PROSEMINAR METHODOLOGIES IN DESIGN HISTORY

Fall 2015

PGHI5105.A. CRN 4273.

Tuesdays, 12:00-1:50 PM

Prof. Lorraine Karafel

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PGHI5105.B. CRN 5247.

Tuesdays, 2:00-3:50 PM

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The Proseminar equips students with the skills required for scholarship in the history of decorative arts and design. Each student selects one work from the Cooper-Hewitt collection to study throughout the semester. A series of discrete assignments proceeds along parallel tracks, introducing a range of critical methodologies while building practical skills in research, writing, and presenting. These two tracks are integrated in the final project, a written catalog entry, which offers a definitive, summary statement of the physical characteristics of the object, its historical significance, and other salient information.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS % OF GRADE**

Attendance/preparation/participation 20%

Short critical responses 10%

Other short assignments 10%

Methodological application paper 20%

In-class presentation 20%

Catalog entry 20%

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

At the completion of this course, students should be able to:

* Produce both oral and written **visual analyses** of objects.
* **Think critically** about primary and secondary sources.
* Exhibit familiarity with a **range of methodologies** in the field.
* Conduct **original research** on a topic in decorative arts and design history.
* Deliver effective **oral presentations** accompanied by digital images.
* **Write clear papers** that combine careful looking with critical thinking, convey a command of the existing literature, express original ideas, and acknowledge sources accurately, in proper *Chicago Manual of Style* form.

**ATTENDANCE:**

Attendance at every class meeting is mandatory. A sign-in sheet will be passed out at the beginning of every class. **Two absences will result in a lowered grade**. Three **absences require automatic failure**, per Parsons regulations. A separate late-comers sign-in sheet will be available for anyone arriving after the first ten minutes of scheduled class time. **Each late arrival will count as ½ absence**.

**WEEKLY READINGS:**

All required weekly readings are available through The New School Library Electronic Reserves and through the course Blackboard site.

Other required and suggested readings are listed on page 3.

**PREPARATION/PARTICIPATION:**

This is a discussion-oriented seminar. You are expected to arrive at every class meeting having completed, and prepared to discuss, the day’s assignments. Contributions to class discussion will factor in to your preparation / participation grade. High participation grades (B+ or above) will be awarded for comments or questions that: (1) reflect careful attention to assignments and discussions; (2) are expressed clearly; and (3) demonstrate respect for instructor and classmates, even if (or especially when) you disagree.

**PAPERS / PRESENTATIONS:**

* **Short critical responses** to the readings, based on questions circulated in advance, will be due at the start of most classes and will be graded √, √+, √-.
* **Four letter-graded assignments** (object description, methodological application, oral presentation, catalog entry) will revolve around the object that you have selected from the Cooper-Hewitt’s collections.
* In addition, **small assignments graded √, √**+**, √-** will be due throughout the semester to help you with the larger project.
* Grades will reflect **form** (e.g., grammar, spelling, organization), **content** and **timeliness**.
* **Papers will be marked down ½ grade for every day of lateness**.

**RE-WRITES:**

* Short papers receiving grades of √- may be revised and re-submitted for a higher grade at any point during the semester.
* Letter-graded papers receiving grades of B- or lower may be revised and re-submitted ONLY after consultation with the instructor.

**PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism means that you have presented as your own, whether in a paper or a presentation, words, ideas, or other intellectual property created by someone else, and that you have not acknowledged your source. **Any act that fits the definition of plagiarism** offered here, in the Student Handbook, or at http://www.newschool.edu/parsons/catalog.pdf will be considered plagiarism, and will be turned over to the Office of Advising with a recommendation that the student **fail the class** and be placed on academic probation.

A rule of thumb: When in doubt, cite your source. If any part of an assignment – a sentence, a phrase, an interpretation, an approach – was inspired by a source, use a footnote to direct your reader to the original source. If words were borrowed, place them in quotation marks and use a footnote. See *Chicago Manual of Style* for footnote form. For more on plagiarism and how to avoid it, see http://www.newschool.edu/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=99181&libID=99192

**EXTRA CREDIT:**

For extra credit, you may attend one public lecture or symposium on a decorative arts or design topic during the semester, and submit a 1-2 page response paper summarizing the event’s approach to its subject and offering your opinion (supported by direct references) on the extent to which it succeeded or failed in arguing its point. Graded √, √+, √-.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

All weekly readings will be available as PDFs on the course Canvas site.

**RECOMMENDED TEXTS:**

Some recommended guides to research and writing:

* Sylvan Barnet, *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*, now in its 11th edition; in the reference section of the Cooper Hewitt library, and widely available both new and used through online sellers
* *Chicago Manual of Style*, now in its 16th edition; on reserve at the Cooper Hewitt library, widely available through online sellers, and available for purchase in digital form at: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html
* Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research,* 3rd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2011).

Some recommended critical introductions to the methodology of art and design history:

* Laurie Schneider Adams, *The Methodologies of Art: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009).
* Moshe Barasch, ed., *Theories of Art*, 3 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2000).
* Hazel Conway, ed. *Design History: A Student's Handbook* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987).
* Jonathan Culler, *Barthes: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
* Charles Harrison, Paul J. Wood, Jason Gaiger, eds., *Art in Theory: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, 3 vols. (Volume 1: 1648-1815; Volume 2: 1815-1900; Volume 3: 1900-2000). (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992-2003).
* Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, *Art History: A Critical Introduction to its Methods* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006)
* Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, eds., *Critical Terms for Art History*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
* Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).
* Donald Preziosi, ed., *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

**SCHEDULE**

N.B. The schedule of classes, readings, and assignments may be subject to change based on the availability of guest lecturers, and unforeseen circumstances.

