Activating History of Art Teaching: Bringing Connect, Capstone, and other Student Research Experiences into the Curriculum

Art History is for Everyone

1. Pedagogical or instructional change:

Offer to students a learning community within the major to develop and activate discipline-specific research skills

2. Project motivation:

Fill a gap in existing learning experiences on offer (large lecture course, small seminar, individualized honors thesis)--particularly so for transfer students.

3. If successful, observable change:

Graduating students possess skills to perceive progress and assess their own learning outcomes in the Major. For thesis writers and non-thesis writers: sense of a professional community.

4. Approach to DEI:

Redesign is oriented toward a maximum diversity of student background and preparation

Cohort building for transfer students in particular addresses retention and improves experience for students of color.

Histart 198: Connect in History of Art

Ran in Fall '21, 1-unit course designed for incoming transfer students intending to major in History of Art

Lead:
Prof. Anneka Lenssen
GSR:
Angela Pastorelli-Sosa

Our flyer!

1-unit course:

Connect in History of Art

Announcing a new pilot program, *Connect in History of Art*! This is a low-stakes, one-unit course we have designed for incoming transfer students and newly declared Majors in the History of Art department. We welcome any/all Majors (or intending Majors) with junior status. Students enrolled in the course will:

- **Build community with other new History of Art students**
- **Visit campus museums and discuss exhibitions together**
- **Learn about campus resources for conducting research in art history – archives, library collections, museum collections, our department's V-Lab, and more**
- **Discuss current directions, opportunities, and challenges in the field of Art History**
- **Access mentors in the form of History of Art graduate students and faculty**
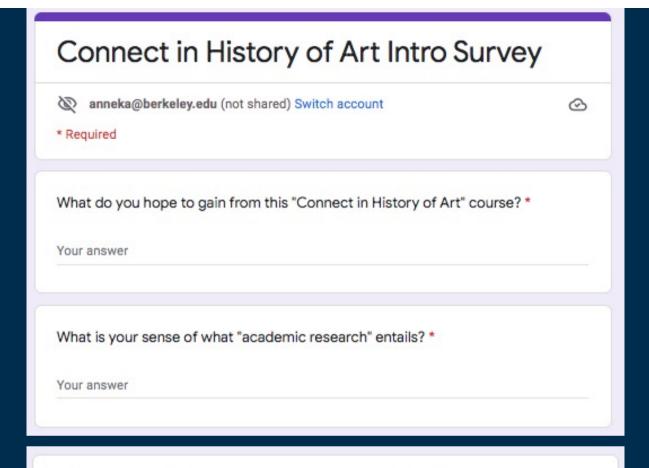
Activities include:

- **Small-group discussions about important ideas, texts, events**
- **Excursions to visit resources on campus and beyond**
- **Special events, panels, and opportunities to meet faculty, students, and alums at various stages**

No papers or outside reading required—the emphasis is on face-to-face interaction with others who share an interest in art history as a critical practice. By participating in "Connect in History of Art" for one semester, you receive one unit of credit.

We will meet in Doe Library every other week on **Wednesdays, 3:30-5:30 pm**

Class session 1

Survey:

Connect in History of Art Intro Survey

anneka@berkeley.edu (not shared) Switch account

* Required

What do you hope to gain from this "Connect in History of Art" course? *

Your answer

What is your sense of what "academic research" entails? *

Your answer

What would you do first to embark on a research project? *

Your answer

Do you feel knowledgable about the various career paths you can pursue as a History of Art major? If not, how can the department and this Connect course better prepare you for exploring career paths in art history? *

Your answer

_What would you do first to embark on a research project?

A:

First you must identify a problem or gap in knowledge in your field.

