

## **VISUAL ARTS DEPARTMENT**

## **ART HISTORY: COURSE #856**

### **Department Contact Information**

Diana Adams Woodruff, Director  
Visual Arts Department  
Acton Public Schools  
Acton-Boxborough Regional School District  
16 Charter Road  
Acton, MA 01720  
Phone: (978) 264-4700, x3315  
Fax: (978) 263-8409  
Email: [dwoodruff@mail.ab.mec.edu](mailto:dwoodruff@mail.ab.mec.edu)

### **The Department's Educational Philosophy**

Art is essential in education. Students engage in art production, art history, art criticism and discussion of aesthetics to broaden their understanding of self and community, to place the arts in an historical and cultural context, and to experience the arts as a universal form of human expression and communication.

### **Guiding Principles**

The art curriculum does the following:

- Emphasizes development of students' skills and understanding of creating and responding.
- Teaches the language inherent in the four disciplines: art production, art history, art criticism, aesthetics.
- Enables students to apply both imagination and rational thinking to the making of art.
- Enables students to invent and explore multiple solutions to a problem.
- Enables students to understand the value of reflection and critical judgment in creative work.
- Promotes knowledge and understanding of the historical and cultural context of the arts – how world cultures have been influenced and shaped by the arts.
- Facilitates positive peer interaction, including receiving and using feedback.
- Encourages self-motivation to create and problem solve.
- Uses artistic literacy as a natural enhancement to learning in other content areas.
- Fosters positive attitudes toward art and opinions of other artists.
- Uses a variety of assessment methods to evaluate what students know and are able to do.
- Introduces career possibilities.

## **ART HISTORY: COURSE #856**

**Course Frequency:** Semester course, five times per week

**Credits Offered:** 2.5

**Prerequisites:** None

### **Background to the Curriculum**

The curriculum for this course, which was offered for the first time during the 2001-2002 school year, was developed by Nathaniel Martin and funded by an AB Research and Development Grant. The course is designed with criticism, history, and analysis of art at its center. In this sense, it is in a position to explore certain Massachusetts Arts Frameworks Standards with a depth not often reached in traditional studio courses. These include Standards 5 (Critical Response), 6 (Purpose and Meaning in Art), 7 (Roles of Artists in Communities), and 8 (Concepts of Style, Stylistic Influence, and Stylistic Change). Each of these standards is explored at length through discussion, writing and creative responses.

### **Core Topics/Questions/Concepts/Skills**

Students explore art from the pre-historic era to today, with a special focus on those periods, cultures and artists that form the traditional canon of art history. Students will be encouraged, however, to explore the canon through non-traditional means. The units use a variety of investigative techniques, each designed to break away from the text, slide and lecture-based format of traditional art history. The core concept is that good art history requires creative thinking, rather than just a good memory; this concept is addressed in each unit through activities designed to engage students with more creative and personal dialogue with art.

### **Course-End Learning Objectives**

<b><u>Learning objective</u></b>	<b><u>Corresponding state standards, where applicable</u></b>
1] To explore the ways in which we can explain art when we have very little information about the beliefs of its makers. This unit will stress observation as a starting point in the investigation of art. This unit will also examine ideals of physical beauty and how they change according to culture. Focus will be on the Venus of Willendorf and the caves of Lascaux in France. (Prehistoric Art)	5.9 Use published sources, traditional or electronic, to research an artist. 5.12 Understanding of societal influences and prejudices . . . . 6.3 Interpret the meanings of artistic works by explaining how the subject matter and/or form reflect the events, ideas, religions, and customs of people living at a particular time in history.

<p>2] To explore the ways in which the ideals and the religion of a culture can be seen in its visual expressions. The unit focuses on 2D, 3D, and architectural examples from Old, Middle and New Kingdoms. (Egyptian Art)</p>	<p>6.4 Describe how artistic production can shape and be influenced by the aesthetic preferences of a society.  8.8 Identify stylistic features and explain how they relate to culture</p> <p>5.8 Demonstrate the ability to compare two works of art . . . .  6.3 Interpret the meanings of artistic works by explaining how the subject matter and/or form reflect the events, ideas, religions, and customs of people living at a particular time in history.  6.4 Describe how artistic production can shape and be influenced by the aesthetic preferences of a society.  6.8 Compare examples of works from several arts domains within a period or culture and explain the extent to which each reflects function, customs, religious beliefs . . . .  7.2 Describe the roles of artists in specific cultures and periods and compare similarities and differences . . . .  8.8 Identify stylistic features and explain how they relate to culture.</p>
<p>3] To explore the idea of “classic” art and why the Greeks and Romans have been placed at the very center of the canon of Western art. This unit will also explore the role of nudity in artistic expressions. Students examine art from the Geometric, Archaic and Classical periods, as well as Roman art of the Republic and Imperial periods. (Classical Art)</p>	<p>5.8 Demonstrate the ability to compare two works of art . . . .  5.12 Understanding of societal influences and prejudices . . . .  6.3 Interpret the meanings of artistic works by explaining how the subject matter and/or form reflect the events, ideas, religions, and customs of people living at a particular time in history.  6.4 Describe how artistic production can shape and be influenced by the aesthetic preferences of a society.  6.8 Compare examples of works from several arts domains within a period or culture and explain the extent to which each reflects function, customs, religious beliefs . . . .  8.8 Identify stylistic features and explain how they relate to culture.</p>

