

GPH-205 background – To help you put things into perspective



Welcome to class! GPH-205 Historical Foundations of Visual Technology is a course in the DePaul University Liberal Studies Program “Understanding the Past, Intercontinental” domain. In other words, it’s a “history” course. As a course of this type—which some people commonly refer to as a “general education” (“gen ed”) course, it has the typical characteristics of this category of undergraduate course. It helps for your success in this course to understand what these characteristics are:

- 1. The course is a “survey” of subject matter: in other words, an introduction.** In the case of this course this means an introduction to a representative portion of the entire expanse of art created by human beings from prehistoric times to AD 1900 and the manner in which it was created, why it was created, the “rules” followed to accomplish its purpose, the technologies used to create it, and any modern impact of it.
 - 2. As an introduction, the subject matter we touch upon is broad, but we do not get particularly deep into it.** You simply can’t get deep in one term when the range covered is so vast.
 - 3. By nature, this kind of course is “fact heavy.”** We cover 27 eras/civilizations and you are guided to learn and identify some of the highlights of each—the most important defining “art” characteristics and events, or examples of things that typify the subject matter and culture of each. This is one reason I designed the written homework to encourage concise identification of art purpose, formation rules, technology, and impact. It’s why I use a mentoring pedagogy to teach this course; this mean I have arranged things so I can help you “get facts right” in this concise form by encouraging form submission, providing feedback, and accepting revised work for re-grading.
 - 4. To meet Liberal Studies course requirements for at least 10 pages of writing.** The reflective essay you develop during the term (which I will help you with if you ask for my help; see pages 50 to 54 of the course workbook) and the “conclusions work” take-home final meet this requirement. The written homework provides facts that you need to weave into this, it takes the form of a diary that you, as a person imagining you live through the eras, write in the first person (“I”).
 - 5. Liberal Studies course requirements include having students demonstrate the ability to think critically.** In this course we meet this requirement with the take-home final, which, as with the other work in the class, can be revised and resubmitted for re-grading. In other words, it’s not just a “learning assessment,” it’s as much of a learning experience as you wish to make it (by submitting, revising to “perfect” it, and re-submitting it). I post three statements two weeks before the end of the term and I provide forms and a simplified citation format for you to do these things:
 - a. Determine if each statement I post is true or false.** The statements are not related.
 - b. Develop an argument supporting your determination citing facts only from your essay.** I use this instead of the traditional format of “research paper” where you form a “thesis statement” and argue your point. Here, I form the thesis statements. Why this approach? Because it gives you three opportunities to demonstrate critical thinking and it’s a better “fit” for this nature of course than a research paper (a research paper is better suited to a more advanced type of course that’s focused on a narrower segment of a discipline and consequently goes “deeper” in its subject matter, in which students are already immersed).
- Make sure you understand this:** each written homework (“Unit Summary Form”) identifies facts you need to weave into your reflective essay “story.” The essay becomes an “oral history” in which the facts make it possible for you to determine if my “conclusions statements” are true or false and to argue logically why your determination for each is correct. The coursework is integrated in this way for your productivity! And all of the work is documented for you in one place for the same reason. It’s all in the free course workbook you download, as one .pdf; it’s a real book. © Jim