# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction ........................................... 1
The need for revision .............................. 1
What we are teaching ............................ 1
Who we are teaching ............................. 1
Goals .................................................... 2

The Pedagogy of the Courses ............... 5
Active learning ..................................... 5
Sharing ideas ......................................... 5
Community-based learning ..................... 5
Digital technology ................................. 6
Luna Insight ......................................... 6
Questions for discussion ....................... 6

The Scope of the Courses ..................... 9
The coverage model .............................. 9
Two-course coverage ............................ 9
Three-course coverage ......................... 9
The case-study model ........................... 11
Parameters for designing a case-study course 11
Case-study options ............................... 12
More complex options ......................... 15

The Texts of the Courses ...................... 17

The function of the textbook .......... 17
Textbook as scaffolding ...................... 17
Textbook as reference ....................... 18
Textbook as image bank .................... 18
Some technological alternatives ...... 18
Custom publishing ............................. 19
Luna Insight ....................................... 19
Reviewable texts ............................... 20
Illustrated textbooks ......................... 20
Critical anthologies ......................... 20
Student guides .................................... 21
Stokstad vs. the competition ............ 21

Conclusions ......................................... 23

Appendix I:
Museum project assignment

Appendix II:
Museum project grading rubric

Appendix III:
Online poll numerical responses

Supplement I:
Some comparative sections of survey textbooks

Supplement II:
Online poll text responses
INTRODUCTION

What shape should the introductory courses take for St. Thomas’s art history curriculum? This is a question that the regular art history faculty is posed to answer. The following report is intended to fuel that discussion. It covers options for revision in pedagogy, scope, and textbook.

The need for revision

ARTH151 and 152 as they are currently taught vary from instructor to instructor, but generally they take the form of chronologically arranged survey courses taught via slide-based lectures and accompanied by a large, illustrated textbook. This format is the “old standby” in the discipline, and still dominates American undergraduate curricula. Despite this pervasiveness, this conception of an introductory course, invented generations ago, should be re-examined in terms of its suitability for the twenty-first century.

This re-examination is demanded by the facts that neither what we are teaching nor whom we are teaching remains as it was when the old survey course was first created. More explicitly, the classic introductory course was a grand narrative of the progress of European art, taught to a students familiarized with the history of European civilization during their secondary education.

WHAT WE ARE TEACHING

We no longer hold fast to such grand narratives, particularly as their Eurocentric biases and blind spots have been exposed. Of course, St. Thomas’s art history department has taught the introductory courses from an insistently global perspective for years. Essentially, though, this has meant that Non-Western art has been shoehorned into the course model that was built for Western art.

WHO WE ARE TEACHING

Another major change that has occurred since the inception of the classic survey course has been the difference in preparation that may be assumed of entering students. Undergraduates were a more homogeneous group in every way generations ago, including in their secondary-school education. The college art history class made sense to those students not only because it provided a grand narrative of European art as suggested above, but also because this narrative of European art could be overlaid onto the narrative of European history that most students would bring to college from their high school education. This no longer seems to hold true today; a common complaint is that undergraduates have a very poor sense of history.

It may be that in the end, we decide that a chronologically arranged survey course taught via slide-based lectures and accompanied by a large, illustrated textbook is an unsurpassable format for conveying the history of art even in our changed world. Such a turn of events will will be satisfactory only if it is consciously chosen, and not simply passively inherited.
Goals

The revision of a course should obviously be tuned to the goals that course seeks to achieve. To that end I conducted a survey of the regular department faculty members, having them rate on a scale of one to six (six = highest priority) the importance they place on particular goals. This same goal ranking was asked of participants in my web-hosted survey. (Full results of the online survey are included in Appendix III and Supplement II.)

The results of these surveys are summarized in the charts below. There are three types of goals – learning goals, skills goals, and department goals – each summarized in its own table. Within each table, goals are listed in order of their importance to UST Art History faculty. Ranking information from the broader survey is also included. That might reveal some ways our department is typical and some ways is it distinctive.

