 Office of General Education A-218C

160 Convent Avenue

New York, NY 10031

ART 21000 Writing About Art

Learning Outcomes Assessment Report Using Blackboard Statistics

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| Date of report: | **February 20, 2018** |
| Course: | **Writing About Art [ART 21000] Sections D and G** |
| Materials used: | **Blackboard generated Rubric Statistics Reports for the 37 graded student essays** |
| Date/semester of assessment: | **Fall 2017** |
| Preliminary Assessment Team Members: | **A. Marjanovic** |
| Secondary Assessment Team Members: |  |
| Coordination/ Oversight: | **Ana Vasovic** |

# Purpose and Justification

Writing About Art (ART 210000) is offered by the Art department at the City College of New York (CCNY). It has two sections: D and G, each enrolling up to 25 students. Originally devised and taught by Professor Craig Houser, the course falls into the English Composition II (EC) category and is recommended in the 2nd semester of study.[[1]](#footnote-1) The syllabus (see Appendix 1) presented in this report is a modified version of Professor Houser’s syllabus; the same version of the syllabus was used in both course sections.

The purpose of this report is to identify and qualify strengths and challenges in students’ accomplishment of learning outcomes using the Blackboard (Bb) Statistic Report (see Appendix 2) for a single assignment, in this case, Short Paper #3. This assignment was selected since rubrics to assess proficiency were well aligned with the General Education rubric assessing writing, critical thinking, and informational literacy. The Bb Statistics Report calculates the number of students who met the specific grading criteria after the assignment has been graded. The data collected through this Bb feature is extremely useful for planning and/or adjusting future lectures and assignments.

# Course Overview

The CCNY Art department provided the following description for ART 21000: “Practice in the styles and forms of expository writing required in the arts. Readings that acquaint students with standards of good writing about the arts.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

### Course Learning Outcomes

The course syllabus (see Appendix 1) states that students who complete the course should gain confidence in:

* writing an articulate, in-depth scholarly analysis of art in formal English language
* understanding and implementing the art-historical methodology
* using printed and online academic sources for art-historical research
* organizing visual observations and historical information into essays with notes and bibliographies

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# Assessment Findings

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| The short paper assignment was divided into two parts: outline and final draft. One rewrite of each part of the assignment was allowed and the grade for each attempt was averaged. The results below are based on the graded final drafts. | | | |
| ***Learning outcomes***  Course Grading Rubric Criteria | ***Rubric benchmark***  General Education Rubric Alignment | ***Brief description of findings*\*** | ***Meeting the Benchmark*** |
| Thesis Statement | Thesis/Main idea | 94.5% meets benchmark, 81% excels | Exceeds expectations |
| Methodology | Context /Assumptions, Student’s position; Demonstrates a clear understanding of info needs and is able to search efficiently | 87% meets benchmark, 54.5% excels | Above Average |
| Body Paragraph Development | Context /Assumptions; Student’s position; Evidence and Development; Evidence  /Analysis and Synthesis; Effectively evaluates information sources | 90% meets benchmark, 62.5% excels | Exceeds expectations |
| Essay Structure | Structure and Organization | 91.5% meets benchmark, 75.5% excels | Exceeds expectations |
| Mechanic and Style | Control of Syntax and Mechanics | 94.5% meets benchmark, 42% excels | Exceeds expectations |
| Chicago Manual of Style | Uses information ethically | 85% meets benchmark, 42% excels | Above Average |
| Grammar |  | 90% meets benchmark, 59.5% excels | Exceeds expectations |

\* Note: the results are based on 37 graded student essays from both course sections and represent the percentage of students whose performance met each grading criterion. The total number of students enrolled in both sections was 48. Only 37 submitted the assignment (this number includes late submissions). The essays are graded using the standard 100% grading scale. The benchmark was set to 73% (letter grade C); students who excelled in performance, scored 90% (letter grade A) and above.

