

*COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES*

*KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY*

**Freshman Seminar**

**Student Guide**

**Fall 2010**

College of Arts and Sciences

## **FRESHMAN SEMINAR**

**Fall 2010**

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Freshman Seminar – a unique course offered through the College of Arts and Sciences.

The purpose of Freshman Seminar is to introduce you to what a university is, to the purpose of a university education, and to what it means to be an educated person. It is unfortunate but true that many students come to universities without a clear understanding of what higher education is and what it can mean to them. Equally unfortunate is the fact that many faculty members assume that students have such an understanding when in fact they do not. Some students quickly learn what is expected of them and meet with great success at the university. Some do not. We created Freshman Seminar to help you get off to a good start, to help you understand the university, and to help you get more from your college experience.

This is not the typical orientation course in which the focus would be on the range of services available to students at a university. That information can certainly be useful, but that is not what we will do here. Our approach is different – we want to introduce you to what it means to be an educated person. But we will not lecture to you about this or about what a university is. Instead, we will let you directly experience what a university is by sharing with you the varied cultural and intellectual activities that occur at a major university.

Your Freshman Seminar section will be small. We have purposely restricted the size of sections so that you can get to know your instructor, and so that she or he can get to know you.

Together, you will go to the events listed on the syllabus (see page 7) and share your reactions to them. Your teacher will be someone you can turn to if you have problems during your first semester at K-State. We hope that through your association with the members of your class and your teacher, your transition to the university will be smooth and your tenure here at K-State will be successful.

A	12483	M	9:30 – 11:20 AM
B	12481	M	12:30 – 2:20 PM
C	12485	M	2:30 – 4:20 PM
E	12475	T	9:30 – 11:20 AM
F	12473	T	12:30 – 2:20 PM
G	12463	T	2:30 – 4:20 PM
J	12469	W	12:30 – 2:20 PM
K	12471	W	1:30 – 3:20 PM
L	12479	W	2:30 – 4:20 PM
M	20411	M	2:30 - 4:20 PM

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS, GRADING, AND ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**Course Requirements.** Your grade in this course will be based on attending class, attending events, writing papers, and participation in class discussion. A detailed breakdown of the points for each of these activities will be provided by your instructor.

Twelve events have been selected for this course. One event is listed as optional and your attendance at that event will be worked out with your particular instructor. *Your attendance at the other events is required.* If you cannot attend a given event, let your instructor know *in advance.* If your reason for not being able to attend is valid (some proposed reasons might not be considered valid), your instructor will give you an excused absence. You will then need to attend a make-up event. Work with your instructor to identify a suitable event. You are also required to attend class each week. Failure to attend an event or attend class will result in a loss of points. If you miss class or an event unexpectedly and are therefore unable to let your instructor know in advance, immediately contact your instructor and discuss your reason for missing the class or event. *You will receive an F in this class if you have three or more unexcused absences for the scheduled events.*

**Grading options.** Students may elect to take this course on an A/Pass/Fail basis. If you do not choose that option, you will be graded by the regular method. The reality is that taking the course on an A/Pass/Fail basis is not a particularly good option because in that case you will not obtain University General Education or Humanities/Fine Arts credit. If, however, you want to take the course on an A/Pass/Fail basis, please see Dean Joe Aistrup in the first two weeks of the semester to make those arrangements.

**Readings.** For each required event, there is assigned reading material that will help you better appreciate the upcoming event. Read this material *before* you attend the event. These readings will also be part of class discussion and would be useful as part of your paper on the event. Take great care, however, to not plagiarize from the reading or from any other written material. For some events, additional material can be found on web sites that will be provided to you.

**Written Assignments.** Academic credit is earned when students demonstrate that they have learned something in a course. In this course, you will demonstrate what you have learned through the written assignments or critiques that you will complete, and from class discussions about the events.

Acceptable papers are those in which you demonstrate that you have learned something from attending the event, the class discussion that followed, and the assigned reading. Your paper should be a *critical review* in which you express your thoughts and reactions to the event and place the event in some wider context (such as may be suggested by the required reading). We want you to express your opinions and to support them with relevant information. Your paper will be assessed in terms of your demonstration of learning and in terms of your presentation and defense of your opinions, not in terms of the opinions themselves. Prepare your papers using a word processor. Computers are available to you in residence halls and in numerous academic buildings on campus. Please remember to always use the spell-check feature of your word processing program. Some instructors may accept clearly legible hand-written papers.

## WHERE TO GO FOR TICKETS

Ticket packages will be available in McCain Auditorium box office starting **September 7<sup>th</sup>** and **must be picked up by September 18<sup>th</sup>**. A packet will be reserved in your name and will contain all of the tickets you will need for this course. The cost of the ticket package will be approximately \$50.00, which represents a discount from the student subscription rate for these events. Seats for the McCain and Nichols Hall performances are reserved. **If tickets are not picked up by September 17<sup>th</sup>, your ticket packet will be released.**

## WHERE TO GO TO VIEW VIDEOTAPES

If you miss a lecture because of a conflict with another class, you may be able to view a videotape of that event. Check for the videotape at the Reserve Desk of Hale Library several days after the presentation. You may want to call in advance to ensure that the tape is available. More than one person can view a given tape at the same time.

## SOME HELPFUL HINTS

**P**lease take a few minutes to read the following advice. Reading this material can't hurt you-- and might just help you in your work as a K-State student!