As we reflect on possible changes in pedagogy, scope, and textbook, the foremost criterion for change should be whether such a change serves the goals that we hold highest for the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Goal</th>
<th>UST Median</th>
<th>UST Mean</th>
<th>Web Median</th>
<th>Web Mean</th>
<th>Web Rank</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To make students understand art as a means of communication that embodies the beliefs and distinct qualities of a culture</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>To compel students to visit and explore an art museum or gallery</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>To insure exposure to historically marginalized cultures or groups and to the diversity of human culture</td>
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<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>To give students vocabulary and awareness of the methodologies for discussing the visual arts</td>
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<td>5.3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To demonstrate explicitly the place of cultural history in a liberal education</td>
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<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help students understand the processes and materials of artistic production</td>
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<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>To offer some semblance of “coverage” of global art since prehistory (as opposed to focused upper-level courses)</td>
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<td>4.7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
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<td>To give students a better picture of historical timelines</td>
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<td>5.0</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>To demonstrate the value of visual literacy in the community off-campus</td>
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<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>To demonstrate explicitly the role of cultural history in posing and solving problems in the world</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>To place students in the roles of real-world art historians</td>
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<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>To introduce a variety of periods[, cultures, or issues] that students might pursue in upper-level courses</td>
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<td>3.8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To connect art to cultural forms (literature, music, theater, philosophy, theology) encountered in other departments’ courses</td>
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<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<td>To encourage a deeper understanding of students’ own cultural identities and traditions</td>
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<td>3.7</td>
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<td>6.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>To improve students’ written expression of their ideas</td>
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<td>5.3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve students’ verbal expression of their ideas</td>
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<td>4.2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>To equip students for more sophisticated work in upper-level courses</td>
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<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To enable students’ critical judgment about art</td>
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<td>3.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>UST Mean</th>
<th>Web Median</th>
<th>Web Mean</th>
<th>Web Rank</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To attract or recruit majors and minors</td>
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<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>To appeal to students’ interests as a way of drawing general enrollment to the department</td>
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<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>1</td>
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THE PEDAGOGY OF THE COURSES

The “classic” introductory course, as described above, conveyed information through slide-based lectures and tested students on that information through slide-based examinations. This model is a poor fit for the commitment to active learning that St. Thomas has made and that our department supports.

Active learning

Lecturing has hardly been eliminated from the conducting of our introductory courses, but I sense that all of us have moved towards methods of conveying information and assessing performance that are more engaging than the old “Darkness at Noon” stereotype of Art History 101. My sense is that only major brakes on that movement stem from our feeling that there is too much to cover; thus what might most need revision is not the course’s pedagogy but its scope (as addressed later in this report).

What I would like to encourage here is further exchange of active-learning techniques and assignments; discussion of community-based learning options; and consideration of the pedagogical advantages that computer technology might offer.

SHARING IDEAS

We have already benefited from each other’s ideas about assignments in casual ways. My wheels turn hearing Cynthia describe her pottery-reconstruction assignment or Mark his mock art auctions that form part of their ARTH151 sections. I would suggest that our more intentional discussions about the introductory course this semester should occasion more sharing of the assignments and assessments we have developed on our own. This is a good time to share not only because we will all be focusing on revising the course, but also because we will have now have settled on some consensus about what our course goals are, by which these assignments might be assessed.

To kick off this sharing and discussion, I have appended the assignment and grading rubric for the museum project I have been assigning in ARTH152 since my arrival.

COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING

A particularly successful type of active learning is “community-based learning,” which consists of contracting with a partner in the extracurricular community on a mutually beneficial exchange. All of us are familiar with this (perhaps more so under the alternative label “service learning”), and in fact several of our faculty have built courses around such partnerships.

How well would this work with the introductory courses? A difficulty would be presented by the size of the course, both in the sense of the enrollment of each section and the number of sections: arranging the logistics for extramural projects on such a scale would be daunting. Perhaps this accounts for why none of the web survey respondents reported integrating a community-based learning
component into his/her introductory course(s).

An option we might consider (suggested to me by Cynthia) would be to specify one or two sections of the course as CBL sections. Again, our course goals should be foremost as we weigh this possibility in our discussions.

Digital technology

The last factor to be considered in discussing how our pedagogy is changing or should change is the role of digital technology. An unavoidable transition we face is the switch from 35mm slides to digital imagery. With the purchase of the Luna Insight system, we have a powerful tool for organizing and manipulating the digital images in our small but expanding database.

