback for further research, writing and documentation improvements culminating in the final QP. Please study the grading rubric below to see how Qualifying Papers will be evaluated.

Early Nov. 2018: Receive feedback from faculty readers. Meet with faculty readers to discuss revisions / elaborations for final QP.

March 7, 2019: Final draft due by close of business day. Five hard copies to the front desk of Smith Hall of Art 101 (black and white images accompanying hard copies OK). An electronic copy to cahist@gwu.edu (must include color images).

Late March 2019: Students are notified about the results. If a qualifying paper is considered to be unacceptable, the author has one opportunity to resubmit the paper, which is due within a period of two weeks following notification from the graduate advisor.

Choosing a Paper to Revise

Qualifying papers represent work done in proseminars and seminars taken during the student's course of study at GW. Students are strongly encouraged to revise papers written for full-time faculty. With the graduate advisor's permission, students may adapt papers done for courses taken outside the department or taught by part-time faculty. *In these cases, the student should find a full-time faculty member to read through and provide the feedback on the first draft well in advance of the actual deadline in order to make sure that the paper is suitable for a qualifying paper. Depending upon the individual, part-time faculty may or may not be available for consultation on the initial draft due in the Fall. No part-time faculty person will be involved in paper evaluation beyond the first draft. Only full-time faculty will be reading and meeting to evaluate students' final drafts in March 2019.*

Format

The paper should be twenty to thirty pages in length; bibliography and illustrations are not counted in the page length.

- The text must be printed on standard 8½ x 11" paper, double-spaced and in a twelve-point font.
- The margins should be roughly 1" on all four sides; margins must not substantially exceed or fall under the limit.
- Indent the first line of a new paragraph, and do not leave an extra space or spaces between paragraphs.
- Do not justify the right margin and do not print on both sides of the paper.
- All pages of text must be numbered.
- Use a binder clip to clamp pages together; save the plastic binders for another occasion.

Papers consist of four parts: title page, text with notes, bibliography, and illustrations.

The title page is a cover sheet that bears the title, author's name, and the names of the three readers. Specify the name of the seminar instructor for whom it was originally written.

The illustrations can be black and white, although color is preferred; each should be labeled as a numbered figure (i.e., Fig. 1, Fig. 2, and so forth) and should carry basic information about the work illustrated: name of artist, title of work, date, dimensions, and the collection in which it is found. When you refer to an illustration, locate the reference as close to the textual reference to the work as possible. For instance: "The lintel of St.- G enis-des-Fontaines (Fig. 1) is a major..." Figure references must always be integrated within sentences; they are never free-standing.

Documentation

1. Footnotes

Documentation should be in the form of footnotes, consecutively numbered in superscript Arabic numerals. Footnotes appear near a quotation, work of art, or idea being documented. References may not be made using parenthetical elements within the body of the text (the style of the sciences and social sciences). If a punctuation mark falls next to the footnote, the number follows the punctuation. Examples of footnote formats are given below.

Knowing what to document and when is important in writing research papers. In an art history paper the times when you must footnote can be reduced to three particular circumstances, though exceptions do exist:

a. When a work of art is first mentioned in the text, reference should be made to a publication in which the reader can find an illustration and discussion of that work. This rule applies to all the works cited except the one that is the subject of the paper, for which more specialized documentation will inevitably be given.

b. Direct quotations must always appear within quotation marks and be followed immediately by a reference to the publication from which the quotation was taken. There are certain exceptions to this rule: biblical quotations, quotations from ancient or medieval authors whose works are published in standard editions, and select modern authors such as Shakespeare, Freud and others. These need not be footnoted. Instead, at the end of the quote give an abbreviated version of the title of the book, the chapter and verse or line number, all within parentheses. For example: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). The particular translation of the Bible need not be identified, but note the order of punctuation in the example given. Another example: "...as when, referring to Gen 4:1-16, the King says, 'O, my offense is rank, it smells to heaven;/ it hath the primal eldest curse upon 't, / A brother's murder' (*Hamlet* 3.2.35-37)." The numbers in the reference allow the reader to find the passage in any printed edition.

A note on English translations: When a passage written in another language is given in English translation, the name of the translator needs to be acknowledged in a footnote (the one exception is the Bible). The reference should be to a standard edition and not to a secondary source that uses the primary source. Thus, when we read in English a passage from Cicero or Vasari, and then find in the footnote a reference to an art-historical study, we can be fairly certain that the author has simply lifted the translation from a secondary source; it is a sign of sloppiness, unless it is the art historian who has rendered the passage quoted into English.

c. An idea not your own must be footnoted, even when the author is not cited in the text by name and the words are substantially your own. We here refer to a difficult area and when doubt arises you should ask for advice, but always keep in mind your responsibility for acknowledging those whose ideas have helped you in investigating your topic.