**Taking notes.** Get into the habit of taking notes in every class and at every formal presentation you attend. It can be easy to let your mind wander in class. Taking notes focuses your attention on the presentation and helps train you to listen actively. What notes should you take? Think of note taking as a constant effort to record answers to the questions: "What really matters here? What captures the essence of this presentation?"

Taking notes efficiently will not interfere with your ability to understand a lecture. Instead, it will help you organize your understanding of the presentation and help you recall the presentation later. In this class, you will need to refer to your notes when you write your assigned papers. Your task will be easier if you have notes from class as well as from the event. Taking notes at performances may not be necessary, but notes from convocations and other formal presentations certainly are.

**Asking questions.** Asking questions in class is a sign of an inquisitive mind, and it is *only* inquisitive minds that can learn. For many students, asking questions in class is difficult, but developing a willingness to ask questions is extremely important. Particularly in a class such as Freshman Seminar, faculty members most definitely want you to ask questions. If you have a question, it is likely that other members of the class have the same question. You might achieve hero status by your willingness to actually ask it! More importantly, even if no one else has the same question, asking your question will help you learn more.

**Reading is an active, not a passive, activity.** No matter what you read, try to interact actively with what you read. Think about the text and try to relate it to what you already know. Put new information into perspective and integrate it with your prior knowledge. Evaluate ideas rather than just accept them.

As a reader, you should challenge the author of any work that you read to make sense and to provoke you.

This is true whether you are reading novels, newspapers, magazines, reference books, or textbooks.

Train yourself to read actively. Make notes in the margins as you read (assuming you own the reading material) or take notes elsewhere (especially if the reading material belongs to someone else). You should learn something every time you read (even when you read fiction). If you can reconstruct what you have read immediately after you are done, then you are an active reader.

You are likely to be asked to read more here at K-State than you have ever been asked before. Your instructors will assume that if they have assigned some reading, you will not only have read but understood the material – at least the material you don't ask questions about.

Remember: don't be lulled into a false sense of security by merely having a book open – instead, actively read it. Don't just read the words; read the ideas.

**Keeping up with assignments.** Entering the university brings with it a great deal of freedom. This can be a blessing because it forces you to assume responsibility for yourself. It can also be a curse if you make poor decisions about how to spend your time. Many students who fail at college do so because they fritter away their time – their most valuable asset – instead of using it wisely. Others over-commit to perfectly worthy activities and, as a result, put entirely too much stress on themselves as they try to do well academically.

One of the best ways to keep up with your assignments is to set aside a time each day to work on every class. Use this time to read assignments, do homework, review or recopy notes, and read ahead. In other words, work constantly, not just right before an exam or a deadline. Cramming may have worked for you before now. For a very few students it can even work at the university, but even for these few it works in only a very limited sense. Cramming is never a way to learn well, and for most people it is an entirely inadequate way of preparing for an exam. (Even cramming while listening to Mozart is unlikely to work well!)

Here is a technique that does work. Make a 7-day calendar (for Sunday through Saturday) with half-hour blocks of time for each day from the time you usually get out of bed until the time you usually go to sleep. Fill in the times for your classes, for when you eat and shower, and for work. Also block out time for social events and personal relaxation, such as exercising or playing intramural sports or watching TV. (Keep the latter to an absolute minimum if you expect to succeed in college.) Include time for religious services if you go to them. Now, look at the remaining blocks of free time. Fill in many of these for routine studying every day. There should still be available blocks of times for especially heavy studying for tests and for impromptu social and personal activities and for other events (such as Freshman Seminar activities). The trick, then, is to adhere to your schedule! If you do so, you are heading for success, not just in the university, but after you graduate.

**The concept of intellectual work.** Maybe you've already gotten this idea from the earlier hints, but just in case you haven't, we want to emphasize that learning is work. Just as surely as harvesting a crop or building a house is work, so is learning. This *intellectual work* simply begins in the classroom; most of it you will do outside the classroom. To a large extent, what happens in a classroom is that an instructor identifies the

material you need to learn. You must then go out and learn it. Obviously, the more active you are in class – in taking notes and in asking questions – the more you will learn in the classroom itself. But the worst mistake you can make is to imagine that you can master the material for a course by just going to class.

Again: most of your learning must be done outside the classroom. In both physical and intellectual work, you have no choice but to dig in and get the stuff done – actively and on your own initiative. (We hasten to add that attending class is very important. There is a strong correlation between attending class regularly and receiving high grades. Attending class is necessary, but not sufficient, for academic success.)

Now here's the good news: intellectual work is one of the most enjoyable types of work. There can be a great sense of personal accomplishment from mastering a body of material, having fresh insights of your own, discussing your views with other people, and writing about your ideas clearly and convincingly.

Freshman Seminar is an orientation to the cultural and intellectual life of the Kansas State University campus. And is an opportunity for you to improve your critical skills and your writing skills. In other words, this course is an opportunity for you to develop intellectual tools that will allow you to do first-class intellectual work for the rest of your life, both for your own benefit and enjoyment and for the benefit of society at large.

## SYLLABUS

### **Week 1 (8/23-8/27)**

Monday, Aug. 23

Tuesday, Aug. 24

Wednesday, Aug. 25

EVENT: Sunday, August 29. Movies on the Grass “*Bag It*”. Coffman Commons, 8:00 P.M.

### **Week 2 (8/30-9/3)**

Monday, Aug. 30

Tuesday, Aug. 31

Wednesday, Sept. 1

EVENT: Read “*The Hunger Games*” by Suzanne Collins. Discuss.

