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## Teaching Arts and Honors: Four Successful Syllabi

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# Teaching Arts and Honors: Four Successful Syllabi

P. BRENT REGISTER, ROBERT BULLINGTON, AND JOE THOMAS

CLARION UNIVERSITY

## INTRODUCTION

My initial experience with honors in academia occurred several years ago when I was approached to teach a 3-credit course as the humanities component of the honors curriculum at Clarion University. Being a musician, I was not quite certain what I could offer these students. The majority of them could not read music, much less play a musical instrument, and I knew that I wanted the course to be more than a typical general education survey course. Several years later, and through participation at National Collegiate Honors Council conferences, I have learned that dilemma is typical in honors programs. I have learned also that the arts are often perceived by students, and occasionally the administration, to be “easy” and “fun,” or buzzwords such as “non-academic” and “dispensable,” but these misperceptions are dismissed quickly once the rigors of the discipline are introduced.

I should mention that the Clarion University Honors Program has a strong commitment to the arts and humanities in the curriculum. The students enroll in a 3-credit course (HON 130) that is taught during the second semester of the students’ freshman year. A different offering is taught each year by a different instructor; it generally involves art, music, theatre and/or dance. Very few restrictions are put on the professor; hands-on experiences are preferred; the classroom atmosphere should be encouraging and challenging; and students should not be subjected to an excessive amount of work just because they are smart.

Through the course of many years and much thought, several successful arts courses have been taught at Clarion University. This article presents four syllabi of these courses. After each syllabus, the professor of record provides some commentary on the course and, perhaps, some obstacles to avoid. I hope that these syllabi may serve as points of departure or models for readers to develop the arts in their own curricula.

## HONORS 130: MUSIC AND DANCE

### Instructors

Dayna Sear, dance and P. Brent Register, music

### Course Description

In keeping with the fundamental premise of an honors course, the instructors have designed an experience that might be considered more a laboratory than a typical academic course. The primary goal of any academic endeavor should be that the students and instructors sense mutual growth. The instructors' ultimate goal is to enrich the students' lives through exposure to new ideas, learned experience, and trial and error. The students' goal is to remain open to new ideas, endeavors, and experiences for future reference.

So, for the non-musicians and dancers in the group, WELCOME TO OUR WORLD!—a world where students don't read about music and dance but become active participants. Through experience gleaned in this course, we are actively searching for many answers. But the fundamental questions behind this course are "What makes art good?" "Is there such a thing as 'bad' art?" and "How do you know the difference?" These are not easy questions, and the instructors can't supply much help. Is there an answer? We know what is considered to be good, and we know why it is considered good. And we know what we like. But do the students?

The course begins with some general lectures on the history of what is considered "good" throughout the world of music and dance. General periods and their characteristics are discussed, focusing primarily on the relationship of contemporary music and dance. By mid-semester (approximately March 16) we begin our collaboration on a performance . . .

### The Performance

After the Winter Holiday break, both sections of Honors 130 meet in the same location, probably the dance studio. The performance is a work conceived, designed, composed, and choreographed by you. It is an original work . . . directly from the students' collective minds. The instructors provide the theme that the work must follow. There is only ONE requirement for this performance: each person must dance, and each person must contribute to the musical content. Persons who cannot dance or play an instrument need not panic. It is the instructors' responsibility to guide students through this process, but they need to keep in mind that the instructors serve only as guides. They do not create the piece for the students. One additional element to keep in mind: there is no such thing as "good" or "bad," "right" or "wrong." Anything goes as long as it makes a work stronger. This may be a challenging concept, but it is how artists work (no doubt, this will disturb the scientists of the group!). The challenge is to create and discover how to create. Again, the instructors are

available as guides through this process but can't be relied on to save the performance. Once students are on the stage, instructors are helpless.

## Grading

Listen up! Grading is generally very subjective. And this is no different in the arts. Artists are evaluated from their performance. Keep in mind that there are no rights and wrongs here. There will be no tests, and the performance will occur during the final exam time (and it will be open to the public). There may also be journaling involved at the discretion of the instructors. And there will be outside reading assignments. Keep up so you can have an active voice. Your evaluation in this class will be based on the following:

Overall attitude	25%
Effort and performance in class	25%
Any written assignments	15%
Final performance and strike	35%

So, you want a good grade? Come to every class. Participate. Have a voice. Make a difference. And be a leader. This will generally guarantee you a good grade.

## In Conclusion

Enjoy this course! The instructors are taking a colossal risk in assuming that a group of students—sight unseen—can create a performance in one semester. We're going to have fun and want you to as well. If you have any questions or concerns, just tell us. We're reasonable. And, for informational purposes, Mrs. Sayre is to be called "Dayna" and Dr. Register is to be called "Brent."

## *Commentary—Brent Register*

This course was, by far, the most radical and interesting honors course that I have taught. It also presented the most resistance from students. First, note the grading process. There are no tests. Grading is based primarily on attitude and participation. Please understand that this is the norm for the discipline. The grading appears to be extremely subjective, and perhaps it is, but this is the nature of grading in the arts. Some students resisted this while others enjoyed the freedom of being able to create. Definite leaders emerged.

One of the major obstacles encountered by the instructors was the students' narrow perception of music and dance. While the students' were left to design the final product, they needed to be carefully guided with various examples and exercises to expand their perception of music and dance. In essence, they would have initially preferred a pageant that consisted of social dancing to a contemporary rock beat. It took much guidance and patience to expand their world, reinforcing the message that music and dance can tell stories, represent feelings and emotions, and communicate with audiences in a unique way. It became much more than a mere outlet for physical exercise.

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Approximately two months of class sessions were used to expose the students to various concepts in music and dance—in essence, to expand their pre-conceived understanding to a more expansive viewpoint. Many discussions focused on “aesthetics versus art” and how the two may be mutually exclusive. This time was also used to help the students formulate a “concept” for their dance, no small task considering the enrollment was fifty students. In retrospect, I do not believe that the students actually thought we would expect them to perform since the tone of the initial classes was very lighthearted. At about midterm through the semester, the students realized that we were absolutely serious, that they would be performing before a live audience in approximately eight weeks. After midterm, the atmosphere of the class became much more serious, a change that was student-driven.

The eventual outcome was a thirteen-minute work titled “Emotions of Life,” which ran the gamut of emotions from birth to death. All of the music was original composition performed by the students and included singing, percussion instruments of various sorts, claps, stomps, one student who could only scream, and a flute solo. Each student was required, at some point, to participate in the musical element. All students participated in the dance element as well. It evolved into a three-part dance wherein various poses increased in complexity and concluded with all participants on the stage.

What began as anxiety evolved into a serious project for the students. As the performance date grew near, they became increasingly involved with producing a quality product. They took complete control in the costuming for the performance. One unexpected treat was the involvement of the technical theatre majors at Clarion. Once they heard of our project, they agreed to provide lighting design for the dance.

The performance occurred during the week of finals on the main stage of Clarion University’s Marwick-Boyd Fine Arts Center. The entire Clarion University and community was invited to the event. The students performed for approximately 150 audience members, who demonstrated their appreciation with a standing ovation.

Reflecting on this course, last taught in 2003, I believe that it was a very courageous and innovative offering within the honors curriculum. The freshmen that were enrolled in the course and who are now preparing to graduate continue to recall the experience with fondness. Comments include “brought out a unique appreciation of music and dance and how to look at it” and “unlike any other class I’ve had.”

This course was outlined in a presentation by the instructors at the 2004 NCHC Conference in New Orleans. The instructors’ goal was to have the students experience a live performance. This may be the only time that most of these students would ever perform on a stage before a live audience. It created a memory for the students, one that will outlast sitting in a classroom.

## HONORS 130: THE THEATRE EXPERIENCE

### Instructor

Robert Bullington

### Texts

Wilson, Edwin and Goldfarb, Alvin. *Theatre: The Lively Art*  
Inge, William. *Picnic*

### Course Objectives

To provide you with a deeper understanding and appreciation of the elements of theatrical production.

### Course Description

Components of the course:

1. Discussion of reading assignments
2. Participation in classroom acting and directing projects—students prepare and perform selected short scenes from *Picnic* as actors or directors.
3. Students attend a *Picnic* rehearsal and write an observation report.
4. Students prepare a paper of 5–7 pages and a 10-minute presentation on a topic related to theatre.
5. Other assignments TBA

### Grading

1000 points possible:

Class participation	200
Rehearsal observation	100
Voice/Body/Acting Work	100
<i>Picnic</i> projects	200
Final Paper	200
Final Presentation	<u>200</u>
TOTAL	1000

### Attendance

Experiential learning and discussion are the key components of the course. Class attendance is essential. Three absences are allowed; there is a penalty of 20 points deducted from the Class Participation grade for each absence over three.

## A Rough Outline of the Schedule

Tues., Jan 16	No class
Thurs, Jan 18	Introduction
Tues, Jan 23	Overview of theatre and why we do it Reading Assignment- Intro, Ch. 1
Thurs. Jan 25	Origins and History of Theatre
Jan 30, Feb 1	The Organizational Structure of Theatre Reading Assignment-Ch. 3 The role of the Director The role of the Stage Manager
Feb. 6, 8	Design Elements—Scenery and Light and Sound (Possible guest speaker) Reading Assignment Ch. 4,5,6
Feb 13, 15	Design Elements—Properties and Costumes (Possible guest speaker)
Feb 20, 22	The Actor’s Tools—Body Reading Assignment Ch. 2
Feb 27, Mar 1	Off for Break
Mar. 6, 8	The Actor’s Tools—Voice Read <i>Picnic</i>
Mar 13, 15	The Actor’s Relationship to Text Reading Assignment Ch. 9
Mar 20, 22	Working with Text Presentation and Paper topics due.
Mar 27, 29	<i>Picnic</i> Scene Projects and <i>Picnic</i> rehearsal observations
Apr 3, 5	<i>Picnic</i> Scene Projects and <i>Picnic</i> rehearsal observations
Apr 10	<i>Picnic</i> Scene Projects and <i>Picnic</i> rehearsal observations
Apr 12 & 16	off for Break
Apr 19	Final Presentations
Apr 24, 26	Final Presentations
Apr 30, May 3	Final Presentations and papers due.
Final Exam TBA	