Finally, you should know that certain kinds of facts are considered to be common knowledge and need not be footnoted. An example is: “Saint Sophia, built during the reign of Justinian (527-65), is ...” The years of the Emperor’s reign, like those for kings and queens, the tenures of popes, patriarchs, bishops, abbots and the like are considered to be common knowledge. If one wrote that “The church of St. Sophia was dedicated on 27 December 537...,” the assertion would need to be documented. The dates of works of art, especially when treated in an art-historical context, are not considered to be common knowledge. In the two examples given, note the different treatment of the word “saint;” do not begin sentences with abbreviations.

For the purpose of citation, reference materials can be divided into four categories: books, articles in journals, articles in books, and websites; for each there is a slightly different form of notation; the following examples have been adapted from the *Chicago Manual of Style*, which is available online through Aladin (<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>).

---Books or monographs:

Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked. Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 15-16.

---Journal articles:

Clive Foss, “The Lycian Coast in the Byzantine Age,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 48 (1994): 5, fig. 30.

---Articles in books (Festschrifts, essay collections):

Suzy Dufrenne, “Simples remarques sur deux manuscrits byzantins des IX^e et X^e siècles,” in *Ritual and Art. Byzantine Essays for Christopher Walter*, ed. Pamela Armstrong (London: Pindar Press, 2006), 73.

---Web materials (the example here taken from http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html):

Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, ed. John Bostock and H. T. Riley, in the Perseus Digital Library, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Plin.+Nat.+1.dedication> (accessed November 17, 2005).

Subsequent citations use a short form of the title rather than op. cit.; consecutive citations of the same work should use Ibid. following the first citation or one in the short form. Here are two examples:

Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked*, 18.

Foss, “Lycian Coast,” 40.

2. Bibliography

In assembling the bibliography, a somewhat different format should be used. Thus, the above would appear in the following fashion:

Bryson, Norman. *Looking at the Overlooked. Four Essays on Still Life Painting*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Dufrenne, Suzy. "Simples remarques sur deux manuscrits byzantins des IX^e et X^e siècles." In *Ritual and Art. Byzantine Essays for Christopher Walter*, edited by Pamela Armstrong. London: Pindar Press, 2006, 72-74.

Foss, Clive. "The Lycian Coast in the Byzantine Age." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 48 (1994): 1-52.

Perseus Digital Library. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>.

Remember that the above are only basic models. For the citation of a second edition of a work, or a work that appears in translation, see the examples in the *Chicago Manual*. Online sources deserve a note of admonition. The example cited, the Perseus Digital Library, is, like the searchable Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, one of a number that contain important texts. Databases such as these, or ones that make available archival material, are legitimate scholarly sources. Wikipedia and similar websites are generally inappropriate sources at the scholarly level. When in doubt, seek advice.

Content and structure

The paper should open with a paragraph that states the thesis in summary form—that is, its subject and the author's particular take on it. The thesis ought to be placed in the context of previous scholarship on the issue: What is the author contributing toward a better understanding of the subject? In this context, as well as throughout the paper, a degree of methodological self-awareness is important. The author should ask if new methodologies have opened fresh paths to understanding an object, movement, or artist's body of work. Once the thesis has been stated, the author needs to formulate arguments that lead to the conclusion. The arguments should build logically and adduce appropriate evidence. In this regard, the paper must demonstrate the skill of visual analysis, of showing how works of art offer concrete evidence leading to specific conclusions. In doing so we often rely on a comparative method, but when using it choose the supporting material carefully; one striking example, well chosen and argued, is far more effective than a series of comparisons, which degenerates into "and here is another example of the same..."

Scholarship in art history often makes use of other kinds of evidence: that drawn from period documents, from contemporary literature, and from artists' biographies. Whatever the form of supporting evidence, the reader needs to know what it contributes to the argument and, in appropriate cases, what its limitations are. Throughout, the author needs to demonstrate a grasp of the scholarly literature bearing on his or her chosen subject. Awareness of a body of scholarship does not mean extensive quotation from secondary sources; such quotation should be kept to a bare minimum. The author who writes, "... and as Panofsky put it so well: '...', " has failed to come to terms with the subject he or she has chosen to elucidate. Direct quotation from scholars whose arguments are considered invalid can be a legitimate strategy, since it absolves the author of the charge of misconstruing another's words. The paper should conclude on a summary statement of what has been demonstrated and its value as a contribution to the history of art.