### **Week 3 (9/6-9/10)**

Monday, Sept. 6-Student Holiday, No Class, Labor Day

Tuesday, Sept. 7

Wednesday, Sept. 8

EVENT: Sunday, September 12. Movies on the Grass “*A Powerful Noise*”. Coffman Commons, 8:00 P.M.

### **Week 4 (9/13-9/17)**

Monday, Sept. 13

Tuesday, Sept. 14

Wednesday, Sept. 15

EVENT: Tuesday, September 14. Libuse Binder – Lou Douglas Lecture. Forum Hall, 7:00 P.M.

### **Week 5 (9/20-9/24)**

Monday, Sept. 20

Tuesday, Sept. 21

Wednesday, Sept. 22

EVENT: Tuesday, September 21. Lecture by Jennifer Pozner “PROJECT BRAINWASH: WHY REALITY TV IS BAD FOR WOMEN (...and men, people of color, the economy, love, sex and common sense!)” Forum Hall, 7:00 P.M.

### **Week 6 (9/27-10/01)**

Monday, Sept. 27

Tuesday, Sept. 28

Wednesday, Sept. 29

EVENT: Friday, October 1. Jack Hanna’s *Into the Wild*. McCain Auditorium, 7:30 P.M.

**Week 7 (10/4-10/8)**

Monday, Oct. 4  
Tuesday, Oct. 5  
Wednesday, Oct. 6

EVENT: No Event scheduled.

**Week 8 (10/11-10/15)**

Monday, Oct. 11  
Tuesday, Oct. 12  
Wednesday, Oct. 13

EVENT: Thursday, October 14. *Antigone* by Sophocles. Nichols Theatre, 7:30 P.M.

**Week 9 (10/18-10/22)**

Monday, Oct. 18  
Tuesday, Oct. 19  
Wednesday, Oct. 20

EVENT: Tuesday, October 19. Lou Douglas Lecture – Eric Alva “Overcoming Obstacles”.  
Forum Hall, 7:30 P.M.

**Week 10 (10/25-10/329)**

Monday, Oct. 25  
Tuesday, Oct. 26  
Wednesday, Oct 27

EVENT: Sunday, October 24. *Fiddler on the Roof* – based on stories of Sholom Aleichem.  
McCain Auditorium, 7:30 P.M.

**Week 11 (11/1-11/5)**

Monday, Nov. 1  
Tuesday, Nov. 2  
Wednesday, Nov. 3

EVENT: Monday-Wednesday, November 1-3. Tour of the Beach Museum of Art.

**Week 12 (11/8-11/12)**

Monday, Nov. 8

Tuesday, Nov. 9

Wednesday, Nov. 10

EVENT: Thursday, November 11. *Little Shop of Horrors* directed by Charlotte MacFarland.  
McCain Auditorium, 7:30 P.M.

**Week 13 (11/15-11/19)**

Monday, Nov. 15

Tuesday, Nov. 16

Wednesday, Nov. 17

EVENT: Tuesday, November 16. *God Grew Tired of Us*. Forum Hall, 7:00 P.M.

**Week 14 (11/22-11/26)**

Monday, Nov. 22 – Student holiday. No class.

Tuesday, Nov. 23 – Student holiday. No class.

Wednesday, Nov. 24 – Student holiday. No class.

Week of Thanksgiving Break – No event scheduled during this week.

**Week 15 (11/29-12/3)**

Monday, Nov. 29

Tuesday, Nov. 30

Wednesday, Dec. 1

EVENT: Thursday, December 2. *Winter Dance 2010*. Nichols Theatre, 7:30 P.M.

**Week 16 (12/6-12/10)**

Monday, Dec. 6

Tuesday, Dec. 7

Wednesday, Dec. 8

EVENT: No events scheduled.

**Week 17 (12/13-12/17)**

**SEMESTER EXAMINATIONS. ALL FINAL WORK IS DUE.**

## Event for Week 11 – Tour of the Beach Art Museum

This information was taken from the following website:

[www.ksu.edu/bma](http://www.ksu.edu/bma)



**The Daily Seen**  
Watercolors, Prints, and Drawings by Charles Marshall, Sr  
**9 July - 26 September**  
**John O'Shea** (Gift Print Artist)  
• [More on BMA Exhibitions](#)

**Summer Vacation Art Tours**  
A selection of art from the Museum's permanent collection chosen especially for families and children. Each tour will feature art objects, children's books, and art activities. Tours are available Tues-Fri at \$1 per child.  
[More info...](#)

### Hours of Operation

T-F: 10-5; Sat & Sun: 1-5

Closed Mondays and Holidays

Open selected Thursdays for special programs

Complimentary parking adjacent to the museum

This information was taken from the following website:

<http://www.ksu.edu/bma/about/index.html>

### Beach Museum : About the Museum



October 13, 1996 marked a [major addition to the cultural life](#) of Kansas State University, Manhattan, and the region, with the opening of the Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art. Since that time the Beach Museum of Art has continued to expand its collections and offer a rich diversity of exhibitions and programs. It must be noted that the quality and standards of these endeavors are high. This speaks very well of the stewardship by the President's Office, [Board of Visitors](#), [Advisory Board](#), [Friends of the Beach Museum of Art](#), volunteers, and [staff](#).