## The Theatre Experience: Presentation Topics

- Masks
- Children and Theatre in Education
- *Avante Garde* theatre
- Drama Therapy
- Historical Reenactments
- Gene Kelly
- Traditional vs. Modern Theatre (Shakespeare?)
- Andrew Lloyd Weber
- An abstract approach to youth involvement in theatre
- A production Concept and Design
- Kabuki Theatre of Japan
- Beijing Opera
- African Theatre—Past and Present
- Shakespeare/DeVere—who wrote the plays?
- Ibsen, Miller and Beckett
- Roman Theatre
- *A Streetcar Named Desire*
- William Shakespeare and “The Indian Shakespeare”
- Disney on Broadway
- Sophocles
- Aescylus
- Production concept and design for *Twelfth Night*
- Greek Drama
- “Theatre of the Absurd”
- Street Theatre/ Circus



**Commentary—Rob Bullington**

When I was approached about teaching a theatre class for honors students, I wasn't quite sure what to do. Primarily I teach acting classes and Voice & Articulation. I knew I wanted to have them do some acting, but I didn't think it would be effective to simply offer them an Acting I class. It is very, very difficult to teach acting to people who aren't really interested in learning about it. When I teach Acting I, even to non-majors, the students have *chosen* to take the course. The honors students would be with me more or less under duress. I knew I would have to do as much as I could to get them curious about theatre first.

Because I had no idea what the group's experience with theatre might be (I assumed correctly that it would range from "quite a bit" to "none"), I decided to teach a modified "Introduction to Theatre" type course that emphasized as many "hands on" elements as possible.

Since the class was being held in the Little Theatre, where a production of *Picnic* I was directing was taking place, I decided to incorporate the production into the class. The students were able to see the set constructed in their classroom incrementally each day, and the scenic and costume designers for the production were brought in as guest lecturers. The students were also required to attend an evening rehearsal of the production (as well as the finished product, of course) and write an observation report. In another *Picnic*-related project, the students were asked to cast the production with commonly known film and television stars and justify their choices.

For the "acting" portion of the class, students chose to be actors or directors, divided into groups, and prepared and presented scenes either from *Picnic* or selected scenes from Shakespeare.

At the end of the semester each student gave a presentation of a research topic pursued throughout the semester. Students chose their own topics (with my approval) based on anything that had piqued their interest from their reading or our class discussions. A listing of their presentation topics is included above.

No final examination was given. During the exam time I conducted five-minute exit interviews in which students had an opportunity to give feedback on the course.

All in all, I felt the course was successful. The coincidence of *Picnic* was fortuitous as many students reported in their exit interviews that having the opportunity to observe the production process from design through rehearsals to a finished production was their favorite part of the course. If I repeat this course, I would make sure that I was directing at the same time so that I could retain this element.

## HONORS 130: ART AND IMAGINATION

### Professor

Joe Thomas

I encourage students to stop by and see me. If they are having problems or not doing as well as they think they should, they should see me *immediately!* I can be very helpful at that point—but I have no sympathy at the end of the semester after all the grades are complete.

### Texts

Henry Sayre, *A World of Art* (rev. 4<sup>th</sup> ed.)

Terry Barrett, *Interpreting Art: Reflecting, Wondering, and Responding*.

### Course Description

This course is intended to be both a general introduction to the methods and meanings of visual arts, while simultaneously having students push the boundaries of their own imaginations by “getting their feet wet” in artmaking. In addition to the standard sorts of lectures and assignments, students need to be prepared to deal with open-ended assignments and come up with their own ideas. The goal is to make students visually literate and to stir up the creative, right side of their brains. Students should be able to visit a museum or art gallery and intelligently evaluate what they see.

### Class Attendance

Attendance comprises the bulk of the participation grade. I’ll allow three unexcused absences—more than that will affect participation grades negatively. Excused absences must include valid documentation.

### Grades

Test 1	100 pts.
Test 2	100 pts.
Essay 1	100 pts.
Essay 2	100 pts.
Participation	100 pts.
Projects/homework	200 pts.

There is no “extra credit” in this class.

The participation grade includes attendance, class discussion, paying attention, etc. Just coming to class daily assures a “C” for that grade. Students have to talk and ask questions and make sure I know who they are in order to go higher than that.

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There's no need to worry about not having previous background in art or feeling any lack of natural aptitude. This class is less about skills than ideas.

### Studying

Tests are multiple choice or short answer and involve applying terms and ideas to images. Many images on the tests will be found in the text. Up to 50% of the test questions may be based on works unknown to the students and for which they must *apply* what they know. I may sometimes put additional images in a slide viewing box in the hall; students are responsible for remembering these images, and I provide notice when they are available for study. A number of questions will also be based on readings and lectures. By coming to class each day and keeping up with the reading, students should have little trouble with the tests.

### Syllabus

This course schedule is tentative. I would like to leave it open-ended so that I can respond to student' own goals and interests and to possible exhibitions this semester.

