

**Department of Art History**  
Assessment Update 2009

An number of years ago, Art History instituted an exit survey to assess both the strengths and weaknesses of our undergraduate program. One very important piece of feedback received from students going on to study art history at the graduate level was the need for an undergraduate methods course. In response, the department is instituting an undergraduate methods/theory course as part of a broader reform of our undergraduate curriculum. Another important reform relates to the faculty's general impression that undergraduate majors need more practice in research and writing before they reach the mandatory pro-seminar as the capstone course for their major. In response, the department is trying to enforce certain standard expectations for the 400-level topics courses, all of which should include a major research paper and a series of linked assignments that give the student more regular feedback from the professor at various stages of the project. A number of faculty members also use Writing Fellows who help students with drafts of their papers twice during the semester. The department has already seen a marked improvement in the quality of writing and framing of arguments in undergraduate research papers.

At the graduate level, Art History has introduced a new requirement that students contribute copies of their research papers and any other significant academic writing to a portfolio that will be reviewed by a committee at the end of the Spring semester. The purpose is to assess the students' progress over the course of the degree, to identify any problems early on, and also verify the range of projects that they are working on. At the Ph.D. level, in order to encourage a timely completion of the degree, the program is requiring that dissertators submit completed dissertation chapters to the portfolio and a revised prospectus each year, so that the faculty as a whole can measure their progress.