Since the BMA opened:

- There have been 48 exhibitions presenting more than 2,000 works by over 300 artists since the Museum opened.
- To the end of this fiscal year, the Museum has hosted 111,168 visitors.
- The permanent art collection numbers over 6,500 works. Since the opening of the museum, over 1,000 works have been added. This is a reflection of the generosity of many wonderful donors. The Friends of the Beach Museum of Art must be recognized for their special and ongoing commitment to secure funds for acquisitions and collection conservation, which totals \$310,473 since the beginning of 1996. Without their participation, the collection would indeed be greatly diminished.
- Over 1,500 educational programs, tours, workshops, lectures and other activities and events have been offered to school children, university students and adults.
- The museum has produced eight significant publications, numerous exhibition brochures, and the BMA [newsletter](#).

**A GUIDE TO WRITING A CRITIQUE OF AN ART EXHIBIT:  
THE METHOD OF EDMUND FELDMAN**

**By**

**Anna Callouri Holcombe  
former Professor of Art  
Kansas State University**

- I. Give an introduction about the facts of the exhibit.  
Who? What? When? Where?
  
- II. Use the Feldman outline (below) for criticism of two of the works included in the exhibit. This outline is adapted from Edmund Feldman's **Varieties of Visual Experience** (Prentice Hall, 1972)

**A. Description**

Make objective\* of value-neutral\* statements about the work in question. Exclude interpretations and evaluations, and instead take an objective inventory of the work. Point out single features such as objects, trees, and people. Then point out abstract elements such as shapes and colors. Finally point out textures, which can lead to a description of the "characteristics of execution."

(\*A test of objectivity would be that most people would agree with your statement.)

**B. Formal analysis**

Make statements about the relations among the things you named in the Descriptions (Part A). You should note similarities in formal elements – such things as color, shape, or direction. Then note dissimilarities (contrasts) in those same elements. Take note of continuities (such as the color red repeated throughout the work) and of connections (for example, the shape of a window repeated in the shape of a table) between these formal elements and the subject matter. Finally, note the overall qualities of the work.

**C. Interpretation**

Make statements about the meanings(s) of the work. This is the most creative part of your critique. Using a hypothesis, support it with arguments, based on evidence given in the Description and Formal Analysis.

**D. Judgment**

This is the most complex part of the critique and requires an opinion regarding the worth of an object, based on what was learned in the previous stages of the critique. Are you moved by this work? What do you think of it?

- III. Draw conclusions – compare and contrast the two works.

From: Art in Context by Jack A. Hobbs  
Fourth Edition  
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers  
pp: 69-75

## **CRITICISM**

As we have said, criticism involves separating a work into its parts to find out their inter-relationships. This is called analysis. A critic certainly analyzes, but that is not all. There is also a creative aspect to criticism, as the critic must formulate a defensible opinion about the work in question.

Edmund Feldman, a well-known writer on art, has identified four stages of what he calls "the critical performance": description, formal analysis, interpretation, and judgment.<sup>1</sup> He is not necessarily referring to *professional* criticism, the type that is published in newspapers, news magazines, and the art press. In principle, Feldman's stages apply to that kind of criticism. But in practice, a professional critic does not always use each of these stages, let alone give them equal emphasis or use them in any particular order. These stages comprise a method that anyone can use to examine a work of art. It is an inductive method, proceeding from the particular to the general. If followed thoughtfully, this method of examination prevents one from coming to premature conclusions before all the evidence is in. A written critique does not necessarily have to mechanically follow the four stages, but the writer should go through the operations of description and analysis before interpretation, *and* before judgment.

### **Description**

The object of this stage of criticism is to identify and record individual facts about the work. The name of the artist (or culture), title, medium, dimensions, and date can be quickly gleaned from the label information. The descriptions of the subject matter, the form, and, if necessary, relevant information about the effects of the medium are more challenging. Objectivity is very important. Interpretation, such as "Goya's *The Third of May, 1808* is about atrocity," or judgment, such as "Saarinen's arch is a beautiful monument," is entirely inappropriate—even though such statements may seem patently obvious. Even to identify the people on the left side of Goya's painting as "innocent civilians" is questionable; to say that they "*appear* to be civilians" would be more acceptable. All statements at this stage must stand the test of general agreement among a group of reasonable people seeing the same thing.

For representational works like *The Third of May, 1808*, description entails an inventory of the subject matter as well as the visual elements and the effects of the medium. For abstract works like *Rhapsody*, in which subject matter is absent, pointing out the visual elements and such things as the quality of the paint becomes very important. The lengthy statements in Chapter 1 about the Alaskan mask (Figure 1-1), the Peanuts comic strip (Figure 1-2), and Picasso's *First Steps* (Figure 1-3) are good examples of objective description about semi-representational works: "The surface of the mask reveals the marks of the carver's tool and a spattering of color around the mouth. . . " . . . the face of the infant is made of lines and shapes that come and go in many directions." The first excerpt refers to aspects of subject matter, color, and medium; the second, to aspects of subject matter, lines, shapes, and directions. In Chapter 2, the statement that "The red of the background in *All Things Do Live in the Three* (Figure 2-8) is actually the same

throughout. . . " is a claim about color in an abstract work. The following comment on Morris Graves' *Blind Bird* (Figure 3-16) is a good example of description by professional critic Ron



3-16 Morris Graves, *Blind Bird*, 1940. Gouache on paper, 30 $\frac{1}{8}$ " by 27". Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Glowman: "Its eyeless sockets and beak are modeled, while the body appears as a dark oval. Its feet and the rock it is perched upon are caught in constricting webs of white line."<sup>2</sup> Notice how aspects of the subject matter have been woven together with claims about shape, line, and color.