<i>Week 1, Jan 18–20</i>	Introduction to course. What is art about? Sayre, 3–41.
<i>Week 2, Jan. 23–27</i>	No class Jan. 23. Purposes of art. Sayre, 42–79.
<i>Week 3, Jan. 30–Feb. 3</i>	Elements of art. Sayre, 80–165.
<i>Week 4, Feb. 6–10</i>	Elements of art and principles of design. Sayre, 166–93.
<i>Week 5, Feb. 13–17</i>	Principles of design. Sayre, 166–93 (cont'd).
<i>Week 6, Feb. 20–24</i>	Formal analysis. No class Feb. 22–24. Work on first essay.
<i>Week 7, Feb. 27–Mar. 3</i>	Two-dimensional media. First essay due Mar. 3. Sayre 194–243.
<i>Week 8, Mar 6–10</i>	Two-dimensional media. Sayre, 244–71.
<i>Winter break, Mar. 13–17</i>	
<i>Week 9, Mar 20–24</i>	Two-dimensional media. Sayre, 313–17; 327–39.
<i>Week 10, Mar. 27–31</i>	Three-dimensional media. Sayre, 272–89
<i>Week 11, Apr. 3–7</i>	Three-dimensional media. Test 1. Sayre, 289–97;
<i>Week 12, Apr. 10–12</i>	Craft media. Sayre, 298–313.
<i>Spring Break, Apr. 13–18</i>	
<i>Week 13, Apr. 19–21</i>	Alternative media. Sayre, 317–26; 340–53
<i>Week 14, Apr. 24–28</i>	Architecture. Sayre, 354–88.
<i>Week 15, May 1–5</i>	Architecture. Sayre, 354–88 (cont'd)

May 8, 10–12 AM (9:00 class) Test 2.

May 10, 8–10 AM (10:00 class) Test 2.

Second essay due by 5:00 PM Wednesday, May 10.

## Writing Assignment #1: Formal Analysis

For this assignment, you will analyze an actual artwork on campus. You will be given a choice of two possibilities: one that is three-dimensional and one that is two-dimensional. To complete the formal analysis you will need to consider the questions below in the course of a 3–5 page, typed, double-spaced essay. Feel free to create visual aids or diagrams if that will help in your analysis; these do not count as part of your length and may be considered as separate from the text. You may want to take photographs or make sketches of different angles (in the case of sculpture) or create the kinds of analytic diagrams that are used in your textbook, whatever you think will help in making your analysis clear.

Use the terms and ideas that you have been introduced to in the first part of the course on the elements of art and principles of design. Remember, this is art, and more than one response is possible. Your job is to support your analysis logically and knowledgably. Be specific. Don't just say, "There's movement in this work;" tell me where and how. Don't get all caught up in the subject, either.

Discussions of some aspects may be limited to just a sentence or two; others may require a paragraph or two (depending upon how concisely you are able to write). Depending upon which work you choose, some elements or principles may have very little (if any) impact on the work; part of your job is determining what all is involved in a particular composition and to what degree. The questions below are reminders and guidelines. You may find other aspects worthy of discussion. I am particularly interested in reading your own original analysis. An "A" paper will be a well-organized, concise analysis of the composition of a work of art that shows a mastery of the vocabulary and artistic principles that you have learned.

Regarding your use of English: this is a college paper. Organize your ideas before you write. Use proper grammar. Spell everything correctly. Check your punctuation. Proofread your paper. Excessive grammatical and/or typographical errors will affect your grade negatively. Staple your analysis at the corner—don't use those bothersome plastic folders. Put your name and class time at the top of the first page. You should be able to complete this assignment by using what you have learned in class, but if you feel it is necessary to do research, you must credit all sources properly: no copying without quotation marks; no paraphrases without footnotes.

- What kinds of lines does the artist use? How do they contribute to the work?
- What is the role of shape? What sorts of shapes are used?
- What about space? Is illusionistic space created? If so, how? How deep or shallow is it? Does scale come into play?

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- What kinds of textures does the artist use? How important are they?
- Describe the use of color and light. What is the range of the colors? Is there a particular color scheme? Do color and light interact with the other elements?
- Does this painting show movement? If so, how is it created? How important is it?
- What is the overall organization of the painting?
- Does the artist use repetition? If so, how?
- Is rhythm part of the composition? How is it created and what is its effect?
- In what ways does the artist create variety?
- How is this artwork balanced (or not)?
- Where is the emphasis?
- What is the focal point and how is it created?
- What element(s) is (are) dominant?
- Can you apply the principle of “economy of means” to this painting? Explain.
- Is proportion important here? Explain.
- Finally, how do all these work together to achieve a successful, unified composition (if you feel that this is the case)? What is the overall effect or feeling that the painting suggests to you? How has that been achieved through the formal elements you have analyzed?

### Writing Assignment #2: Exhibition Review

Write an exhibition review of one of the art exhibits in the University Gallery or elsewhere this semester. This will be an exercise in art criticism. You should use the exhibit reviews at the end of each issue of magazines such as *Art in America* or *Artforum* (available in current periodicals section of the library) as your model. Read a few of these to get an idea of what an exhibition review should be like. This is a different type of writing than the formal analysis. It requires you to form an opinion and/or develop an interpretation and then explain and support it.

An art exhibition is more than just the sum of its parts. Chapter 8 in *Interpreting Art* will provide some useful guidelines and principles (and other parts of this book may be helpful as well). Think about your own interpretation and reaction to the work as well as any written or other information you can find. An exhibition review evaluates the entire exhibition, and mentions specific works to elucidate that evaluation. Thus, it is not necessary to discuss each work individually. However, do include the basic information about the show (who, where, why, etc.).

