

Art 23: Introduction to World Art
Spring 2025
Professor Lisa J. DeBoer

Adams 216
T TH 1:15-3:05pm

"In this framework...anthropological contextualization represents not a tedious elaboration of exotic customs that competes with 'true aesthetic experience,' but rather a means to expand the aesthetic experience beyond our own narrowly culture-bound line of vision."

--Sally Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*, p. 93

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Course Description:

A survey of the forms and cultural contexts of the arts of India, Asia, The Pacific Islands, Africa, and the Americas. Within a broadly comparative framework, this course investigates how architecture, sculpture and two-dimensional representations have functioned within a variety of cultural and historical contexts. (GE)

Learning Outcomes: Westmont's Institutional Learning Outcomes

All courses at Westmont, whether general education courses or major specific courses, contribute toward a range of learning goals adopted by the faculty and the Board of Trustees. These goals are: Christian Understanding, Practices and Affections; Global Awareness and Diversity; Critical Thinking; Quantitative Literacy; Competence in Written Communication; Competence in Oral Communication; and Information Literacy.

This course contributes to Westmont's Institutional Learning Outcomes primarily in two ways:

- **Critical Thinking** This survey class challenges us to recognize the ways in which "art" is defined and understood in ways very different from current western, modern definitions. We will also be challenged to understand the ways in which images create, maintain, and re-interpret cultural norms. By studying the arts of past cultures, and cultures other than our own, we will gain critical tools from a variety of disciplines (religious studies, anthropology, literature, philosophy) with which we can examine our own ideas about art, its meaning and function. **By the end of the semester, through thoughtful completion of reading responses and the cumulative synthetic essay you will demonstrate your ability to analyze and evaluate our current, every-day visual and artistic environment with respect to your own core commitments.**
- **Global Awareness and Diversity:** Art 23 ranges over the cultural artifacts produced by societies very different from our own. Developing a sympathetic approach to the interpretation of these objects and spaces will help us develop not only analytical skills, but also virtues and affections that will enable us to encounter difference in our own world with attentive sympathies and genuine engagement. **By the end of the semester, through thoughtful completion of the cumulative synthetic essay you will demonstrate your ability to analyze objects from different cultures with sympathy and insight.**

Learning Outcomes: Westmont's General Education Program

In addition to contributing toward Westmont's overall learning goals, courses that are part of Westmont's general education curriculum fulfill specific learning tasks within the GE's common contexts, common inquiries and common skills.

As a course that fulfills Westmont's common inquiry requirement for **Thinking Globally**, this class is designed to work on several levels. (Italicized phrases are from "The Purpose of General Education" found in Westmont's catalogue.)

- As a course that addresses the ideas about "art," and uses for "art" from six different world regions, Art 23 *introduces cultural, religious or economic traditions from a comparative global perspective. By the end of the semester, through thoughtful completion of quizzes and short answer questions on tests, you will have gained familiarity with key monuments and figures from the world of art beyond the West. Via thoughtful completion of compare and contrast essays and via the cumulative synthetic essay, you will have learned to make relevant comparisons between objects from different cultural settings.*
- As a course that asks us to self-consciously relativize our modern, Western idea of "art" Art 23 *recognizes competing basis from which to perceive and interpret issues. By the end of the semester, though thoughtful completion of the reading responses to Elkins and Price, you will recognize the vastly different conclusions drawn, regarding the same body of material, using an art-historical lens, and using an anthropological lens.*

Additionally, this course that fulfills Westmont's common skill requirement for "Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity on Biblical and Theological Grounds."

- As a class that regularly engages with the ethics of collection, interpretation and display, Art 23 will afford you the chance to articulate your views on what virtuous work in the museum world might entail in biblical and theological language. We want to do this as an expression of our commitment to live out the good news of the gospel. As disciples of Jesus, are called to love our neighbors and be agents of reconciliation no matter where we land in life—helping to identify and redress wrongs caused by sin, and pointing toward the Kingdom of God by joining in the healing, reconciling work accomplished by Christ on the cross, through the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God.
- **By the end of the semester, through thoughtful completion of the reading responses to Elkins and Price, and by completing the Museum Policy Project, you will see where your deepest convictions would have bearing on practices of collection, display, interpretation and repatriation.**

Learning Objectives: Art / Art History Majors and Minors

Finally, within the broad context of Westmont's learning goals and the purposes of our GE curriculum, this course is designed to contribute toward core learning outcomes in our art and art history program:

Core Practices: Students will demonstrate **independent, creative exploration** in **various media** and in the **history** and **theory** of the visual arts

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2. ... in the history of art

1. Students will effectively compare and contrast works from varied stylistic and historical periods. (Assessed by means of tests and the cumulative synthetic essay)

Core Sensibilities: Students will demonstrate a **critical appreciation** of the **roles** that artists and art have played (and continue to play) in our world, and will develop a discerning grasp of the **contours of our current art world**.