### Formal Analysis

The object of formal analysis is to identify relationships. Using the information from the description stage, especially that which pertains to the form, a critic would identify the ways in which lines, shapes, colors, and so forth have been organized and interrelated. These include similarities, contrasts, continuities, and overall qualities. Are colors and shapes repeated? Are some things vividly different in size, shape, color, or light and dark? Are there rhythms or continuities? Are there any

significant connections between formal elements and subject matter—such as the use of a cool color to emphasize the coldness of a winter landscape? Such overall qualities as “basically rectilinear,” “roughly-textured,” or “brightly-colored” are germane to identify at this stage.

The principles of design are about relationships; therefore, the first part of this chapter contains many statements related to the analysis of such relationships: “. . . its position is very off-center, a fact that would pull the picture down and to the left except for countervailing forces that tug the composition in the opposite direction.” Or “While *Bathing at Asnières* is animated by hue contrasts, organic shapes, and some rhythms, it is stabilized by its studied arrangement of figures and objects, the simple forms of the people, and the horizontal format.”

### Interpretation

The object of this stage is to arrive at the meaning or content of the work under question. What feelings, ideas, or emotions does it evoke that can be related to the description and analysis? This is perhaps the most creative part of the critical process. Feldman suggests that the critic *hypothesize* a meaning, and then try to support his or her hypothesis by referring to the information obtained in the previous stages. For example, to defend the notion that “*Rhapsody* emphasizes vitality and energy much more than repose,” the critic might argue that its “lively brushwork and highly-charged color” outweigh the sedentary effects of its rectangles and triangular arrangement. To say that *Bathing at Asnières* “describes a quiet moment of summer torpor” could be defended by referring to both the subject matter and the composition—in other words, “the studied arrangement of figures and objects, the simple forms of the people, and the

horizontal format."

So far in our examples, we have illustrated some ways in which interpretation can be based on the *visible* properties of an artwork—its images and composition as revealed in the process of description and analysis. Recall that the description stage also includes label information such as the title and the date. Sometimes this is helpful; no doubt the title *Rhapsody* gives us a clue as to the artist's intentions. But often this information is limited or ambiguous. For example, the title, *Tree of Fluids (Body of a Lady)*, for Dubuffet's thickly-painted image of a woman (Figure 2-32) raises more questions than it answers. Although it helps us to identify the gender of the image, the title still leaves us to puzzle over its meaning and its relationship to Dubuffet's deliberately primitive style. Is it intended to equate females with sap rising in a tree? Perhaps it is a reference to some vital creative principle—just as Dubuffet's style is intended to evoke a sense of *élan vitale*. If so, why the term "lady" rather than "woman"?

This discussion on interpretation brings us around to the point made in Chapter 1 about the fact that what we see in a work of art—any work of art—depends on a combination of visual information and past experience. While *Bathing at Asnières* may not be as demanding on our understanding as *Tree of Fluids (Body of a Lady)*, it nevertheless depends on our experience of summer pastimes and their connotations. Theoretically, an abstract work like *Rhapsody* does not depend on such knowledge, but it nevertheless requires the viewer to have some experience with the aims and premises of modern, abstract painting—including, perhaps, knowledge of the principles of design. Obviously, complex works, like *Tree of Fluids* or works from unfamiliar cultures and times, like *Clear Day in the Valley* (Figure 3-12), require sophisticated knowledge to determine their content. Interpretation, then, is based on description and analysis *plus* whatever can be brought to bear from the critic's knowledge, ideas, and past experience.

### **Judgment**

The object of judgment is to determine the quality or lasting importance of a work. Initially a viewer, even one who is playing the role of a critic, may judge a work by his or her personal response. There is no reason to be dishonest or to conceal one's feelings. If a person is knowledgeable about art, such feelings can sometimes be a reliable source for judging quality. But there is a difference between personal feelings about a work and the public value of that work. It is certainly possible—and legitimate—to like a bad artwork, or to dislike a good one.

The question is: what criteria should we use to determine excellence in art? This is perhaps one of the most difficult questions in the world. To answer it in detail is beyond the scope of this chapter or even of this book. But some of the criteria that different critics have used—whether explicitly or implicitly—will be analyzed in this section. As with interpretation, not all of the criteria are involved with the visible properties of works.

*Design quality* Variety, unity, movement, balance, and so forth. Using design principles as criteria in art criticism relates to a twentieth-century doctrine of art called *formalism*. Although formalist critics do not necessarily refer to the principles of design as we have articulated them, the focus of their interpretations and judgments is almost exclusively on the form of a work.

*Expressiveness* How effectively the work expresses or reflects a theme or world view. In contrast to formalism, this criterion takes into consideration such things as subject matter and symbols. The subject matter itself, however, is not as important as the vividness of its presentation or embodiment. Expressiveness can also be a judgment about the strength of human feelings aroused by the work. In this sense expressiveness is related to a twentieth-century doctrine called *expressionism*. In some ways the opposite of art that stresses formalistic values, expressionistic art tends to exhibit distortion, fragmentation, and the communication of overstressed emotion. A critic with a taste for expressionism would tend to look for different qualities in a work than would a formalist.