Consider the medium and goals of the artist or artists. Is it a group show or a solo exhibition by one artist? How effective is it? Were the works well-chosen? Does the installation complement the content and medium? What message or messages is/are offered by the show? What are the best and worst points of the exhibition? You may deal with these or other points as you evaluate and

interpret. Be sure to support your opinions logically and specifically. The length of each of these essays should be 500–750 words (2–3 typed, double-spaced pages, approximately 1-inch margins). Being able to sum up your opinions and ideas concisely is going to be one of the biggest challenges of this assignment.

Other Guidelines: Just staple papers at the corner—no folders. You need not make these research papers. However, if you would like to do a little research, be sure to give credit to any sources whose ideas you use. That means citations (see section below on plagiarism). Most likely, the only thing you might be citing would be artists' statements or gallery information. I am much more interested in seeing you exercise your newfound knowledge to draw your own conclusions than I am in seeing you quote or reiterate what others have said.

Regarding your use of English: These are college papers. Use proper grammar. Spell everything correctly. Check your punctuation. Proofread your paper. Please note that titles of artworks are italicized or underlined, *not* put in quotation marks. Excessive grammatical and/or typographical errors will affect your grade negatively. Organize your material before you write. Use all of the tricks that you have learned in English Composition classes. Contrary to popular belief, proper grammar and composition are not just for English classes. Take every opportunity to learn these skills; one recent report showed that almost half of all resumes submitted to Fortune 500 companies are immediately thrown away because of poor spelling, grammar, and English usage. Don't let this happen to you!

Plagiarism: Don't do it. I have in the past and will in the future deal severely with plagiarism.

Plagiarism occurs whenever you use outside sources (books, encyclopedias, magazines, etc.) for ideas or information and do not clearly credit the source of your information. If you consult books, museum catalogs, or even the wall label in a museum, use utmost care that you do not borrow ideas, phrases, or information from these sources without documentation.

Exactly how far one must go in documentation can vary to some degree. Some authorities see no need to document the sources of information such as biographical data on artists. This can lead to confusion in some cases since not everyone agrees even on such basic facts. If you reference your source, then people who read your work know where you got your facts and can decide for themselves if your source is reliable. Very widely known historical data, subject to little dispute (i.e., World War I lasted from 1914–1918) would not need to be footnoted. However, when in doubt, use a footnote. Be absolutely sure that any phrases taken unchanged from a source are put into quotation marks and citations given. It doesn't even have to be a whole sentence: "Sometimes referred to as a 'disgusting piece of trash,' [4] I nevertheless found the work fascinating." If you cite your source but don't include the quotation marks, it's still plagiarism because you've stolen the author's words and suggested that you're paraphrasing. So make sure when you paraphrase that you really use different words to restate the author's idea.

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If you choose to do some research, you may use any style of documentation you wish as long as it is consistent and cites the source specifically (including author, title, publishing information, and page numbers). Examples may be found in the University of Chicago Manual of Style (or Kate Turabian's abbreviated version) or the MLA Stylesheet. You may credit your source in your text: "According to the work's wall label at the Museum of Fine Arts, this artist killed herself by consuming vast quantities of oil paint," or "The artist's statement suggests that the work symbolically represents 'another era,' as she puts it."

Penalties can range from failure on the assignment to failure for the class, depending on the severity of the offense. Expulsion can be considered in certain cases. The same goes for cheating on tests. All of this falls under the category of "Academic Dishonesty," and I invite you to investigate that topic further in the appropriate university publications. I hope that you will come to see me if you have any questions about this or do not understand how to avoid plagiarism.

### ***Commentary—Joe Thomas***

My approach to this course was to modify an art appreciation class of the sort I commonly teach to beginning students in order to emphasize creativity, imagination, and problem-solving. The goal was threefold: 1) familiarize students with the basics of art so that students would feel comfortable and prepared to see art in a museum, gallery, or other setting; 2) show the value of art in civilization and its complex relationships with the entire body of scientific and humanistic learning; 3) break down preconceived, restrictive notions about art and tap into students' own creative energy. Initially I had envisioned a course that would focus on detailed case studies of famous individual works in each major medium: for instance, a week on Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling, and a comparative study of Christian, Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist places of worship. However, I was unable to find a textbook appropriate to this sort of "greatest hits" approach. I then decided to scale down this aspect of the course in favor of a series of studio projects. My hope was that these open-ended assignments would help to "loosen up" students accustomed to a rigidly structured academic program as well as to challenge the common protest, "I'm not an artist."

The course was organized in several sections. The introduction explored why people make art (nobody really knows! although Ellen Dissanayake's evolutionary theories were introduced) and various functions of art. A long unit covered the traditional elements of art and principles of design, emphasizing their universality across time and cultures. Subsequently, two-dimensional and three-dimensional media were explained, and we concluded by looking at architecture. I had hoped to end the semester by discussing the evaluation and interpretation of art in some detail, but things just took longer than originally estimated. Classes ranged from standard lectures to film viewings to workshop formats.

