Critical Thinking in the Arts

Critical Thinking in the Arts will foster critical thinking skills in relationship to performing and visual arts. Students will learn how to listen to music and view art analytically, applying knowledge about common elements such as form, texture, balance, and contrast to enhance understanding both of arts process and product. Course readings and assignments will support development of critical thinking skills and consideration of the arts in cultural and historical context. Examination of existing arts-based learning programs and curricula will provide students with practical examples for using concepts in educational settings to promote learning across the curriculum.

Objectives: Students will be able to do the following:

- Define and identify (visually and aurally) fundamental elements of art and musical works.
- Identify pieces of art and musical selections that demonstrate specific fundamental elements.
- Compare and contrast specific works of art and music in terms of common elements.
- Explain rationales for arts education in K-12 curriculum.
- Develop awareness of methods and materials used in school arts education.

Required materials
Other materials available online or through college/university library databases.

Assignments (see schedule for due dates, detailed assignment guides for major assignments and final project)

- Homework (30%)
  Reflective or analytical essays based on observations, listening, or readings. Includes identification/analysis of specified elements in art and music, comparison and contrast of particular works, summary of main points of readings, identification/explanation of theses, presentation of opinion with supporting evidence, synthesis of ideas from multiple readings.
- In-class assignments (20%)
  Includes quiz over elements of art/music (with aural/visual examples), brief class presentations sharing art/music analysis and other homework content, individual and group reflections on class material and discussions.
- Major assignments (choose three, see schedule for due dates – 30%)
  - Visit museum or attend concert from pre-approved list (descriptive/analytical essay)
  - Interview artist or musician addressing specified questions/issues (analytical essay)
  - Examine arts-based school curricula/programs using specific criteria (analytical essay)
  - Compare/contrast art or music of two cultures on specific elements (analytical essay)
  - Find/read a journal article about a current issue in arts education and lead a class
discussion (written analysis/plan, presentation/summary)

- Final project: Essay and Presentation (individual or with one partner – 20%)
  Persuasive essay about value of arts education (15%) and multi-media presentation (5%)

**Expectations**

Students are expected to attend each class and participate in all activities. (For official excused absences, follow policies in college/university catalog.) Late assignments are not accepted for credit (except in cases of emergency) because material is often used for group work during the class session it is due. Unless specified otherwise, all assignments should be word processed using APA format and Times New Roman 12 point font.

**General rubric for written assignments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A (90-100)</th>
<th>B (80-89)</th>
<th>C (70-79)</th>
<th>D (60-69)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceeds assignment requirements, shows thorough knowledge of material and context. Makes insightful connections and demonstrates creative and perceptive thinking about course readings and arts examples. Communicates clearly and logically using appropriate academic language and arts vocabulary with no substantial mechanical errors. Provides sophisticated transitions to guide reader through clear progression of ideas. Supports ideas with relevant and specific evidence from appropriate sources for assignment.</td>
<td>Meets assignment requirements, shows basic knowledge of material with few mechanical errors, but may not always communicate clearly or demonstrate insight. Central idea and logical progression of ideas is present, but presentation is weakened by insufficient support, informal/vague language, lack of transitions or misuse of arts vocabulary.</td>
<td>Falls short of assignment requirements. Writes vague or general statements that reflect partial understanding of material. Writing may include distracting mechanical errors. Ideas are arranged randomly rather than presented through a logical structure. Transitions are limited and relevance of source support is not always clear or relevant. Word choice is repetitive, and arts terms may be used inappropriately or ineffectively.</td>
<td>Fails to show understanding of material. Organization is illogical or confusing. Repetitive words or phrases, informal language, or mechanical errors may make writing difficult to understand. Arts vocabulary is not used or is used incorrectly. Central idea is missing and presentation lacks coherence, transitions, and supporting evidence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Course Schedule (subject to change based on class needs)**

Week 1: Introduction to Critical Thinking in Arts
Topics/activities:
- Inventory of student experiences, thoughts, feelings about art/music
- Introduction/overview of critical thinking, analytical observation and listening
- Reactions to specific pieces of art and music