**Sept. 1. Introduction to Decorative Arts and Design History**

Readings:

Isabelle Frank, “Introduction: The History of the Theory of Decorative Art,” in Frank, ed., *The Theory of Decorative Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 1-18.

Hazel Conway, “Design History Basics,” in *Design History: A Student’s Handbook* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 3-14.

Due in class: Bibliography. 8-10 sources related to one of the Proseminar objects, formatted according to *Chicago Manual of Style*. Graded √, √+, √-.

**Sept. 8. Iconography, Iconology and Semiotics**

Readings:

Erwin Panofsky, “Studies in Iconology,” in *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 3-17.

Kenneth Ames, “Death in the Dining Room,” in *Death in the Dining Room and Other Tales of Victorian Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 44-96.

Roland Barthes, “Rhetoric of the Image,” in *Image/Music/Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Noonday Press, 1977), 32-51.

Optional: Barthes, “Myth as a Semiological System,” in *Mythologies,* trans. Annette Lavers (London: Vintage, 1993), 111-113.

Due in class: Critical Response. Graded √-, √, or √+.

**Sept. 15. Material Culture and Social History**

Readings:

Jules Prown, “Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 1-19.

Kenneth Haltman, “Reaching Out to Touch Someone? Reflections on a 1923 Candlestick Telephone,” in Prown and Haltman, eds. *American Artifacts: Essays in Material Culture* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000), 71-92.

Michael Yonan, “Toward a Fusion of Art History and Material Culture Studies,” *West 86th* 18, no. 2 (Fall-Winter 2011): 232-248.

Due in class: Critical Response. Graded √-, √, or √+.

**Sept. 22. The Museum Registrar**

Guest Lecture: Wendy Rogers

**Consuming and Collecting***(Section A, 1:00 to 1:50; Section B, 3:00 to 3:50)*

Readings:

Grant McCracken, “Culture and Consumption: A Theoretical Account of the Structure and Movement of the Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods,” *The Journal of Consumer Research* 13, No. 1. (Jun., 1986), 71-84.

Michel de Certeau, “General Introduction” to *The Practice of Everyday Life* [1980], rpt. in Ben Highmore, ed., *The Everyday Life Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 63-75.

Optional: Grant McCracken, “Lois Roget: Curatorial Consumer in a Modern World,” in *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 44-53.

Due in class: Critical Response. Graded √-, √, or √+.

**Sept. 29. Working with Objects: Textiles**

Guest Lecturers: Susan Brown, Matilda McQuaid and Lucy Commoner

**Gender and Design**

Readings:

Cheryl Buckley, “Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Women and Design,” *Design Issues* 3, No. 2 (Autumn 1986): 3-14.

Penny Sparke, “The Happy Housewife: Domesticity Renewed,” in *As Long as It’s Pink: the Sexual Politics of Taste* (London: Pandora, 1995), 165-86.

Bill Ogersby, “The ‘Bachelor Pad’ As Cultural Icon,” *Journal of Design History* 18, no. 1 (2005): 99-113.

Due in class: Critical Response. Graded √-, √, or √+.

Object Description. Letter graded.

**Oct. 6. Working with Objects: Ceramics**

Guest Lecture: Barry Harwood

Due in class: Comparative images. Graded √-, √, or √+.

**Oct. 13. Inventories and Patronage Studies**

Guest Lecture: Lorraine Karafel

Reading:

Gail Feigenbaum, “Manifest Provenance” in Feigenbaum and Reist, eds., *Provenance: An Alternate History of Art* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013), 6-28.

**Oct. 20. Working with Objects: Drawings and Prints**

Guest Lecturers: Caitlin Condell and Andrew Gardner

**Taste and Class** *(Section A, 1:00 to 1:50; Section B, 3:00 to 3:50)*

Readings:

Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, translated by Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 1-8, 28-34, 56-60, 76-79.

Mimi Hellman, “Furniture, Sociability, and the Work of Leisure in Eighteenth-Century France,” *Eighteenth Century Studies* 32, no. 4 (1999): 415-45.

*Optional:* Vera L. Zolberg, “Taste as a Social Weapon.” *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol. 15, No. 4. (Jul., 1986): 511-15. (Review of Bourdieu’s *Distinction*.)

Due in class: Methodological application paper. Letter-graded.

Preliminary bibliography (at least 10 sources) and thesis statement for your in-class presentation. Not graded.

**Oct. 27. Museum Education**

Guest Lecturer: Caroline Payson

**Individual meetings with instructors to discuss research/presentation**

Due in class: *Object of the Day* post. Graded √-, √, or √+.

**Nov. 3. Individual meetings with instructors to discuss research/presentation**

**Nov. 10 Student presentations**

**Nov. 17. Student presentations**

**Nov. 24.** No class meeting (classes follow Wednesday schedule)

**Dec. 1. Student presentations**

**Dec. 8. Histories of the History of Design**

Readings:

Nikolaus Pevsner, “Theories of Art from Morris to Gropius,” in *Pioneers of Modern Design from William Morris to Walter Gropius* [1936] (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2005).

Denise Whitehouse, “The State of Design History as a Discipline,” in Hazel Clark and David Brody, eds., *Design Studies: A Reader* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2009), 54-63.

Due in class: Critical Response. Graded √-, √, or √+.  
Bibliography for final paper, and same in footnote form. Graded √-, √, or √+.

**Dec. 15. Open topic**

Due in class:Catalog entry. Letter-graded.