*Originality* A judgment about the work's inventiveness or novelty. Does it display a fresh theme, or a fresh treatment of an old theme? Is the medium unique in some way? Originality operates at different levels, depending on an individual's past experience with art. What appears to be very fresh to some people may in fact be quite derivative. The degree of originality in a work, therefore, is not purely a visual matter. Although not always openly stated as such, originality was the driving force behind much of the art created so far in the twentieth century. It also seems to have been the criterion for judging much of Western art going back to the early Renaissance. In other words, a high value tends to be placed on works by artists who pioneered new ideas of style, theme, or medium.

The fame of the artist, the importance of the artwork in the history of art, the demand for the artist's work, the market value of the work, and the opinions of critics, collectors, art dealers, and art historians have been criteria for judging art. Yet none of these criteria are directly related to the visual properties of a work. However, for purposes of assessing the public value of a particular piece, any of these could override such criteria as design quality or expressiveness.

There is no single criterion or even a single cluster of criteria for judging excellence in art. Not only do different kinds of art require different criteria, but there are different schools of thought about what constitutes good art.

## **SUMMARY**

Composition is the act of organizing an artwork. Even such seemingly random pieces as Pfaff's *3D* (Figure 3-14), and such simple paintings as Klein's one-color *IKB 175* (Figure 3-15) require some process of ordering. If nothing else, Klein chose the shade of blue and determined that the dimensions would be 19½ by 23½ inches. Many decisions are involved in composition. The principles of design are guidelines, a system of strategies, available to the artist. Bear in mind, though, that many great artists, past and present, have not always followed the guidelines.

Criticism is the act of analyzing, interpreting, and judging a work. Like the principles of design, the stages of criticism are guidelines that may or may not be followed by professionals. These stages are recommended for the student of art.

Much is made of the fact that it takes a lot of learning to make art; it is equally true that it requires learning to see art. This chapter is intended to give some insight into the ordering processes of both the artist and the critic as these relate to what the viewer perceives—insight that will enhance appreciation and enjoyment of works of art. The issue is not “knowing what you like,” but “liking what you know.”

<sup>1</sup>Feldman, Edmund Burke. *Varieties of Visual Experience: Art as Image and Idea*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1981.

<sup>2</sup>Glowen, Ron. “Morris Graves: East and West.” *Art in America* 72, 8 (September, 1984):191.

This information was taken in part from the following website:

<http://www.artlex.com/ArtLex/c/conceptualart.html>

**\*\*\*Note: Go to the above website to view the links referred to in this article.**

**C**onceptual art or **Conceptual Art** - Art that is intended to convey an idea or a [concept](#) to the perceiver, rejecting the creation or appreciation of a traditional art [object](#) such as a [painting](#) or a [sculpture](#) as a precious [commodity](#).

Conceptual Art emerged as an [art movement](#) in the 1960s. The expression "concept art" was used in 1961 by Henry Flynt in a Fluxus publication, but it was to take on a different meaning when it was used by Joseph Kosuth (American, 1945-) and the Art & Language group (Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge, Michael Baldwin, Harold Hurrell, Ian Burn, Mel Ramsden, Philip Pilkington, and David Rushton) in England. For the Art & Language group, concept art resulted in an art object being replaced by an analysis of it. Exponents of Conceptual Art said that artistic production should serve artistic [knowledge](#) and that the art object is not an end in itself. The first exhibition specifically devoted to Conceptual Art took place in 1970 at the New York Cultural Center under the title "Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects."

Because Conceptual Art is so dependent upon the [text](#) (or discourse) surrounding it, it is strongly related to numerous other movements of the last century.

### **Examples of Conceptual Art:**

Sol LeWitt (American, 1928-), *Wall Drawing #263 (A wall divided into sixteen equal parts with all one - two, three and four part combinations of lines in four directions.)*, 1975, black [graphite](#) on wall, [dimensions](#) variable, Whitney Museum of American Art, NY. LeWitt's work amounts to a plan or directions to the draftsman who executes the work, much as an architect presenting plans to a builder. These directions call for dividing a wall into sixteen equal parts with all one, two, three and four part combinations of lines in four directions. The first row of this sixteen-square grid contains lines in the four basic directions-vertical, horizontal, and two diagonals- that establish a system upon which the rest of the drawing is based. Because LeWitt does not use an intermediary support, such as canvas or paper, in the final work, he de-emphasizes the materiality of the aesthetic object, giving priority to the idea behind the art work. [See quotes of Lewitt below.](#)

Mel Bochner (American, 1940-), *To Count: Intransitive*, 1972, soap on [glass](#), [dimensions](#) variable, Sonnabend Gallery, NY. Having rubbed a window with a soap film, Bochner drew numbers onto the glass, [transforming](#) the window from a [material](#) through which to look into one at which to look. The piece cannot be moved, and so cannot be sold as an [object](#). The work must instead be considered the manifestation of an idea, which could be again created elsewhere, any future incarnation necessarily made inexpensively and temporarily.

Lawrence Weiner (American, 1942-), *Statement of Intent*, 1969 and 1999, [enamel](#) on wall, [dimensions](#) variable, collection of the artist.

▲ Joseph Kosuth (American, 1945-), *Clock (One and Five)*, English/Latin version, 1965, clock, [photograph](#) and [printed texts](#) on [paper](#), [unique](#), 61.0 x 290.2 cm, Tate Gallery, London. See [horology](#) and [time](#).

Joseph Kosuth, *One and Three Chairs*, 1965, a folding chair, a [photograph](#) of a chair, and a photographic enlargement of a dictionary definition of a chair, 200 x 271 x 44 cm, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. *One and Three Chairs* is presented as having no [function](#) other than as a clear definition of itself. Kosuth wrote the important article "Art after Philosophy," *Studio International.*, 1969. See [furniture](#).