LUNA INSIGHT

(Along with Mark,) I have been a guinea pig for this transition this year. Allowing for some time to get accustomed to the software, I can report that organizing presentations of Insight images is faster and easier than organizing a slide presentation. Furthermore, LCD projection worked well. Not every image looked perfect (some were pixelated or fuzzy, whether due to a poor scan of an image, or to a scan of a poor image), but the number of unsatisfactory images was probably fewer than I would have encountered with slides. Memorably, a beautiful Caspar David Friedrich painting, projected across the whole wall, evoked an audible gasp from some students!

Essentially, then, I expect few drawbacks or difficulties as our expert Visual Resources Curator guides us into replacing slide technology with digital. The more intriguing question, though, is: what can we do with digital technology that we could not do without it, in terms of the pedagogy of our courses?

I will address later in this report a key ability that Insight facilitates, namely, the posting of digital images online for students to consult on their own time. For now, I would like to pose three technology-related questions for us to discuss.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

First, to what extent have we found the abilities of Blackboard useful in our introductory courses? Thus far, I have only used its rudimentary functions: posting syllabi and handouts, making announcements, and emailing students. Have more elaborate features like group assignment or discussion boards been helpful to any of us?

Second, digital cameras and cam-phones have probably reached the same saturation among UST students that word processors had when I was an undergraduate. Students are certainly adept at finding images on the internet, and increasingly able and equipped to manipulate digital images. Can digital media provide useful ways not only of presenting information to students, but also receiving work from them?

Third, looking ahead, digital video clips will likely be the next format that might find a place in our presentations of art. Certainly a “flyover” of a digitally reconstructed Acropolis, a clip of cloisonné
enamel in the making, footage of a Bwa dance, or an excerpt from an interview with Robert Rauschenberg would be welcome resources to be integrated into introductory classrooms. (Indeed, some already are, mostly in a videotape format.) Could this sort of resource be digitally preserved and catalogued alongside digital still images in the future?
THE SCOPE OF THE COURSES

The scope of the courses refers to the content that is taken up in the introductory curriculum. What should students learn about in an introductory art history course?

I have concluded that the first decision that needs to be made is whether the introductory courses strive for comprehensive “coverage” of art history, or whether a “case-study” approach (one which may include breadth but not coverage) makes more sense.

The coverage model

Our present courses’ commitment to coverage is the main cause of the concern, voiced by all faculty, that there is too much to cover in one semester as presently organized. Even so, the faculty voiced some interest in preserving that commitment: we rated the importance of “offering some semblance of ‘coverage’ of global art since prehistory (as opposed to focused upper-level courses)” rather highly (median 5.0/mean 4.7 on a scale of 1-6).

For this reason, it is worth considering the viability of keeping the “coverage” approach, whether via reorganizing our two courses or adding a third.

TWO-COURSE COVERAGE

It is conceivable that we could retain two coverage courses but redistribute the content between them to address this difficulty. Options would include redistributing by geography (e.g., one course on Western art, one on non-Western art) or by medium (e.g., one course on “fine arts,” one on architecture), but I conclude that the benefits of such redistribution would be small, and probably outweighed by disadvantages that would also arise.

THREE-COURSE COVERAGE

The other “coverage” option is to expand the introductory curriculum to three courses. I have discerned three viable options for the distribution of content among three courses.

Three-course coverage, option 1

This option redistributes the presently-taught material over three courses, divided chronologically. For example:

- Course 1: Global art to ca. 1000CE;
- Course 2: Global art ca. 1000-ca. 1700CE;
- Course 3: Global art since ca. 1700CE.

(The date breaks are up for debate.) This is the least radical of the revision options: it presumes a course very like the existing introductory surveys, only able to move at a more deliberate pace since there are fewer centuries to cover.

According to the questionnaire, course 1 could be taught happily by Cynthia, Mark, and Shelly. Course 2 could be taught happily by Shelly and willingly by Craig; Cynthia and Mark would also be able to teach it. Course 3 could be taught happily by Cynthia, Craig, Susan, and
Victoria; Shelly would also be able to teach it.

**Three-course coverage, option 2**

This option separates non-Western art from Western, and divides Western into chronological halves. Thus:

- Course 1: Western art until ca. 1400;
- Course 2: Western art since ca. 1400;
- Course 3: Non-Western art.