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| *Briefly summarize overall findings by identifying strengths and challenges in students’ accomplishment of learning outcomes.* |
| The high percentage of students who meet each grading criterion, particularly essay organization, thesis statement, and paragraph development was most likely the result of the iterative process that required students to submit multiple drafts of the same assignment. Each draft was graded and critiqued separately, so the students had a chance to improve their writing skills. Special attention was paid to interpreting and evaluating evidence in the body of the essay and writing unified paragraphs. Furthermore, students were prompted to select and implement a particular theoretical frame of reference in their theses.  The biggest challenge was meeting the submission deadline. Only 76% of students in section D and 72% in section G submitted the assignment even through a grace period was allowed.  Another issue was with helping students develop a sense of authorship and ownership of their papers. Many students initially refrained from evaluating sources in their body paragraphs. In-Class Presentations/Discussions seemed to address that issue to a certain extent.  Initially, teaching students to implement a theoretical frame of reference in thesis statements was challenging, but was successfully addressed through the iterative process described above. However, an endeavor to teach students to develop a thesis statement that contained a counter-argument remained unsuccessful.  In addition, grammatical errors, such as sentence fragments, subject-verb agreement, and comma splices remained persistent in some students even though many of them improved on the macro level. |
| *How useful are the text and other resources assigned to this course?* |
| The following textbooks were used in class:  Adams, Laurie Schneider. T*he Methodologies of Art: An Introduction*. 2nd ed.Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 2010.  Barnet, Sylvan. *A Short Guide to Writing About Ar*t, 10th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2010.  *A Short Guide* was useful since it explained how to develop an argument and provided an overview of style and grammar. *The Methodologies of Art* appeared a bit dense in presenting methodologies used in Art History. I addressed that issue by simplifying arguments presented in the textbook and adjusting them to the expository paragraph model presented in the assignment instructions. |
| **Already implemented “Closing-the-loop” efforts to improve student learning/success:**  *Since teaching this course, including this current semester, have you made changes in course content? If yes, please explain.* |
| The most important modification I made was breaking each assignment into Outline and Final Draft, which allowed me to implement scaffolding in my teaching. The Outline portion of the assignment weighted only 3.33% of the final grade and its purpose was to allow students to identify and correct writing issues (with my help and the help of their classmates). The Final Draft of the same assignment weighted 15%; in this part, students were expected to demonstrate specific writing skills stated in the syllabus. One rewrite was allowed for both components.  Another adjustment I made was increasing the number of In-Class Presentations /Discussions. Ten classes over the course of the semester were devoted to this type of activity. One student was selected at a time to present their outline while the rest of the class gave their critique helping the classmate to improve the outline and better prepare for the final draft. I was leading the discussions. Through this assignment, I wanted to communicate that revision is an integral part of the writing process; I also wanted the students to learn that their audience was general public and other scholars (and not only their class instructor). This assignment was also a good way of assessing how well the class understood the course content.  The critique of In-Class Presentations/Discussions was framed by the criteria described in the grading rubrics. Students were initially timid to engage in these discussions and to present. Over time, they communicated that the discussions were a helpful preparation for the final drafts and some even volunteered to present.  Overall, each student could get up to three rounds of criticism per outline: up to two from me via Blackboard, delivered privately and one from their classmates. Each Short Paper: Final Draft was also allowed a rewrite based on my comments via Bb. All these steps reflected my instructional scaffolding.  I devised two grading rubrics: *Outlines: Student Evaluation Chart* and *Final Drafts: Student Evaluation Chart* (see Appendix 3).Both Grading rubrics were available to students before the assignment due dates.  *Outlines: Student Evaluation Chart* had five grading criteria (Working Thesis Statement, Methodology and Working Bibliography, Sample Body Paragraph Development, Essay Outline Structure, and Grammar) and five levels of achievement (Failure (grade F), Poor (D-, D, D+, and C-), Satisfactory (C and C+), Competent (B-, B, and B+), and Proficient (A-, A, and A+). The weight of grading criteria corresponded to the assignment goals - to have a clear thesis statement, to compile and read sources, and to outline the body paragraphs, all necessary preparation steps for the final draft. The sample body paragraph was a necessary component of the outline since it gave me a chance to point out to each student possible issues related to that aspect of writing before the final draft was due and to teach them how to address those issues.  *Final Drafts: Student Evaluation Char*t had similar grading criteria to the *Outlines* grading rubric, but the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) and Mechanic and Style were added as separate categories. The CMOS criterion was inserted to encourage students to pay attention to citations. The separation of Grammar from The Mechanic and Style allowed me to better plan lessons addressing the micro level writing issues. |