Two tests were multiple choice and largely involved application of terms and concepts to both known and unknown artworks. There were two major writing assignments; students received elaborate written instructions for each. The first was a formal analysis of a work of art on campus in which students applied the ideas learned in the unit on the elements of art and principles of design. Students nominated works they found on campus and then voted on one two-dimensional work. I then chose a three-dimensional work as a purposeful contrast to the two-dimensional one. Students could analyze either for their papers. The second writing project was very different: a review of an art exhibition on campus or elsewhere. They were to read reviews in art magazines in the library in preparation. As an interpretive, evaluative piece of writing, this assignment was in stark contrast to the highly analytical, formal approach of the first essay. Students also received a participation grade (partly determined by attendance) and a major grade based on homework and studio assignments.

Studio projects were not defined in the syllabus simply because I had not made final decisions about them when the class started. The first day of class, on the back of an index card with their contact information, I had students draw self-portraits of themselves as animals, either real or imagined. This became an avenue into their personalities during an introduction period. Also in the first week, students created *cadavres exquis*. This surrealist game involved groups of students. Each student drew one section of a piece of folded paper without looking at anything but the edge of what the previous person had drawn. The concept was a bit shocking for students who believed art was only about mimesis. In introducing the elements of art, students experimented using various kinds of line and different media. They also did interpretive line drawings, abstractly representing words such as "tackle" and "torment" using line alone. While studying color, students painted color wheels along with value and intensity scales. This was a rather taxing and time-consuming project, but there is nothing like it for creating an understanding of the different components of color. During the two-dimensional media unit, students created small abstract paintings on tag board inspired by Kandinsky. Once again, using Kandinsky's loose, colorful paintings as a model (as well as his thoughts about art and meaning) helped students move away from the definition of art as skill and mimesis. They also made collages after looking at examples of various approaches to this medium in class. For a three-dimensional project, students were asked to save plastic and metal lids for the entire semester. Hot glue or Sobo was used to create a relief sculpture with the lids on corrugated cardboard or foam-core, which was then spray-painted in black, white, or gray (in the manner of Louise Nevelson). For the more elaborate projects, one or two class days were spent working on them, and they were completed as homework. Except for the color wheel, each assignment was evaluated as "check," "check-plus," or "check-minus." Students who showed imagination, daring, and careful effort were rewarded with "plus" designations. Students who clearly gave little thought or effort received "minus." Most received "checks." As a project with clearly



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defined goals (and involving the most class time) the color wheels received a standard number grade and comments. Outstanding projects were displayed in the glass cases outside the classroom. At semester's end, students turned in all their projects in a portfolio for final review. The portfolio itself could be as simple or as complex as they liked.

A variety of other content was included. I showed a film of artist Paul Cadmus making egg tempera and talking about his work. I also showed the documentary film of Christo's *Running Fence*. A visit to the University Gallery demonstrated for students the practical aspects of looking at art in a formal environment, and students were asked to visit another show as homework. Students also visited the printmaking and painting studios during class. Artworks were brought to class from the university's permanent collection for students to identify by medium; I awarded small token prizes to the best "identifiers." The final class day was an architectural tour of campus to discuss what made good, interesting buildings.

The majority of students seemed to respond well to the material. As expected, some had trouble with open-ended creative assignments, but the "pass/fail" evaluation structure helped to increase their comfort level. Many students surprised themselves with the results of their studio projects, as I had hoped. I was pleased by the concern of many students at the end of the course with making sure that their artwork was returned to them. They really had taken ownership and a sense of pride in their achievements. Other art faculty and students commented very positively on the work that was displayed. Grades were about 40% A, 50% B, and 10% C. Participation and studio projects were primarily used (for students who did well in these categories) to prop up lower test and essay grades. Student evaluations were not conducted because of a lack of class time.

If doing this course again, I would make several changes. First, I would not use the same text. *A World of Art* included some bizarrely inappropriate commentary and not enough non-Western artwork. I would probably use the same text as I do for my usual art appreciation class, *The Art of Seeing* by Paul Zelanski and Mary Pat Fisher. It's simple and focuses on the content I use. More importantly, I would try to work out a way to have the class time extended or a laboratory section added. It was not really possible to do the amount of studio work I wanted without extra class time, and students often needed encouragement and assistance while working. Some interesting discussions often arose from questions asked while students were working. Overall, however, I believe that a combination of hands-on studio work and traditional lectures provided a basic knowledge base while simultaneously allowing for imaginative expression.

## HONORS 130: EXPLORATION OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC AND THE ARTS

### Instructor

Dr. P. Brent Register

### Course Description and Objective

*HON 130: Exploration of Contemporary Music and the Arts* is a survey of innovations in twentieth-century art forms. The course focuses simultaneously on the significant social, economic, political and cultural events of this period. By necessity, students are briefly exposed to musical characteristics of previous arts periods (Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic) in order to understand more fully the twentieth century's radical departure from traditional performance practices. Beginning with the late 1800s, the course then explores the artistic, philosophical, and compositional revolutions that characterize the arts of the twentieth century. All significant "isms" are explored, including serialism, impressionism, nationalism, minimalism, eclecticism, and neoclassicism. The course will include presentations and lectures from arts professionals. These include Dr. Joe Thomas (Art), Robert Levy (Theatre), Lisa Johnson (Music), and Dr. Peggy Hunt (Dance). At the successful completion of this course students will be able to:

- intelligently discuss significant styles, composers, compositional techniques, and representative compositions in twentieth-century music;
- relate their understanding of twentieth-century music to various disciplines such as the visual arts, philosophy, and other performing arts; and
- recognize various compositional styles through listening and/or viewings.