According to the questionnaire, course 1 could be taught happily by Shelly; Craig and Mark would also be able to teach it. Course 2 could be taught happily by Craig and Victoria and willingly by Susan; Shelly would also be able to teach it. Course 3 could be taught happily by Cynthia and Mark, and willingly by Shelly.

There is of course something very artificial (if not offensive!) about lumping together the art of the non-Western world as a kind of “leftover” course. The imbalance of attention here is a legacy of the historiographic shape of the discipline, but it is one that we may not want to reinforce in the design of our curriculum.

By further breaking the “Non-Western” course proposed above into regions, this “leftover” problem could be avoided – for example, we could have an African survey, an Asian survey, etc. Indeed, breaking the introductory survey into major geographic regions is an increasingly common practice at other institutions; but this is more easily done at institutions with larger enrollments and larger faculty.

(According to the questionnaire, if we were to have an array of four “continental” introductory courses, Shelly, Craig and Victoria showed the most interest in teaching Europe; Susan, the Americas; Cynthia, Africa; and only Mark indicated a tentative interest in Asia.)

**Three-course coverage, option 3**

This option separates architecture from painting and sculpture, and divides painting and sculpture into chronological halves. Thus:

- Course 1: Architecture (global and throughout history);
- Course 2: Global painting and sculpture until ca. 1400;
- Course 3: Global painting and sculpture since ca. 1400.

“Painting and sculpture” here is shorthand for two- and three-dimensional creative works that are not part of the built environment, which could certainly include prints, textiles, ceramics, etc.

According to the questionnaire, course 1 could be taught happily by Mark, Shelly, and Victoria. Course 2 could be taught happily by Shelly; Cynthia and Mark would also be able to teach it. Course 3 could be taught happily by Craig and willingly by Susan; Cynthia and Shelly would also be able to teach it.

A number of concerns arise with this option. For one thing, the limitless chronology and geography of Course 1 might make it even more unwieldy than the courses it would replace. For another, the integrity of some course content would
be compromised by this rather artificial redistribution: is it sensible to send Brunelleschi and Masaccio into different courses? Mondrian and Le Corbusier? Japanese teahouses and Japanese teaware?

The case-study model

What I have been calling a coverage course has as its goal a comprehensive introduction to art for its given chronological and geographical spans. Opposed to the coverage course is the course conceived as a series of case studies. In a case-study course, the learning goals dictate the selection of a series of content units. These units will receive more attention than they would in their places in a coverage course; at the same time, this selection and attention means that the goal of comprehensive coverage has been sacrificed.

The case-study model better fits the curricular revision encouraged by Bill Hood and Matt Rohn in their recent review of our undergraduate curriculum.

PARAMETERS FOR DESIGNING A CASE-STUDY COURSE

If any of these case-study options described below were to be adopted, the faculty should agree upon parameters to be implemented in guiding the design of the courses. This will help with consistency across sections, as well as aiding adjunct and new faculty in fitting their courses to departmental goals.

What follows is a list of parameters I have drafted, intended only as a starting point for departmental consideration.

1. Five case studies should be covered during the semester.
2. At least two units should include discussion of art of historically or historiographically marginalized cultures or groups.
3. At least two should include some architecture.
4. At least two should include some painting.
5. At least two should include some sculpture.
6. At least two should include some art outside these categories (e.g., photography, textiles, ceramics, city planning).
7. At least four different geographical areas should be included.
8. Within the scope of the course, samples from throughout the chronology should be included.
9. Each of the following basic issues should be discussed: the analysis of style; the significance of patronage; the relation of art to religion/ideology; the relation of art to society/economy; and the interaction of cultures.
10. Indeed, the idea of a “case study” is material brought in as evidence supporting a larger point or testing a larger hypothesis, so cases should be chosen based on learning goals, and not thought of as an abridged survey.
Again, this list is only a draft, and probably would be situated on the stricter end of the range of possibilities. We may decide, for example, that parameters 2-7 above ensure breadth but mandate an undesirable sacrifice of depth. We should review trade-offs like this and come up with some list of parameters to guide the course. In addition to making sections more consistent and enabling new faculty to join the project, such a list will also help with authoring a more accurate and explicit course description.