Style issues

Authors should aim for maximum clarity. They should also avoid the unnecessary pedantry that beginners associate with scholarly prose. Wordiness tends to obscure the argument. Consider the following sentence. “Another possible explanation for this explosion might also be attributed to the distribution of wealth during this time period.” A number of words and phrases here are redundant, so the sentence could be simplified to read: “Another possible explanation for ~~this~~ the explosion might ~~also be attributed to~~ the distribution of wealth at the time ~~during this time period~~.” When proofreading your work, look for unnecessary words and phrases. Being clear and precise in one’s writing should not be associated with pedantry. One sure sign of pedantry is the use of foreign language words and phrases. Certain words have entered the language of art history (e.g., *chiaroscuro*) or are in more general use (e.g., *Weltanschauung*), but for many others there are English equivalents of long-standing acceptance (“low relief,” not *bas-relief*; “earliest possible date,” not *terminus post quem*, and so on). Do not pepper your paper with foreign words, if only because, needing to be italicized, they call attention to themselves and break the reader’s concentration.

Other stylistic matters include:

Passive voice: Avoid whenever possible. It is often an excuse to be vague about what or who is doing something.

Colloquialisms: Avoid colloquialisms such as contractions, or the use of “so” as a conjunction.

Dates: In the example given above in 2c, “The church of St. Sophia was dedicated on 27 December 537...,” there is no comma following the year, but if it were written as “The church of St. Sophia was dedicated on December 27, 537, ...,” there would need to be a comma following the year. When a century designation serves as an adjective it needs to be hyphenated, as in “The sixth-century church of St. Sophia...,” whereas the statement “Saint Sophia was built in the sixth century” does not require a hyphen in the century designation. When citing decades, do not use an apostrophe. “Warhol did his best work in the 1960s” is correct, not “Warhol did his best work in the 1960’s.”

States, countries, and cities: In the sentence, “Returning from Cordoba, Spain, we landed in Washington, D.C., and then continued ...,” the country and state designations are set off by commas.

Titles of works of art: An important aspect of art in the modern era is that artists give their works unique names: Kandinsky, *Composition No. 2*, or Donald Judd, *Untitled*; such names, even when translations from another language, are italicized. The names we use when discussing ancient, medieval and Renaissance works are simply art-historical conveniences and are not italicized, though they may be capitalized: thus “the famous Visitation on the west façade of Reims cathedral...” does not have “Visitation” italicized.

Some words to avoid, or to use with utmost care:

Iconography: The word is not a synonym of or substitute for “subject;” avoid its use outside of the discussion of a particular methodology.

Influence: In his *Patterns of Intention* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 58-59, Michael Baxandall wrote:

“Influence” is a curse of art criticism primarily because of its wrong-headed grammatical prejudice about who is the agent and who the patient: it seems to reverse the active/passive relation which the historical actor experiences and the inferential beholder will wish to take into account. If one says that X influenced Y it does seem that one is saying that X did something to Y rather than Y did something to X. But in the consideration of good pictures and painters the second is always the more lively reality. [...] If we think of Y rather than X as the agent, the vocabulary is much richer and more attractively diversified: draw on, resort to, avail oneself of, appropriate from, have recourse to, adapt, misunderstand, refer to, pick up, take on, engage with, react to, quote, [...]. To think in terms of influence blunts thought by impoverishing the means of differentiation.

Reference: Avoid use as a transitive verb, as in “She repeatedly referenced the writings of Aristotle in her talk.” The writer means “referred to.”

Realism/realistic: Words fraught with significance; use the neutral “naturalism” and “naturalistic” unless writing about a particular movement in nineteenth-century art.

Reflect: In the sentence “Jackson Pollock’s *Blue Poles* reflects American anxiety during the Cold War era,” the verb “reflects” implies a degree of causality, or suggests that the work of art is a mirror in which we see mental states or social concerns reflected with clarity. In fact, far from passively reflecting a pre-existing reality, works of art construct both perceptions and conceptions of the world.

This: Limit your use of “this”; ask yourself, Can I use “the”? If not, is the noun or phrase to which it refers in the preceding clause?

Unique: “Unique” is an absolute, and cannot be modified, as in the incorrect “very unique,” “most unique,” and so on. When you describe something as unique, be sure that you can verify your assertion. Are you absolutely sure that no other photographers ever captured a drop of milk as precisely as Harold E. Edgerton did?

Very: A weak intensifier used when the correct word has not come to mind; do not use it. There are a number of other adjectives and adverbs (incredible, awesome, interesting) that have no precise meaning; avoid them, too.

For further sound advice on stylistic matters, Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* is a tried and generally true resource. For a more up-to-date handbook, Diana Hacker's *A Pocket Style Manual* is a good choice.