1. Students will evaluate the relationship between art and various social, political and cultural contexts (Assessed by means of tests and the cumulative synthetic essay)
2. Students will evaluate the ways in which the arts interact with various religious practices, particularly those of the Christian faith. (Assessed by means of tests and the cumulative synthetic essay)

For a chart matching assignments to learning outcomes, see the reverse of this page.

Art 23: Assignments and Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Tasks	Westmont Learning Outcomes		GE Learning Outcomes: Thinking Globally, JRD			Art Learning Outcomes		
	Critical thinking	Global Awareness	Comparative Global Perspective	Competing basis for Interpretation	Theologically grounded evaluation of Museum practices	Compare and contrast	Art in social context	Art and religious practice
Short Answer		X					X	X
Compare and Contrast	X	X	X			X	X	X
Price and Elkins	X	X		X	X		X	
Cumulative Synthetic Essay	X	X	X			X	X	X
Museum Policy Project	X	X			X		X	X

OVERARCHING THEMES AND ISSUES

Art and the Sacred (/Social)

The meaning of space (architecture in particular)
 Religious uses and meanings of objects/spaces
 Art, death and the afterlife
 Representation of gods, deities, exemplars
 Art for Intervention

Art and the Social (/Sacred)

Prehistoric roots of art
 Social/Political uses for art/architecture
 Patrons and markets for art
 Art for affiliation (social, cultural, religious, familial, national identities)
 Art for documentation (social, cultural, religious, familial, national)
 Ethics of collection, display, interpretation, repatriation

Thinking about "Art"

Varied aesthetic theories and notions of "taste"
 Varieties of artistic techniques
 The meaning of materials and media
 Western aesthetic theories vs. other aesthetic theories
 Identity, Indigenous production vs. hybrid production
 Art for contemplation

Historically Conceptualized Art

Indian, Chinese, Japanese

Geographically/Culturally Conceptualized Art

Oceanic, African, American

Evaluation

Evaluation will be based on attendance, evidence of thoughtful preparation as seen in written reading responses, participation in discussion, quizzes, tests, and an original, synthetic essay, tracing a theme or topic throughout the entire course.

Together, attendance and verbal participation will count toward 15% of your grade. Verbal participation assumes that you have read and thought about the readings assigned beyond the main survey text. Please come with observations, questions and comments to contribute to the class. Should I note that students are not preparing for class discussion on these texts, I may choose to introduce additional writing assignments or quizzes to insure that all are doing the reading.

I will also give image and vocabulary quizzes after each unit. Your quiz grades will count toward 15% of your final grade.

A mid-term and final exam will each constitute 20% of your grade. These tests may include vocabulary items and short answer questions, but will always include slide pairs which you must identify and discuss with respect to one another.

I will provide study guides for all tests. In addition to these tests, you will write synthetic essay of around 1500 words, which will engage materials drawn from the entire semester. This essay is due on **April 28 by 5:00pm** and will constitute 15% of your grade.

Summary:

Attendance and Participation	10%
Elkins and Price responses	15%
Unit quizzes	10%
Midterm Examination	20%
Final Examination	20%
Museum Policy Project	10%
Cumulative Synthetic Essay	15%

Note: I use a straight 4-point scale for tests, and at the end of the semester interpret all results in light of my knowledge of your learning in this class. A 4-point scale is more challenging to students who already bring many skills to this class, and more gracious to those who have more to learn.

Required Texts

James Elkins, *Stories of Art*, Routledge, 2002.

Michael Kampen O'Riley, *Art Beyond the West*, Second Edition, Prentice Hall, 2006.

Sally Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places* (2nd edition), University of Chicago, 2001

...and supplementary articles as assigned.

Additional Notes:

About Honor and Respect in the Classroom:

Westmont's Community Life Statement calls us to treat each other according to two commands from Jesus: "Love one another as I have loved you," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." Further, our Diversity Matters document indicates that as we abide by these commandments, we learn to honor and respect one another. In this class, we will embody these commitments as we interact with one another and with the class material. If you experience or witness something that does not honor these commitments, please talk with the instructor as soon as possible. You may also find it helpful to access the College's policy on Bias, Harassment, and Discrimination.