**CASE-STUDY OPTIONS**

I have discerned four options for converting the introductory courses into case-study courses. An overview:

- **Option 1**: One course with generalized description; content up to instructor (the “free option”);
- **Option 2**: Two courses with generalized description, but divided chronologically; content up to instructor within those bounds (the “free halves option”);
- **Option 3**: One course with standing sections, authored by various instructors (the “customized option”);
- **Option 4**: One course with standing thematic sections (the “thematic option”).

**Case-study, option 1**

The “free option” is the least prescriptive and most flexible case-study option. This is a single course, the catalogue description of which does not specify the content that will be examined (instead it might outline the principles that will be covered through that unspecified content). The individual instructor has the freedom to choose his or her case studies as he or she sees fit, subject to agreed-upon parameters as suggested above.

This option would allow faculty members fully to “play to their strengths.” Students might find the unspecific description unappealing or confusing, however.

**Case-study, option 2**

The “free halves option” offers two courses. Like in option 1, the content of these courses is not specified in their catalogue description, with the exception that the case studies from the first of the two courses will date from before 1400 and those from the second course will date from after 1400. In other words, this would be the present 151/152 sequence converted from coverage courses to case-study courses. Again, the instructor would freely determine the case studies, subject to this chronological limit and the general parameters.

The pros and cons of this option resemble those of option 1. Unlike option 1, though, this option would allow us to preserve the current requirement for majors to take both halves of the introductory sequence.

**Case-study, option 3**

The “customized option” presents one course with standing sections, authored by various instructors. Content of the various sections would then be customized to our varied interests and expertise, and available in the course description for potential students.
How adjunct or other occasional instructors of the introductory course would be worked into this option would be a problem to be worked out. We would also have to determine how important it would be to avoid overlap in content between sections – as, for example, if we wanted to allow students (or require majors) to take more than one section for credit.

**Case-study, option 4**

The “thematic option” presents one course with standing sections that are based on cross-cultural themes. The catalogue description would specify the distinct thematic focus for each of the sections of the course (though not necessarily the case studies).

Smith College offers sections like this within its “Approaches to Visual Representation” (which is offered alongside more traditional regional surveys). Smith’s course descriptions demonstrates what a thematic case-study approach might look like, and is thus worth quoting at length:

101 Approaches to Visual Representation

Emphasizing discussion and short written assignments, these colloquia have as their goal the development of art historical skills of description, analysis, and interpretation. Each section is limited to 20 students.

Sect 01: Advertising and Visual Culture

By analyzing advertisements – from ancient Pompeian shop signs and graffiti to contemporary multi-media appropriations – this course will seek to understand how images function in a wide array of different cultures. In developing a historical sense of visual literacy, we’ll also explore the shifting parameters of “high” art and “low” art, the significance of advertising in contemporary art, and the structuring principles of visual communication.

Sect 02: The Home as a Work of Art

Using examples of domestic design throughout the world and the ages, we will examine in detail various facets of the setting and the building, its spatial organization, materials, and accoutrements, and the way it serves and represents ideas about gender, the family as a social and productive unit, and moral and aesthetic values.

Sect 03: Realism: The Desire to Record the World

Throughout history, artists have sought to recreate the natural world; indeed “Realism” has been a driving force behind representation from the earliest human-made images to the invention of photography to computer-generated pictures. In some cases, this Realist intention has meant designing the built environment to human scale; in others it has meant trying to record seasonal changes and simple human activities; in others still Realism has been used to suggest the presence of the divine in everyday objects. Whether accurately or symbolically, through the blatant use of materials or through virtuoso trickery, artists have consistently tried to transfer scenes from the "real world" onto other surfaces or sites. This course will explore the artistic motivation of Realism formally, thematically, and contextually from ancient times to the present.

Sect 04: Writing Art/Art Writing
This class will introduce students to a wide range of art objects and ways of writing about them, considering both art and writing from various historical periods, and including different cultural and disciplinary perspectives. The class will consider writing – always together with the objects it seeks to understand – from within art history, as well as artists’ writing fiction, popular media, and texts from disciplines including anthropology, sociology and philosophy. Topics may include: indigenous critiques of anthropological writing about Australian aboriginal art, and the reception of aboriginal art within contemporary art; artists’ writings in relation to criticism of their works, and in relation to biographical and fictional accounts of their lives; the ways in which scholarship appropriates fragmentary ancient material; poetry that takes visual art as its starting point; visual art that is primarily textual. Students will learn to assess what is at stake in different ways of writing about art, in relation to the contexts in which both the art and the writing appear.