The Russian emigrant conceptual artist team Vitaly Komar and Alex Melamid are responsible for the projects they titled "[The Most Wanted paintings](#)" and "[The Least Wanted paintings](#)", reflect the artists' interpretation of a professional market research survey about aesthetic preferences and taste in painting. Intending to discover what a true "people's art" would look like, the artists, with the support of the Nation Institute, hired Marttila & Kiley, Inc. to conduct the first poll. In 1994, they began the process which resulted in America's Most Wanted and America's Least Wanted paintings, which were first exhibited under the title "People's Choice." See [aesthetics](#) and [taste](#).

## Quote: ". . .

"In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work . . . all planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes the machine that makes the art."

Sol LeWitt (American, 1928-), in "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," in *Artforum*, summer issue, 1967.

## **EVENT FOR WEEK 15 - K-State's WinterDance '10**

### **Notes on Dance as an Art Form by Vera Orlock former Associate Professor of Dance Kansas State University**

#### **A. Defining dance in relation to other art forms**

Dance is a three-dimensional, temporal and kinetic art form in which the human body is the primary medium of expression. Dance shares many of the same elements with other art forms. For example in what art forms other than dance would you find the following elements?

- rhythm
- shape
- volume
- phrasing
- arrangement of forms
- speed
- design
- dynamic (or energetic) variations
- compositional forms
- style

#### **B. Observing dance**

In observing dance in a performance one rarely has the opportunity to view a dance more than one time, and yet because of the ephemeral nature of dance it is most helpful to observe a dance several times to get to know it more than superficially. Given that repeated viewings are not often possible, it can be helpful to be aware in advance of some of the various elements of dance as an art form. This can help one to recognize what is happening as it is happening, and also later reflect upon what one has seen.

When observing a dance for the first time, it is advisable not to try too hard to look for specific elements of the dance, but rather take in the gestalt of the experience in a broad way, with an easy perceptual availability, instead of trying to “get” the dance. In noticing the details as possible qualities of movement, use of space, color and style of costumes, lighting effects, don't miss the total effect of the dance (atmosphere, overall theme, how the dance affected you). While it can be helpful to make notes about what you have seen after the dance is over, it is advisable not to do so while watching. Give your full, moment-to-moment attention to the dance. Afterward, you can replay the dance in your mind to recreate what you have seen. Notice how the dance makes you feel and try to figure out what the choreographer did to achieve that feeling for you. Sometimes discussing a dance with someone else who has seen it can be helpful, but don't necessarily expect to always agree with them. It is also important to keep an open mind and not judge a dance a good or bad one because its look or style may be familiar or

unfamiliar to you.

In observing a dance, there are many perceptible aspects to take in. This may include bodies, movement, costumes, sets, props, music, or lighting. Dance is a time/space/and kinetic art. We relate to dance through our imaginations and our senses. The latter may include visual, auditory, kinesthetic senses, and at times vicariously (or in certain circumstances, directly) through our tactile and gustatory senses. It has been argued that dance is the most primary of all the arts, as the fundamental instrument of dance is the human body itself. We relate directly to what the dancer is doing by the very fact of seeing another human being moving.

### **C. Formal Analysis**

The fundamental elements of dance are:

- TIME
- SPACE
- WEIGHT
- ENERGY
- FLOW
- FORM
- STYLE

In looking at a dance one can take in the overall affect of the dance, and one can also look at the relationship of individual formal elements used in the dance. The way time, space, weight, energy, flow, form, and style are combined in a dance determines the overall effect and uniqueness of a particular expression in movement. Each dance has its individual characteristics just as each person or each style of dance has its own characteristics. In analyzing a dance look at how each of the following elements of dance have been selected, and designed by the choreographer.

**TIME** – This includes rhythm, tempo (slow & fast), acceleration & deceleration.

**SPACE** – This includes shape (symmetry/asymmetry, dense or open), line (curved or straight), level (high, middle, low), group formations and relationships, volume (negative and positive space), placement on stage (left, right, upstage, downstage, diagonals).

**WEIGHT** – This includes the relative lightness or strength of a movement. The equivalent to weight in music is volume or loudness.

**ENERGY** – This includes amount of effort, and the quality of the effort (vibratory, percussive, swing, collapse, suspend, sustained, explosive).

**FLOW** – This includes free flow and bound flow, and is about the degree of “goingness” a movement displays. In music this translates into legato and staccato.

**FORM** – This includes the organization of the dance, how it is constructed. The most basic way of

looking at form is in terms of the dance's beginning, middle, and end. Some dances follow a musical form such as an "ABA" form or "theme and variations".

STYLE – This may include ballet, modern dance, (sometimes called contemporary dance), jazz, tap, social, or ethnic dance (a term which covers an immense diversity of cultural styles). Style may also reflect the characteristics of an individual choreographer's approach to movement.

#### **D. The Medium of Dance**

Also, not to overlook perhaps the most obvious aspect of dance is the use of the body, which is the medium of dance. This includes the organization of the body as a whole and also the relationship of body parts to one another. For example, how do the movements of the arms relate to what the torso or legs are doing? This can vary greatly depending upon the individual dancer or choreographer, or a particular style or culture. African dance, for example, exhibits a remarkable flexibility and articulation of the torso, notably different than the more vertical and sedate European use of the torso which is seen in a traditional ballet style. We learn much about a culture's attitude about the body, the community, gender, spirituality, sensuality, art, and so on from how the body is asked to move.