| *Since teaching this course, have you made changes in course delivery or other pedagogy? Please explain.* |
| Through In-class Presentations/Discussions, I incorporated an inquiry-based approach that relies on asking open-ended questions and creating a dialogue in the classroom. In addition, I implemented a constructivist teaching method that refers to a relationship between the students’ existing knowledge and new concepts and information. It implies using common, ordinary matters to explain more complex concepts. I used examples from pop culture to teach methods used in Art History - Beyonce's *Formation* (2016)was used to explain Iconography; Drake’s single *Started from the Bottom* was mentioned in lecture covering Marxism; and examples from adbusters.com were shown to help students understand Structuralism. Moreover, by using grading rubrics and breaking each assignment into outlines and final drafts, I implemented scaffolding in my teaching. |
| *How exactly have the changes that you have implemented impacted student learning/student success? Please provide specific examples.* |
| Breaking each assignment into outlines and final drafts and allowing rewrites helped students to identify and correct (based on my comments) specific issues on both macro and micro levels of writing. In addition, In-Class Presentations/Discussions engaged students in helping each other during the writing process, which in turn facilitated learning. |
| **Future “Closing-the-loop” plans to improve student learning/success**  *Based on your assessment of student learning, what changes do you plan to implement at instructional level to improve student learning? Specify topics and pedagogical changes, if applicable.* |
| About 25% of students from both sections failed to submit their assignments, despite a grace period. That seemed to be the biggest issue. To address it, I will reinforce modeling as an instructional strategy, showing more samples of student writing (including developing counter-arguments) before the assignment due dates. In addition, I will devise handouts, implement firmer deadlines, and deduct points for late submissions. I also plan to use a free online Jeopardy game maker to address grammatical errors, such as sentence fragments, subject-verb agreement, and comma splices.  After an open discussion I had with my students, I realized that the order of the Short Paper assignments should have been different. Initially, the purpose of Short Paper #1 was to teach students to use Formalism in analyzing a two dimensional piece of art; the second Short paper was a compare and contrast essay teaching them to implement Formalism in analyzing three dimensional art; Short Paper #3 focussed on Iconography in analyzing any type of art, but that assignment did not require a comparative analysis. The third Shor Paper was followed by the Final Paper, which was a compare and contrast essay. Many students struggled with finding the main idea for a compare and contrast essay and I realized that I should have spent more time teaching them that. At the end of the Fall 2017 semester, I discussed that issue with students, and some suggested that it would have been better if I made the third Short Paper a compare and contrast essay. The new arrangement of these assignments is implemented in the Spring 2018 syllabus. |
| *Provide suggestions, if any, to be done on a departmental or institutional level to support student learning/success in this course.* |
| Assessing student performance using Blackboard could be improved and automatically applied to all CCNY departments and courses if the institution entered a set of learning goals and criteria into Bb, as described below:  “Institutions can demonstrate that their programs and curriculums are effective with goal alignment to course content and activities. The process consists of three steps:   1. Your institution turns on the goals tool and imports or creates goals. Instructors can't create goals. 2. Instructors align course content to one or multiple goals. In the Original Course View, content types include discussion forums and threads, blogs, journals, tests and individual questions, assignments, and Grade Center columns. In the Ultra Course View, you can only align goals to assignments at this time. 3. In the Original Course View, instructors and administrators run course reports to examine how course content matches up with the institution's goals and how students perform against goals.” \*   \* “Goals,” Blackboard Help, accessed February 13, 2018, <https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Instructor/Performance/Goals>. |

1. The Office of General Education, *General Education Handbook for Faculty*, CCNY, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Division of Humanities and the Arts, “Pathways Core Requirements,” CCNY, accessed January 23, 2018, https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/humanities/humanities-pathways-core. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)