Sect 05: Scenes of Sacrifice

This class focuses on sacrifice and its ties to visual representation. Our primary concern: how and why sacrificial acts, images, and objects have been - and continue to be - invested with meaning in different contexts. Along with specific sacrificial scenes and rites, we will address issues and methods of analysis in the visual arts. Examples will be drawn from Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas, and from antiquity to the present.

Sect 02: Art and Death

Through an examination of key architectural, sculpted, and painted monuments from a variety of different cultures we will study funerary beliefs and rituals, asking how art has been mobilized across the ages to frame the disruptive experience of death.

Sect 03: Designing, Depicting, and Destroying Landscapes

Landscapes cover the globe. How have humans dealt with their landscapes through the ages and around the world? This course will examine how and why places have been conquered, designed, painted, printed, sculpted, filmed, woven, recycled, forgotten, or destroyed. Balancing the real and the representational, specific topics will include land art, memorials, public parks, historic preservation, gardens of paradise, Chinese scrolls, medieval tapestries, and Impressionism.

Ideas for such cross-cultural themes might also be found in Frames of Reference, a new introductory textbook for art history. It is the only thematically organized, historically focused textbook I have found. It is useful here as an example of how themes might be traced cross-culturally in a historically sensitive way. (Note that I am cribbing the ideas of the textbook’s organization – that is not to argue for its appropriateness as our textbook. Indeed it would probably be unsuitable, since it covers in a chapter what I am suggesting might be covered in a whole course.)

Here are the chapter titles, and some of the content examined in each:

1. The Earth as Art (Mounds and Henges in Britain, Japan, North America; Modern Earthworks)

2. Representations of the Gods (Antiquity; Christian Europe; Hindu India; Buddhism; Aztec Mexico)
3. The Art of Rulers (Middle East; Africa; Roman Imperial and Medieval Europe; SE Asia)

4. Pilgrimage (Greek shrines; Christian medieval pilgrimage; Islamic)

5. Patrons and the Role of the Artist (Benin; Chinese Painting; Italian Renais-sance; New Ireland; Akbar and Louis XIV)

6. Art and Collecting (Illuminated mss; Netherlandish collections; Grand Tour; American Nouveau Riche; Spoils of War; Japan and France)

7. Art and Revolution in Modern World (French Revolution; American Revolution; 19c France; Mexico; Russia; China)

8. Utopia and Dystopia (French Post-impressionism; Ea 20c Paris; German Expressionism; Italian Futurism; US; German Dystopias after WWI; German Utopias after WWI)

9. Art, the Spirit World, and the Inner Mind (Aboriginal; Yoruban; Native American; Freud and Expressionism; Dada; Surrealism; Degenerate art; Postwar abstraction; Pop)

10. Identity in Contemporary art (Ea. Feminism; 2d wave Feminism; Black identity; Postcolonial identity; Multicultural art in the US)

These are examples of cross-cultural themes; of course we would want to adapt and replace to fit our own interests and expertise.

For the record, a reservation about this “thematic” approach (which might bear upon all of the case-study approaches) was contributed to the online survey by a Cornell professor, who avoids the thematic approach which I find really unsatisfying and which seems to leave students very confused (I TA’d for this sort of course in grad school and most of the time I felt like I was more doing damage control than actually teaching) because most students, even those coming to a place like this, have a very nebulous knowledge of basic history (at best).

**More complex options**

All of the options outlined above assume that the introductory function is assigned to one basic type of course. There is yet another option: to offer a combination of types of courses, any of which would be considered a suitable introductory course. For example, a student could choose between a thematically organized course, a chronological survey, and an issues-and-methods survey. I would imagine the logistical complexity of such an offering, especially given our department’s modest size, would outweigh its benefits; but it is worth considering.

Multiple types of introductory courses could also come into play if UST adopts a university-wide curricular revision such as first-year seminars or writing across the curriculum. Hopefully our discussions about our introductory courses will equip us well to adapt to any such changes in the university.
THE TEXTS OF THE COURSES

Of course, our needs for a textbook or textbooks will depend strongly on our decisions about the scope of the introductory course(s).

Before getting to our options for choosing a textbook, it is worth reflecting on the function of the textbook.

The function of the textbook

In my experience teaching survey, the main textbook serves three principal functions.