<p>4] To look at the ways in which the two dominant religions of the Middle Ages represented their gods. We look at the ways in which different religions restrict visual expressions and why. Students examine Early Christian, Byzantine and Islamic design and art. (Faces of the Gods)</p>	<p>5.8 Demonstrate the ability to compare two works of art . . . .</p> <p>6.3 Interpret the meanings of artistic works by explaining how the subject matter and/or form reflect the events, ideas, religions, and customs of people living at a particular time in history.</p> <p>6.4 Describe how artistic production can shape and be influenced by the aesthetic preferences of a society.</p> <p>6.8 Compare examples of works from several art domains within a period or culture and explain the extent to which each reflects function, customs, religious beliefs . . . .</p> <p>8.8 Identify stylistic features and explain how they relate to culture.</p>
<p>5] To explore the ways Italian artists and their Northern counterparts broke away from medieval conventions and began to create new art and a vision of the new artist. Major artists examined include Leonardo Da Vinci, Michaelangelo, Raphael, Jan Van Eyck, Hugo van der Goes. (Renaissance Art)</p>	<p>6.3 Interpret the meanings of artistic works by explaining how the subject matter and/or form reflect the events, ideas, religions, and customs of people living at a particular time in history.</p> <p>6.4 Describe how artistic production can shape and be influenced by the aesthetic preferences of a society.</p> <p>6.5 Interpret the meaning of art based on biography . . . .</p> <p>8.8 Identify stylistic features and explain how they relate to culture.</p> <p>8.9 Identify examples of innovation in the arts . . . .</p>
<p>6] To explore the changes in art that took place in the 17th century and to examine emotion as a force in art. How do artists use emotion and drama to engage the viewer? What role does emotion play in the way we view art? Major artists studied include Carravaggio, Bernini, Rembrandt and Frans Hals. (Baroque Art)</p>	<p>6.3 Interpret the meanings of artistic works by explaining how the subject matter and/or form reflect the events, ideas, religions, and customs of people living at a particular time in history.</p> <p>6.4 Describe how artistic production can shape and be influenced by the aesthetic preferences of a society.</p> <p>6.5 Interpret the meaning of art based on biography . . . .</p> <p>8.8 Identify stylistic features and explain how they relate to culture.</p> <p>8.9 Identify examples of innovation in the arts . . . .</p>

<p>7] To explore numerous “isms” of the 20th century and how the modern vision allows for plural styles to coexist. Key questions include: What is the role of the modern artist? How is it different from other roles we have seen? Artists studied include Delacroix, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Matisse, Picasso, Salvador Dali, Jackson Pollock, Donald Judd, Ann Hamilton. (Avalanche of Isms)</p>	<p>6.5 Interpret the meaning of art based on biography . . . .  7.9 Identify artists involved with social and political movements . . . .  8.9 Identify examples of innovation in the arts . . . .</p>
---	--

**Assessment**

Each unit will require two small projects, which stress creative and higher-order thinking skills. One will always be a short, written response to an art historical problem. The other will vary but will always require creative thinking in response to a problem, either through art making or creative writing. Quizzes, peer critique and teacher feedback (written and verbal) are all used as assessment methods.

**Technology and Health Learning Objectives Addressed in This Course**

**(This section is for faculty and administrative reference; students and parents may disregard.)**

<b><u>Course activity: skills and/or topics taught</u></b>	<b><u>Standard(s) addressed through this activity</u></b>

**Materials and Resources**

Text

Discovering Art History, Gerald F. Brommer, Davis Publications, Worcester, MA, 1998

Additional Resources

Color slides; color transparencies, various web sites; videos (*Discovering the Pyramids, Leonardo da Vinci* and others).