Sometimes in dance "the medium is the message", as Marshall McLuhan once said. That is, sometimes the dance is just about dancing, bodies moving in time and space, and the choreographer's intention is simply for us to witness this remarkable phenomenon. In dances like this movement exists for movement sake, and the choreographer may not have an immediately recognizable or specific story or narrative to tell. Some viewers of dance can make a story out of anything. If you get a story from the dance, fine; if not, fine. A good dance will have some kind of internal logic of its own even if there is not a literal plot to follow, and you will probably be able to sense the rightness of this logic on some level, even if you are a novice dance audience member.

If you are asked to respond or write about a dance, it's a good idea not to focus exclusively on the plot. The story of even the most elaborate ballets can be dispensed with in a few sentences. Explain the story briefly and go on to describe how you thought the choreographer crafted the elements of dance (space, time, energy, etc.) to realize the story. While story is important, dance is fundamentally about movement and relationships of movement. Pay attention to and write about movement.

## WRITING A DANCE CRITIQUE

by Vera Orlock  
former Associate Professor of Dance  
Kansas State University

Paper should be approximately 2 pages in length, typed, double-spaced. Do not write about every dance, but only two which you are to write about in depth.

Evaluation of your paper will be based upon the following:

- Overall presentation – length, spacing, grammatical errors, spelling, typos
- Content – Does the content address the outline given below; does it reflect ideas/principles/language presented in class?
- Insight – Does the writer go beyond reporting and provide creative insight into the material?

### OUTLINE FOR PAPER

#### A. INTRODUCTION TO PAPER

Context: Name, date and location of the performance, title of specific dance(s) about which you will write, music, performs, and any other relevant information.

#### B. BODY OF PAPER:

##### Observations, Response, Interpretation, Evaluation

For each dance about which you are writing, address the following areas:

1. Objective observation

What you say. Be as rich in detail as possible. “I saw 23 dancers dressed as elephants in pink tutus and pointe shoes, jumping and twirling high in the air, in unison, moving from upstage left to downstage right.”

2. Subjective responses

How you felt in response to what you saw. “I felt disturbed and at the same time amused by the image.”

3. Possible choreographic interpretation

“The choreographer seems to be making a statement about social prejudices concerning body image.”

4. Evaluation

Based on what you know about the choreographer’s intention (title of dance, program notes, class discussion) and based on your understanding of dance as an art form, how would you value the dance. Note that the value you place on the dance may not be directly related to whether or not you found the dance to be entertaining or even like the dance. While one’s aesthetic preferences will usually color one’s experience of a dance, informed evaluation needs to be based upon criteria with a scope broader than that of one’s personal taste. “*Not Just Any Body*”, with its unusual jumps and turns, realistic costuming and surreal lighting, and especially the passages in extreme slow motion gave the dance an other-worldly, bizarre and powerful tone, one which effectively communicated the choreographer’s intention.”

#### CONCLUSION

1. Final closing remarks may include

- a comparison of the two dances relating the performance to this course in general
- your expectations, satisfactions, disappointments
- anticipations for future performances
- any change of your view of dance as an art form as a result of this performance
- any change of your view of life as a result of this performance
- other summary or concluding remarks

## Critical Evaluation of Choreography

Lavender, Larry (1996).  
Dancers Talking Dance.  
Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

**Prepared by:** Joyce Yagerline, MFA  
Associate Professor of Dance  
Kansas State University

### Observation:

Viewer's role:

1. Attend to the dance with an open mind for the duration of its performance.
2. Tighten perceptual focus to include only the dance itself.
3. Set aside artistic assumptions, preferences, and expectations.

Following the performance of a dance, ask “What did you see in the dance?” rather than “Did you like it?”

**Reflection:** A focused free-writing after viewing a dance, concentrating on description and analysis of the visible properties of the dance.

The viewers' aim in describing the dance is to identify what they saw in the work as fully as possible rather than to formulate interpretations of the work's meanings(s) or judgments of its merits.

Use *low-inference*, or *unloaded*, language. The following sample passages describing the beginning of the dance illustrate the difference between low- and high-inference descriptive language:

High-inference (loaded language)

The four dancers moved in a totally predictable pattern from the outside to the center of their world. The leader of the group moved with powerful, domineering movements while the followers seemed frightened and timid.

Low-inference (unloaded language)

The four dancers moved toward the center, one from each of the four corners of the stage. Three of the dancers moved with small steps and appeared to be lightly floating, while the fourth moved with larger, heavier movements and stronger energy.

**Discussion (Stage 1 and Stage 2):** Sharing the notes with the group allows the viewers to discover which of their experiences of the dance have also been experienced by others.

Stage 1 (Description and Analysis) also requires participants to seek clarification of others' reflections and to draw attention to details of the dance that may have been overlooked.

Stage 2 (Interpretation) is a process through which the critic articulates his or her view of the meaning(s) of the work. The plausible interpretations are grounded in description and analysis of the work.

**Evaluation:** Aesthetic judgment which makes specific reference to the intrinsic features of the work under review. The evaluation is supported by description and analysis of the perceptual evidence.

**Recommendations for Revisions:** Critical projection should begin only after all the viewers' interpretive and evaluative claims have been explored and the choreographer has learned which aspects of the dance "worked" for the viewers and which aspects they think need further attention.