TEXTBOOK AS SCAFFOLDING

The first textbook function is to provide a structural or narrative framework that gives shape to the course material as a whole.

I have already mentioned the just skepticism that “grand narratives” provoke nowadays. That said, making sense of art history may require some kind of scaffolding.

In Stories of Art, James Elkins criticizes the modern survey textbook (and Stokstad’s in particular) as a “kaleidoscopic history ... [that] relies more on juxtaposition than synthesis.” (77) Stokstad has some opinions,

but those opinions are gentle and mainly hidden, and the avalanche of names and facts ensures that the book as a whole has no message or storyline. In the absence of critical judgments, art is bathed in an eerie half-light of uniform praise. In the absence of a meaningful sequence of periods, art is strangely scattered, as if all of art history were an archaeological site strewn with random fragments. In the absence of an author who is partisan to a particular period or style, the reader begins to wonder if anything is better or more interesting than anything else. The situation is historically anomalous: before the twentieth century there were no histories of art that avoided making judgments or promoting specific historical periods. Now it seems only fair.

The history of survey texts suggests that a profound difficulty may be concealed behind the façade of multicultural equality: the textbooks may owe their structure, their meaning, and even their existence to previous generations of books that they repudiate. Books like Janson’s History of Art, Gardner’s Art Through the Ages, and Stokstad’s Art History would be unthinkable without the openly biased books that preceded them, which they implicitly reject. The lineaments of the older histories are present on every page...

A neutral, encyclopedic art history loses its impetus, the forward push that it had when it was recounted by people with a stake in art’s development. Ideally, books like Stokstad’s may help educate a generation of viewers to appreciate art more widely, freed of the prejudices that color other accounts. But their bloodless descriptions might also promote a pallid enthusiasm where there is no compelling reason to prefer one object over another. Instead of struggling with conflicting claims about history, students are being
coached to look with equal interest on every conceivable object. (77-79)

Elkins’s point is a provocative one, and while his implied longing for the good old days of Gombrich’s Eurocentric triumphalism may seem reactionary at first read, I think he sums up our current quandary well.

I do not think, in heeding Elkins’s critique, that we need to adopt a less even-handed textbook; but I do think we need to consider what, if not the textbook, gives structure to our introductory courses.

TEXTBOOK AS REFERENCE

The second textbook function is to provide information about art that reinforces, supplements, or extends information delivered in class.

While the development of the standard textbook has made it function less well as scaffolding, it has improved as a reference, as it has gained the “encyclopedic” character to which Elkins refers. Indeed, with the narrative text ceding space to more common “information boxes,” illustration captions, timelines, glossaries, and the like, the structure of the survey textbook increasingly resembles an encyclopedia more than a history. (Art Past Art Present has probably gone the farthest in this direction, forgoing chapters for “entries” that average two pages, assembled chronologically.)

This atomizing development seems to have made the textbook more user-friendly. Quite a few survey respondents cited sidebars and the like as their favorite things about the survey textbook they used.

TEXTBOOK AS IMAGE BANK

The third textbook function is to provide images to which students have access outside of class.

In my own teaching experience, this function may be foremost. The monuments upon which I focus (those that are the answer to the perennial question, “What do we need to know for the test?”) are selected from those that appear in the textbook, precisely because they are there and thus easily available for review. On the other hand, the structure into which those monuments are placed and the important information about them (in other words, the first and second functions just described) are things I convey in class. This was brought home to me by a recent student evaluation that said students “don’t really need to do the reading to succeed” if they go to the class meetings.

If this third function has indeed become predominant in our introductory courses, we should realize that a textbook is actually an expensive, inflexible, and inefficient format for an image bank, compared to something like online image posting, discussed below.

Some technological alternatives

It would seem that choosing a textbook would be a matter of reviewing the books offered by publishers and selecting the ones that came closest to fulfilling our needs. Several technological advances, however, have complicated that picture. It may be that the functions that a textbook serves presently might better be served by a book we would design rather
than simply select, or by a system that is not a book at all.

CUSTOM PUBLISHING

One textbook option that might interest us is custom publishing. With this service, we can select content from books and/or journals and have the custom publisher assemble a book or course pack from these parts. The publisher will handle clearing rights. Pearson Custom Publishing is the firm that I have contacted about these possibilities; there may be others. This opens several possibilities.

