

HART 398/Senior Conference I

Professors Houghteling and McKee

Writing Assignment Three: First Draft of the Thesis Proposal

Due to Moodle midnight, Monday, October 20

Your first draft of the thesis proposal is an opportunity to take stock of where you are in the process and formalize your emerging ideas. It is expected that the proposal will show your work in progress (which is to say, your ideas are not expected to be fully formed). At the same time, please take advantage of this opportunity to coalesce your current thoughts and benefit fully from focused feedback by planning your preparation for this assignment with care and allotting ample time to be thoughtful in how you execute this draft. In particular, please do not attempt to produce the proposal the night before. Your thesis work will require advance planning and consistent attention over several months. Now is the time to start the habit of working at a gradual pace and breaking down larger goals into more manageable tasks.

At this stage, a strong first draft of the proposal will show:

- 1) that you are beginning to home in on a **subject** (specifically, we hope that you are moving toward identifying, as relevant, the artist, movement, period, medium, or specific work[s] that will be the focus of your thesis);
- 2) that you have begun to articulate some **core questions** that you find engaging – maybe even exciting – and that will structure your research in the weeks and months to come;
- 3) that you have some sense of the **methods** of art historical inquiry that might help to frame your approach (although your ideas on this point will no doubt evolve as we move through the syllabus for HART 398 in the remainder of the semester);
- 4) that you have some **background** or preparation in the area/field in which you are choosing to write (the strongest theses usually build from previous coursework and/or interests rather than starting completely from scratch);
- 5) that you have accomplished some **preliminary research** (for example, that you have located primary and/or secondary materials and started to read and think about some of those sources so as to begin establishing the bibliography on which your project will be based; that you have started gathering the visual evidence for your project in the form of images or, if possible, planning visits to see relevant works of art/architecture/film/etc. first hand);
- 6) that you have identified (and possibly reached out to) members of the department and/or relevant faculty in the Bi-Co or even Tri-Co who might provide **useful advice** as you embark on your research (if you are not yet in contact with relevant faculty, you can use this assignment to identify those individuals and prepare to contact them to discuss your emerging ideas/plans).

Keeping these criteria in mind, your assignment is to draft 2-4 pages that document your current progress with the thesis. Specifically, we hope that you can articulate a general topic of inquiry; can identify some artworks and questions to drive and inspire your research; already possess some background of relevance to this topic; can comment on possible methodological tools or theoretical approaches that might structure and animate your research and writing; have accomplished some preliminary research; and have identified (or

perhaps already spoken to) at least one relevant faculty member. In addition to the 2-4 pages of prose, use Chicago Style to cite a few (3-5) secondary sources (books or journal articles) that you have or will soon read (though it will be in the next assignment that you will demonstrate your research progress by annotating your preliminary bibliography). Finally, include at least 1 (and no more than 3) representative images, to help envisage your topic.

Like all midterm assignments, this one is diagnostic. Producing this preliminary proposal is intended to aid in the development and refinement of your thesis by identifying the most successful aspects of your proposed topic, invigorate you to pursue these lines of inquiry for the remainder of this (and next) semester, and clarify where you need to focus your efforts in the remaining weeks.