About Learning:

Though in students' minds, tests and grades are virtually the same thing, tests and quizzes perform many important learning tasks. Reviewing material and studying helps you retain what you are learning for future use beyond this class. Testing also provides a diagnostic tool to help you assess your own strengths and areas for growth as a learner. Tests and assignments in this class call for several different cognitive activities: slide ID's and vocabulary items test for recall of knowledge; short answer questions test for comprehension of material; compare and contrast essays require analysis and creative synthesis of what has been learned. Readings and responses ask for comprehension and application. The synthetic essay requires selection and evaluation as well as knowledge, comprehension and synthesis. The Museum Evaluation asks you to analyze a specific Museum's practices of collecting, display, interpretation and repatriation with respect to your deepest commitments. You will find this class most beneficial if you can see tests and assignments as part of your own learning process, rather than simply the way to earn a grade.

About Accommodations:

Westmont is committed to ensuring equal access to academic courses and college programs. In keeping with this commitment under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008, individuals with diagnoses that impact major life activities are protected from discrimination and may be entitled to reasonable accommodations. Students who choose to disclose a disability are encouraged to contact the Accessibility Resource Office (ARO) as early as possible in the semester to discuss potential accommodations for this course. Accommodations are designed to ensure equal access to programs for all students who have a disability that impacts their participation in college activities. Email aro@westmont.edu or see westmont.edu/accessibility-services for more information.

About Laptops ...

Regarding your own learning: Laptop computers can be a great help in taking notes for this class. However, **if you can not resist the temptation** to check your e-mail, surf the web, or work on other assignments during class, **do not take your laptop to class**. Our textbook is an important source for this class, but good lecture notes are indispensable. It is impossible to take good notes while being distracted by e-mail, the internet, or other work.

Regarding classroom community: Laptop computers used for purposes other than class are a distraction to the students around you. In a dim room, it is very difficult to ignore changing screens on the laptop next door. Discussion time is not "discretionary time" to check e-mail, and mentally leave the classroom. Such behavior has an immediate and negative effect on the quality of the discussion and is disrespectful to all in the class. *For all of these reasons, if any student uses their laptop for anything other than taking notes, that student will be asked to leave the classroom for the remainder of the period, and will forfeit any laptop privileges for the remainder of the semester.*

About Academic Integrity and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools:

Westmont's [academic integrity policy](#) prohibits us from "present[ing] another's work as our own." Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT attempt to do the work of writing and other creation for their users. Therefore, **students should NOT substitute AI-generated content or ideas for original academic work**. Westmont faculty members design assignments for students' incremental and active learning through methods such as reading, summarizing, discussion, and an authentic generative process in which a student does the work of critical thinking and message construction.

It is possible for original academic work (e.g., a student-authored essay) that has been grammar-checked or proofread by AI editing tools (including ChatGPT and Grammarly) to be flagged by AI detection tools on Turnitin.com, etc. Our [academic integrity policy](#) does not prohibit students from using AI editing tools unless the extent of usage meets the threshold for plagiarism. However, **a student should seek permission from an instructor PRIOR to an assignment submission if considering using an AI tool for editing or another assignment-related task**. Failing to do so may result in that student's work being flagged for disciplinary action.

Synthetic Essay Guidelines

Choose one of the four questions listed below. With this question in mind, review your semester's notes and readings, and thoughtfully compose an essay in which you discuss a selection of objects or monuments from among the cultures and eras we have studied, and compare them to one or two objects from mainstream American culture.

Your essay must be around 1500 words. Your essay will need a thesis statement, which you should demonstrate and argue. Strong papers will make use of our course readings for their analysis. Your essay will need to be properly edited and proof read. Simply list the book and page number for the images you are discussing.

1. The arts have often been a means by which powerful people have sought to represent and legitimize their positions. Discuss a selection of works from those we have studied in this course and one or two drawn from mainstream American culture, assessing the ways in which these works help us understand how power can be represented.
2. Throughout the history of art, people have represented the human body, male and female. What kinds of meanings and functions have gender and gender difference played in the cultures we have studied? Do you see any enduring themes, or a variety of different uses? Discuss a selection of works from those we have studied in this course and one or two drawn from mainstream American culture, and assess the ways in which these works help us understand how the representation of gender and gender difference have been used to create meaning.
3. Many of the images and objects we have studied have something to do with ideas about the relationship between life and death. How have images functioned with respect to ideas about death in the cultures we've studied and in mainstream American culture? What does this tell us about the power of images?
4. Consider the representations of animals we have examined throughout this course. How has the animal world has been used in art, and why? How are animal images used in one or two drawn from mainstream American culture? What kinds of meanings can images of animals convey, and in what ways do they convey these meanings?
5. You may compose a question of your own. You must, however, submit it to me for approval.