Assessment

Qualifying papers will be assessed on several issues. They include: the clarity with which the author lays out the thesis in the opening paragraph, as well as how the conclusion summarizes the argument and its art-historical significance. Has the author demonstrated the ability to use visual analysis? Are appropriate written sources used, and employed in a methodologically sound fashion? For example, instead of drawing exclusively on secondary literature on key written sources, students should consult the sources themselves, when available. Are the mechanics of writing and documentation at an acceptable, scholarly level? Finally, there is the issue of tone, in particular as it relates to the concept of authority. The author needs to recognize when he or she speaks with authority and when not. Working with objects in local collections may lead to observations of importance, ones that can form the core of a useful contribution based on the author's eyewitness authority. Often, though, we rely on the judgments of others who have had access to the work of art, its documentation, or records regarding its state of preservation. The interpretation of written sources can sometimes be difficult and best left to the findings of experts. This does not mean that you are left to sifting and rewording secondary sources when writing a research paper. What it means is that the author needs to consider carefully the topic and approach, so that he or she can work effectively within the limits of the available research materials.

The following rubric will be used by faculty in evaluating Qualifying Papers:

MA Qualifying Paper Grading Criteria:

CONTENT

SCORE _____

A (High Pass---4 points): Presents an original perspective based upon a thorough understanding of relevant readings and convincingly relates both scholarly art historical literature and primary source documents to a thorough visual analysis of art objects and/or critical, historical analysis of theoretical, aesthetic ideas. Demonstrates methodological self-awareness.

B (Pass---3 points): Demonstrates a good, but not excellent, mastery of visual, scholarly, textual analysis. While good and showing promise, a "B" paper manifests certain deficiencies and shows the need for improvement in a few areas: the stated thesis may not be fully developed and/or the paper has some unsubstantiated analysis and/or minor errors of interpretation and/or historical fact.

C (No pass---2 points): A "C" paper demonstrates only minimal adequacy in visual analysis and historical understanding of the material. It lacks a substantiated thesis and/or a meaningful discussion of artworks and their connection to the ideas and themes expressed in the scholarly literature and primary-source readings. The paper may be over-reliant upon the views of

secondary-source authors and/or misinterpret their arguments and/or misinterpret primary sources. A "C" paper is minimally researched and/or includes interpretive/factual mistakes.

D (Poor---1 point): Demonstrates a poor comprehension of the material, has no convincing scholarly thesis and lacks both meaningful discussion of the individual artworks and their connections to themes and ideas expressed in the scholarly and primary-source readings. A "D" paper is poorly researched and may include flawed visual analysis, and/or serious deficiencies in historical understanding.

COHERENCE, ORGANIZATION, WRITING STYLE SCORE _____

A (High Pass---4 points): An "A" paper is persuasively written and achieves clarity of argument by being cohesively, logically organized around a central, well-stated thesis appearing at the beginning of the paper. Carefully proofread, the paper is largely free of grammatical, spelling, typographical errors.

B (Pass---3 points): B papers are mostly well-written and accomplished but are also flawed by minor organizational, writing problems which diminish somewhat the clarity of argument stemming from the thesis. The thesis itself may need to be stated more clearly and precisely. Stylistic problems may include minor typographical, grammatical, spelling errors.

C (No pass---2 points): A "C" paper has an imprecise, contradictory and/or vaguely stated thesis; organizational problems in persuasively supporting the thesis; grammatical, spelling, typographical errors that diminish the clarity of argument.

D (Poor---1 point): Has serious writing errors, including the lack of a thesis statement; poor grammar and spelling; rambling, incoherent organization, and/or a heavy dependence upon long quotations, strings of quotations and close paraphrasing of secondary source authors.

DOCUMENTATION SCORE _____

A (High Pass---4 points): An "A" paper is fully and properly documented with well-written, accurate footnotes and bibliography. The paper is also fully illustrated with high-quality reproductions that have accurate, complete identifying captions. Footnote and figure numbers properly appear in order where needed throughout the text.

B (Pass---3 points): B papers are mostly well-documented and well-illustrated but are somewhat marred by minor errors and omissions in the footnoting, bibliography, illustrations and captions.

C (No Pass---2 points): A "C" paper has documentation errors/omissions that undermine the persuasiveness of the argument. There may be improperly numbered, missing footnotes and source information lacking for quoted, paraphrased material. Illustrations may be missing and illustration captions may have inaccurate or incomplete identifying information. Illustrations may be unclear or too small to be easily read in relation to textual descriptions. Bibliography may not be complete, may be missing necessary information and may have organizational errors.

D (Poor---1 point): Generally lacks proper documentation and has numerous errors/omissions in footnoting, bibliography, illustrations and captions. Footnotes are frequently missing, misnumbered, and/or incompletely, inaccurately written. The paper fails to attribute quotes and ideas to their authors and textual sources. Illustrations may be missing or poorly reproduced. Illustration captions may be missing or inaccurate and misnumbered. Illustration figure numbers may be missing or misnumbered in the text. The bibliography may be ill-organized, seriously incomplete and inaccurate.

PAPER GRADE:

OVERALL AVERAGE SCORE _____