### Text

There is no required text for this course. There is, however, an ample number of articles that students are expected to read prior to each class session. Many articles are found in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (20 volumes), edited by Stanley Sadie. *The New Grove* is found in the reference room of Carlson Library. Additional reading assignments may be included at the discretion of the instructor. For your convenience, a couple of *New Grove* articles can be found and downloaded at: <http://www.groverefERENCE.com/GroveMusic/TNGMMFreeArticles.asp>. The articles available at this site include "Renaissance," "Baroque," "Classical," and "Romantic."

## Grading Process

A = 92–100	Test #1 (TBA) . . . . .	25%
B = 83–91	Test #2 (TBA) . . . . .	25%
C = 74–82	Research Report . . . . .	15%
D = 65–73	Final Exam (Cumulative) . . . . .	25%
E = 64 and below	Class Participation. . . . .	10%

## Note

Regular attendance is expected. Excessive absences may result in withdrawal from the course and the assignment of E for the semester grade. Plagiarism is not acceptable and results in the automatic failure of this course.

## Tests

There are two written tests and a final exam. Each test includes a listening component from taped recordings which are placed on reserve in the Carlson Library. Please be advised that all materials placed on reserve in the IMC at Carlson Library are property of Clarion University or the personal property of the instructor. Removal of any materials from the library is considered a theft.

## Required Listening for Examination #1

(This is a sample of one of the three required listening components.)

### Medieval (circa 300–1450)

- 1 Gregorian Chant—*Alleluia/Vidimus stellam*

### Renaissance (1450–1600)

- 2 Anonymous—*Sumer Is Icumen In*
- 3 Josquin—*Allegez moy, douce plaisant brunette (6-part vocal)*
- 4 Josquin—*Allegez moy, douce plaisant brunette (lute version)*
- 5 Josquin—*El grillo è buon cantore*

### Baroque (1600–1750)

- 6 Purcell—*Dido and Aeneas, “Dido’s Lament”*
- 7 Bach—*Fugue in g minor*

### Classical (1750–1825)

- 8 Mozart—*The Magic Flute, “Within the hallowed portals”*
- 9 Beethoven—*Symphony #5, first movement*

### Romantic (1825–1900)

- 10 Schubert—*Erl-King, op. 1*
- 11 Wagner—*Lohengrin, Act III “Prelude”*

### Expressionism (1900–circa 1925 Germany)

- 12 Schönberg—*Pierrot Lunaire, “Mondestrunken”*
- 13-15 Webern—*Drei Lieder, op. 18*

## Final Research Project

In keeping with the Honors Program 2004–5 theme, “It’s a Small World,” and Clarion University’s sponsorship of the 2005 Summer Honors Program, the following final project has been designed. Research will focus on one aspect of the art/music world, namely Paris, and concentrate on aspects of one particular period, 1850–1914. There are six allotted dates for presentations. There are eleven general topics. Beneath each general category are listed individual topics. Group leaders select one of these topics. Other students select two of these topics and prepare five-minute PowerPoint presentations. Students do research individually but must work together to create a presentation that is informative, non-repetitive, and works as a cohesive whole. This is the responsibility of the group leader. The topics are:

### *April 12 (12)*

- Late-romanticism in music
- Paris Opera Garnier
- Hector Berlioz
- Richard Wagner (in Paris)
- Camille Saint-Saens
- Gabriel Fauré
- Charles Gounod
- Georges Bizet
- Jules Massenet
- Cesar Franck
- Vincent d’Indy
- Paul Dukas

### *April 14 (14)*

- Realism in Art
  - “Academic Art” (French Academy)
  - Ferdinand-Vistor-Eugène Delacroix
  - Gustave Courbet and Jean-Baptiste-Camille-Corot
  - Pierre Puvis de Chavannes and Jean-Francois Millet
- Art: Symbolism
  - Gustave Moreau
  - Emile Bernard and Eugène Carrière
  - Auguste Rodin
  - Odilon Redon and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes
- Literature: Symbolism
  - Stéphane Mallarmé
  - Paul Verlain
  - Maurice Maeterlinck and Charles Baudelaire

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### *April 19 (10)*

- Art: Impressionism
  - Claude Monet
  - Édouard Manet
  - Pierre Auguste Renoir and Edgar Degas
  - Camille Pissarro and Alfred Sisley
- Music: Impressionism
  - Claude Debussy
  - Maurice Ravel
  - International Exhibition of 1889
  - Japanese influence (Le Japonisme et l'Orientalisme)

### *April 21 (9)*

- The Ballet Russes in Paris
- Sergei Diaghilev
- Vaslav Nijinsky and Bronislava Nijinska
- Igor Stravinsky
- *L'Oiseau de Feu*
- *Petrouchka*
- *Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune*
- *Daphnis et Chloé*
- *Jeux*

### *April 26 (10)*

- Art: Cubism
  - Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque
- Art: Post-impressionism
  - Vincent van Gogh
  - Georges Seurat
  - Henri de Toulouse-Latrec
  - Paul Cézanne
  - Paul Gauguin
  - Henri Matisse
  - Henri Rousseau