Synthetic Essay Evaluation Guidelines

Argument

- Is there a credible thesis?
- Are the images discussed the best ones to demonstrate this thesis?
- Do the images discussed adequately cover the range of the course?

Structure

- Is there an effective introduction?
- Is the thesis clearly presented?
- Is the argument ordered effectively?
- Are paragraphs coherent?

- Is there an effective conclusion?

Mechanics

- Are all sentences complete?
- Are grammar and punctuation correct?
- Have typos been eliminated?
- Are quotations handled correctly?

Format

- Is line spacing appropriate?
- Are margins appropriate?
- Is font size appropriate?
- Are there page numbers?

Museum Policy Project

You will be assigned a small group. Each group will be tasked with investigating a specific museum:

- American Museum of Natural History (Washington DC)
- The Field Museum (Chicago)
- Metropolitan Museum of Art (NYC)
- The Getty Villa (Los Angeles)
- Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

All these museums have been in the news in recent years due to controversies over the handling of objects from places other than the US, or controversies over the handling of objects and human remains from Native American cultures.

With your group, you will read up on each museum, consider the kinds of objects under scrutiny, track the issues under discussion and map the possible ethically responsible policies that have, or might, result. You will discuss amongst yourselves your response to each museum's choices and articulate what your position would be, and connecting that position to Christian convictions that would support it, and finally, discuss how one might translate those convictions to colleague who may not be Christian.

Your group will present your findings in class as part of a wrap-up discussion at the end of the semester.

Commented [d1]: This assignment asks students to consider and evaluate a range of current, American museum practices around the handling of non-Western objects. Many of these objects are religious. Some include human remains. There are deep issues here that impinge on the ethics of collecting, the complexities of display, the responsibilities involved in interpretation, and the need, on occasion, for repatriation. Historical museum practices have been rife with racism, exploitation, greed, and fraud. (I think Museums may be prime loci, actually, for all these sins!) Students will come to see how these sinful behaviors exist even in the refined reaches of so-called "high culture."

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Introduction	Readings	Quizzes/Tests/Assignments
Wk 1: Jan 07 Jan 09	Kampen-O'Riley 12-17 Introductory Discussion	
Wk 2: Jan 14 Jan 16	No Class (Alternate Schedule) Elkins, xi-xv, and 1-38 Price, 1-6	Your map of "World Art" What does "Primitive Art" mean to you?

Unit One:

India and Southeast Asia

Kampen-O'Riley 54-99

Wk 3: Jan 21 Jan 23	Elkins, 39-56: Old Stories No Class	
Wk 4: Jan 28 Jan 30	Elkins, 57-88: New Stories	Quiz on Introductory issues

Unit Two: China

Kampen-O'Riley 100-149

Wk 5: Feb. 04 Feb. 06	Elkins, 89-116: Non-European Stories	Quiz Indian/SE Asian Art
Wk 6: Feb. 11 Feb. 13	Elkins, 117-154: Perfect Stories	

Wk 7: Feb 18 *No Class*
 Feb 20 **MIDTERM EXAM**

Unit Three: Japan **Kampen-O'Riley 150-203**

Wk 8: Feb 25
 Mar 27 Price, 7-22: Connoisseurship

Wk 9: Mar 04
 Mar 06 Price, 23-36: Universality

Unit Four: The Pacific **Kampen O'Riley 204-233**

Wk 10: Mar 18
 Mar 20 Price, 37-55: The Night Side of Man

Wk 11: Mar 25 Quiz on Arts of the Pacific
 Mar 27 Price, 56-67: Anonymity & Timelessness

Unit Five: Africa **Kampen O'Riley 324-269**

Wk 12: Apr 01
 Apr 03 Price, 68-81: Power Plays

Wk 13: Apr 08 (Lost City of Zimbabwe) Quiz on Arts of Africa
 Apr 10 Price, 82-107: Objets d'Art & Ethnographic Artifacts

Unit Six: The Americas **Kampen O'Riley 270-337**

Wk 14: Apr 15
 Apr 17 Price, 108-123: From Signature to Pedigree

Wk 15: Apr 22 Quiz on Arts of the Americas
 Apr 24 Museum Policy Project / Wrapping up

Apr 28 Synthetic Essay Due by 5:00 pm

FINAL EXAM

TBD

TBD