Readings:
Week 2: Elements of Art
   Due: Music/Art journal entry essay
   Topics/activities: Fundamentals of art: color, line, texture, shape, form
   Readings:
      http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/elements.html
      National Gallery of Art (2011). NGA Classroom: The Elements of Art
      http://www.nga.gov/education/classroom/elements/

Week 3: Elements of Music
   Due: Share a piece of art that demonstrates a specific element, explain how element is used for artistic expression
   Topics/activities:
      Fundamentals of music: melody, rhythm, harmony, texture, timbre, form
      Listening for understanding
   Readings:
      Brandt, Anthony “How Music Makes Sense.” In Sound reasoning: A new way to listen. http://cnx.org/content/m12953/latest/ (Also PDF download)
      http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0073526568/student_view0/part1/
      W.W. Norton & Company StudySpace: “Music materials.”
      http://www.wwnorton.com/college/music/enj10.short/content/materials/momindex.htm

Week 4: Art/music connections 1: Color/Timbre
   Due: Share an excerpt of music that demonstrates a specific element, explain how element is used for artistic expression
   Topics/activities:
      Quiz art/music elements
      Connections between music and art: color/timbre
      Creations of musical representation of art and visual representations of sound
      Reflections on decision making in group creative process
      Historical context for arts integration in schools
   Readings:


Week 5: Art/music connections 2: Line/Melody
Due: Major Assignment #1

Topics/activities:
- Fostering critical thinking in arts activities
- Connections between art and music: Line and melody
- Assessing listening maps for aiding musical understanding/active listening

Readings:

Week 6: Art/music connections 3: Texture
Due: Reading response essay

Topics/activities:
- Value of arts in education
- Texture in art and music

Readings:

Week 7: Corresponding Art/music elements 4: Form
Due: Final project proposal
Topics/activities: Artistic and musical expression through form
Readings:

- Schmidt-Jones, Catherine (2011). Connexions. Form in music. [http://cnx.org/content/m10842/latest/](http://cnx.org/content/m10842/latest/)

Week 8: Design Principles Art/Music 1: Balance, Variety, Contrast/Compositional Devices
Due: Major Assignment #2
Topics/activities:
Composer representations of visual art
- Sunday in the Park with George (Suerat and Sondheim)
- Pictures at an Exhibition (Hartmann and Mussorgsky)

Readings:

Week 9: Design Principles Art/Music 2: Impressionism and Orchestration
Due: Reading response essay
Topics/activities: Impressionism in art and music
Readings:
- Schmidt-Jones, Catherine (2011). Connexions. Scoring music: Writing for specific instruments. [http://cnx.org/content/m12746/latest/](http://cnx.org/content/m12746/latest/)

Week 10: Design Principles Art/Music 3: Movement and Rhythm
Due: Final project outline/draft  
Topics/activities: Rhythm and movement in art and music, interdisciplinary arts education  
Readings:  
http://www.artsconnected.org/toolkit/explore.cfm  

Week 11: Arts in Education  
Due: Major Assignment #3  
Topics/activities: National/state arts standards, arts advocacy and critics  
Readings:  
http://www.ade.state.az.us/standards/arts/revised/  
National K-12 Arts Standards  
http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/standards.aspx

Week 12: Arts-based curricula/programs  
Due: Reading response essay  
Topics/activities:  
Role of arts in 21st Century Skills  
Examples of arts-based curricula/programs, online arts education resources  
Readings:  
21st Century Skills Arts Map (2010)  
http://www.arteducators.org/research/21st-century-skills-arts-map  
Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (Boston). Thinking through art.  
http://www.gardnermuseum.org/education/research  
Visual Thinking Strategies http://www.vtishome.org/
Week 13: Historical Context: American music/art
Due: Reflective essay
Topics/activities:
    Composer/artist expressions in American history and culture
    Interdisciplinary example: Harlem Renaissance
Readings:
    National Gallery of Art: *The art of Romare Beardon* [http://www.nga.gov/education/classroom/bearden/musub1.shtm](http://www.nga.gov/education/classroom/bearden/musub1.shtm)

Week 14: Cultural Context: World music/art
Due: Final Project Essay
Topics/activities:
    Music/art functions within cultures
    Multicultural arts education
Readings:

Week 15: Arts in Community/Final Project presentations
Topics/Activities:
    Importance of the arts in a community
    Final presentations, peer assessment, reflection
Readings: