

Path of learning for students who major in Fine Arts

In the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Hong Kong, students who major in Fine Arts study the history of art. This means that students engage with legacies of art production with a concentration on Asia and non-Asia. At present, the department does not offer studio courses to actively create works of art. As the students progress through the program in Fine Arts, they encounter increasing complexities of visual literacy and develop abilities to analyze, read, and interpret works of art. Students also study techniques and materials that are employed in art production. Learning activities include lectures, discussions and seminars, but also may extend outside the classroom with object sessions and museum visits.

The outline below provides general guidelines for the various learning experiences students who major in art history can anticipate discovering at each level in the classroom. Given the great variety of approaches artists across the world take in creating art, instructors in the Department of Fine Arts tailor the learning experiences for the course materials and may schedule museum tours, visits to collections, and study trips. As a result these guidelines are flexibly generalized for classroom instruction and are not regulations for either students or teachers.

1000-level courses: In these introductory classes, the emphasis of learning is placed on developing an awareness and understanding of the canonical works of the subject area. Students learn to identify works of art and understand why they are historically important examples of the dignity of human expression in lectures and tutorials. Assignments include essays, visual analysis, and exhibition reviews. Students can expect to have 5 to 6 tutorials in these courses.

Skills developed:

Spoken communication, learning to describe art through visual analysis
Effective writing skills, learning to form a thesis
Original thinking and critical engagement
Introduction to visual literacy

Learning Activities:

Papers, quizzes, tests
Writing – approximately 5 -7 pages of writing

2000-level courses: These advanced courses provide knowledge of established historical interpretations and include discussions of art theory and art historical scholarship in lectures and tutorials. Students learn to interpret works of art and apply these skills in the writing of interpretive research essays on art objects. In general, 4 tutorials are offered in these courses. For a majority of these courses, the research essay is the most important assessment component.

Skills developed:

Greater focus on writing with an emphasis on research
Applying critical skill in thinking and talking about art, advancing more sophisticated skills in visual literacy
Original thinking and critical engagement

Learning Activities:

Papers, quizzes, tests, presentations, exhibition designs
Writing – approximately 8 to 12 pages of writing in total

3000-levels courses: These courses, a mix of lecture and seminar (students contribute ideas and address concepts in periods of discussion), include a widening range of scholarly materials. Topics or themes in this course are streamlined, offering students access to a diverse variety of art production either by theme, location, or era. Materials in these courses draw upon an advanced range of methodologies and include an assortment of interpretations of art that challenge established scholarship or advance its findings. Students focus on in-depth explorations of art history as they learn to speak about different methodological approaches and areas of interest. The research essay is the most important assessment component.

Skills developed:

Greater focus on writing and research
Emphasis on participation in class to articulate critical insights into the production of art and art history
Increasing focus on original thinking and critical engagement

Learning Activities:

Papers, presentations, quizzes, tests, exhibition designs
Writing – approximately 10 to 14 pages of writing in total
For courses with longer class sessions (e.g. 3 hours), tutorials are optional. For other courses, in general 4 tutorials are offered.

4000-level courses: These capstone courses tend to be seminar courses, with the notable exception of the Internship, a description of which is located in the course listings. The seminar capstone courses emphasize critical historiography, methodologies of the discipline, investigations into art theory, and the evaluation of interpretations of canonical art history. Students are immersed in intensive learning in seminars and acquire critical approaches to art history as a discipline. No tutorials are offered at the 4000-level; some instructors provide individualized student consultations, and some teachers schedule seminars for two or three hours. The research essay is the most important assessment component. Participation in seminar discussions is also given great importance.

Skills developed:

Emphasis is on the historiography (the history of art history)
Further honing of research, speaking, and writing skills
Critical engagement with the discipline of art history
Originality in thinking and the critique of state of the field of research

Learning Activities:

Papers, quizzes, tests, exhibition designs and reviews, consultations with instructor
Writing – approximately 15 to 20 pages of writing in total