### *April 28 (10)*

- Music: Neoclassicism
  - Erik Satie
  - Jean Cocteau
  - *Parade*
  - Les Six
- Art: Les Nabis
  - Paul Ranson and Paul Sérusier
  - Édouard Vuillard
  - Maurice Denis and Pierre Bonnard
  - Ker-Xavier Roussel and Felix Vallotton

## Syllabus

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assigned reading for next class*</u>
<i>Week 1</i>		
Tues.	Introduction	New Grove: "Medieval," "Renaissance"
Thurs.	Overview: Music during Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Renaissance	New Grove: "Baroque"
<i>Week 2</i>		
T.	Overview: Music during the Baroque Period	New Grove: "Classical," "Romantic"
Th.	Overview: Music during the Classical and Romantic Periods	New Grove: "Post-Romantic"
<i>Week 3</i>		
T.	Overview: Romantic and Post-Romantic Music	
Th.	Twentieth-century compositional techniques	New Grove: "Arnold Schoenberg, "Alban Berg," "Anton Webern"
<i>Week 4</i>		
T.	Germany: Expressionism	
Th.	<i>TEST 1</i>	New Grove: "Claude Debussy," "Maurice Ravel"
<i>Week 5</i>		
T.	France: Impressionism	New Grove: "Igor Stravinsky," "Serge Prokoviev," "Dmitri Shostakovich"
Th.	Russia: Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, The Mighty Five, Scriabin	
<i>Week 6</i>		
T.	<i>Guest Lecture: "The Visual Arts in the Twentieth Century"</i> Dr. Joe Thomas, Associate Professor of Art, Clarion University	
Th.	<i>Guest Lecture: "The Psychology of Art"</i> Dr. Iseli Krauss, Professor of Psychology, Art Enthusiast	
Sat.	<i>Carnegie International Field Trip, Pittsburgh, PA</i>	
<i>Week 7</i>		
T.	<i>Guest Lecture: "The Modernization of Music"</i> Dr. Lisa Johnson, Assoc. Dean, Mannes College of Music, NYC	
Th.	<i>Guest Lecture: "Trends in Contemporary Theatre"</i> Robert Levy, Asst. Professor of Theatre, CUP	



## **Additional Information**

The instructor is currently working with the honors administration to organize a field trip to Carnegie International Exhibit and possibly an evening event in Pittsburgh.

### ***Commentary: Brent Register***

This course was presented in a lecture format, which may be more comfortable for many instructors. In order to approach the radical changes to the arts in contemporary society, I first had to present an historical point of reference. The first several weeks were a brief outline of the various music periods, detailing some of these identifying characteristics.

The second part of the course outlined all of the various “isms” found in contemporary art, theatre, and music. Various guest lecturers were incorporated for their expertise. Most of these guests were professors on the Clarion campus or past acquaintances who were willing to share themselves for one lecture. It made the course more interesting for the students and provided me with the opportunity to learn as well. The dance component was a bit challenging as it was definitely hands-on and the students are generally more “in their head” and not “in their bodies.” I had worked with this particular instructor many times and knew that she would be able to create a lasting experience that was not intimidating.

Our geographical area is fortunate in that we are in close proximity to Pittsburgh. The Carnegie Museum of Art hosts the triennial *Carnegie International* that presents some of the leaders in contemporary visual arts from around the globe. A bit of research allowed me to know which artists would be represented in the exhibition and thus prepare the students for a field trip to Pittsburgh. The exhibition served as a true educational experience and built community within the class.

The final portion of the course was student driven. A representative period, in this instance “Paris from 1850–1920,” was chosen for student presentations. I chose the topics, and the students were required to give five-minute presentations using PowerPoint. It was an interesting way to examine the wealth of the arts in one brief snapshot of time.

The course was successful for both the instructor and the students. Student comments included “Interesting, I apply this information everyday,” “Good course, just not interested in this type of music,” and “Helped fill in the gaps in my music history and make connections.” The combination of student involvement, various speakers, and a field trip appealed to the students while exposing them to a wealth of ideas about the arts.



## CONCLUSION

Each of these courses was redesigned specifically for the honors population. As mentioned, the Clarion University Honors Program maintains a policy that honors students should not be punished with heavier work loads because of their involvement in the program. To the contrary, instructors approach these courses as a way of offering their discipline that could not occur in traditional, non-honors courses.

The instructors found that interdisciplinary connections were more readily made with honors students and that most had some previous experience or exposure to one of the arts. Information could be relayed at a rapid pace. In comparison to non-honors arts majors, however, the instructors had a general consensus that the honors students were “locked into their heads, locked into their bodies, and less willing to take chances.”

Many honors students appeared to misunderstand and be more vocal about the apparent “subjective” grading process. Although the majority of these courses included a written test component for assessment, they included also a variety of subjective evaluations by the instructors. This subjective assessment, which presents a greater challenge to the instructor and the student, is a normal part of education in the arts. Each instructor provided several theories and examples of what is typically considered “excellence” in the disciplines. The concluding assessment was often based on individual growth rather than a final project.

Our primary goal was to teach a long-lasting appreciation for the arts since the majority of these students will inevitably be the consumers and future patrons of the arts. These future scientists, medical professionals, and business leaders have now experienced dance on the stage, a role in a theatre piece, the creative process of the visual arts, or the rigors of composing a piece of music. This is what these courses are about: keeping the arts alive for future generations.

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