Custom readers

With custom publishing, we could collectively create a “St. Thomas Art History Reader.” By assembling readings that we use semester after semester into one volume, we could create a text that is both customized to our needs and somewhat resalable for students.

We could also customize readers for individual instructors, though this would likely be more expensive and less convenient for students. Pearson can make custom course packs in quantities as small as twenty-five.

Rebinding

Custom publishers can also offer textbook “rebinding,” which is exactly what it sounds like. Unwanted sections of a textbook, for example, might be simply taken out and the book rebound.

A case where this would very likely be economical and useful would be if we elected to move to a three-semester survey. The existing two-volume split of Stokstad (or the other major survey texts) would complicate this move, but with a custom rebinding we could assemble the last chapters of vol. I and the first chapters of vol. II into a new textbook for the middle course in the sequence.

LUNA INSIGHT

The University’s purchase of the Luna Insight software, combined with our Visual Resources Curator’s ongoing project to expand our digital database, offer a major new tool for delivering information to students both in and out of the classroom.

I began using Insight for organizing my introductory course lectures last semester. Essentially I used the digital images only as a replacement for slides; and for this, it worked quite well (and will continue to improve as the database grows and users gain experience), as I have already reported. What I have not done, but what the software can do easily, is to set up groups of images accessible to students online.

Giving students access to course-related images online appears to be quite useful. Indeed, of the web survey respondents that reported offering students such access, a strong majority named that “the most useful, convenient, or pedagogically helpful” of all the technologies used to enhance the introductory course(s).

What this means is that, with Insight, we have in place a far better way of providing an image bank for introductory students than a textbook. That third function of a textbook discussed above can easily and effectively be transferred to the Luna system.
Utilizing Luna Insight as the primary means of distributing images for review has one other potential consequence: by offloading this function to Luna, any custom publishing we elect to order might be more affordable because the quality of image reproduction can be sacrificed.

**Reviewable texts**

What I have just suggested is that custom publishing and Insight might be combined to make selection of an existing textbook obsolete. Nevertheless, there are a good number of existing textbook options that we might find satisfactory.

The following lists detail the books I have obtained for consideration for our introductory courses.

**ILLUSTRATED TEXTBOOKS**

**Geographically/chronologically arranged**


**Thematically arranged**


**CRITICAL ANTHOLOGIES**


- Calo, Carole Gold, ed. *Viewpoints: Readings in Art History*. 2nd ed. Up-
Reference works


**Stokstad vs. the competition**

Should we choose to keep employing a chronologically arranged survey textbook, now would be a good time to weigh the alternatives, particularly because we have not yet adopted the newest edition of Stokstad’s *Art History*.

The first question is how that newest edition compares to the one we are all currently using. From my perusal, the changes seem to be minor. The choice of exemplary monuments has been improved here and there, but largely the book remains the same. The common complaints about the book’s unsatisfactory coverage of architecture and of non-Western art still hold.

As stated above, copies of the newest editions of the competing surveys are among the books I have collected for our perusal. As a beginning focal point for this consideration, Supplement I includes photocopies of some comparable sections of Stokstad and other survey books.
CONCLUSIONS

I hope that this report furnishes a solid launching pad for the department’s discussions of the introductory curriculum. As stated at the beginning, my goal in this report was to lay out options rather than to select them. Thus I would like to conclude with a suggestion for the procedure we might follow from here. I have already intimated it in the structure of this report.

I think our departmental discussions should first review our goals for the introductory course. Then I would have us

1. discuss pedagogical methods (including pooling of successful assignments);
2. discuss the scope options for the course; and
3. discuss the textbook options.

For each of these discussions, any possibilities must be measured against two things: the goals we have agreed on for the course; and the following list of practical consequences:

- What will the effect of this decision be on enrollment?
- on major and minor requirements?
- on core curriculum requirements?

These practical matters cannot be neglected, but I fervently believe that it is our course goals, and not these logistical entailments, that should be steering our decisions first and foremost. Here I am in agreement with the advice included in our recent program review.

Once those three discussions are complete, attention should turn to the transition strategy: What revisions can go into effect when? By whom and when can necessary catalogue revisions happen? What approvals need be sought? Can students get credit for both the old and revised courses?

I look forward to these discussions, and to improving what is already a terrific program at St. Thomas.