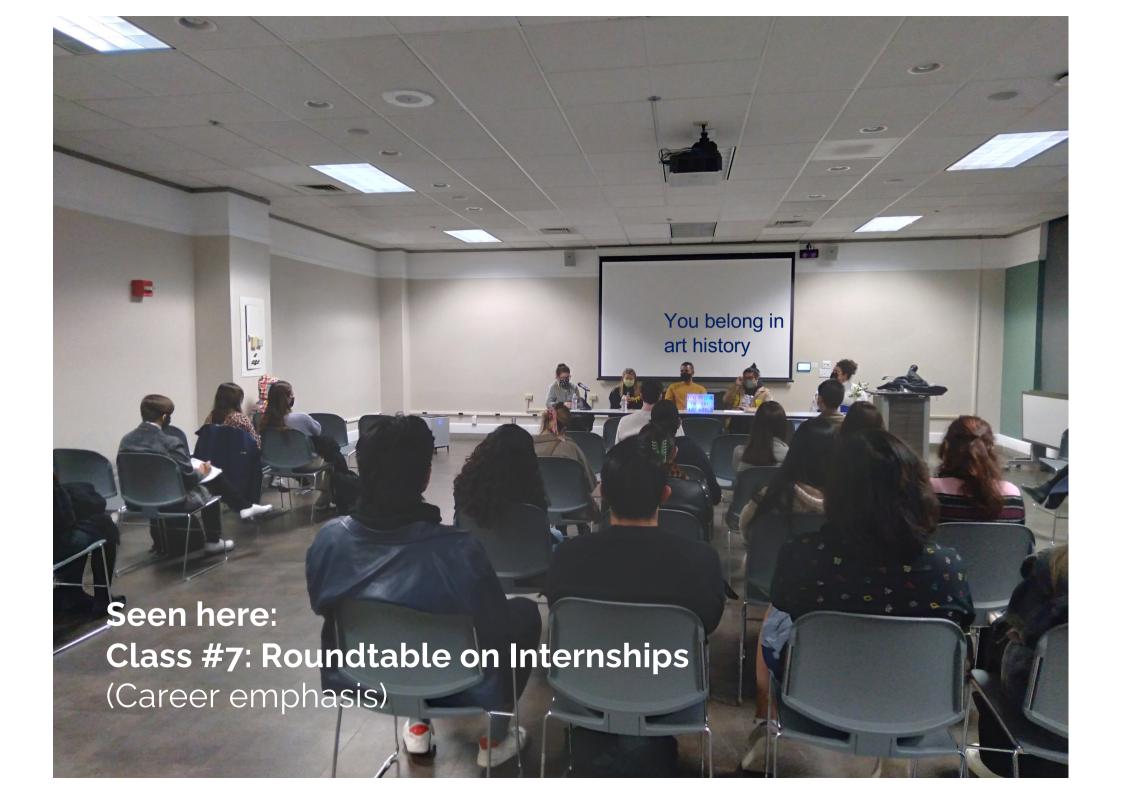Clarify and breakdown the questions I want to answer

First I would research a couple of different subjects; I would ensure that the topic I chose has adequate and reputable sources. Then I would form a thesis about said subject and find ample information that I could use to support my thesis.

Find a piece art or object or genre of art that I am into, go visit different museums and galleries if possible!

Explore library catalogues and find articles that explore my exact subject and areas around it -- see what's already written about my topic, and ways to complicate the narrative.

The first thing I would do on a research project is gather the information that is readily available on the project. That way I will be able to know what to search for. With that information, I will be able to connect pieces of information that I did not have beforehand to draw a bigger picture.

I need a question or have something in mind that drives (really drives) me to learn more. I usually do some searching online and then turn to scholarly work.

You belong in
art history

Seen here:
Class #7: Roundtable on Internships
(Career emphasis)

Histart 193: Capstone Experience –Guided Research & Exhibition Project

Currently running it, Spring '21. 4-unit course designed for majors and minors interested in gaining experience pursuing original research based on archives, artifacts, and structures on Berkeley's campus

Lead: Prof. Jun Hu

Collection Title: Guide to the Chinese in California Virtual Collection

Collection Number: Various; consult contributing institutions

Get Items:
- 👁 Online items available   [Request items ↗]
- 🚚 Contact UC Berkeley::Bancroft Library

Online Items

[Chinese immigrants coming to San Franc

[Advertisement for shipping freight by Central Pacific Railroad directed towards Chinese]

Class session in Bancroft with Theresa Salazar (Curator, Western Americana)

Student A (Senior, graduating in Fall 2022; Transfer)

"One museum visit is not a research experience; being able to return and continue to return to a group of objects multiple times, each time with new questions and new things to see specifically, affords me a true experience of what research is like."

Student B (Senior, graduating in Summer 2022; Transfer):

"Transferring to Berkeley in my junior year and hearing that it's a research school, I didn't, however, know what research is. Now actually getting the opportunity to go into the archive, to have the stuff, and request the stuff…I finally know what it's like to be an art historian. In other classes, we study painting, sculpture, etc., but we don't actually work on the thing itself. I am now trying to learn more about art conservation as a career; I am also considering becoming an archivist. I finally figured out what I want to do with my life."

Student B (Senior, graduating in Summer 2022; Transfer):

(cont.)

"This is the humanist's equivalent of being on a team and working in a lab. Art history can be very isolating, as we tend to work on our own. Students need reminding that they work in an environment where they can work with one another."
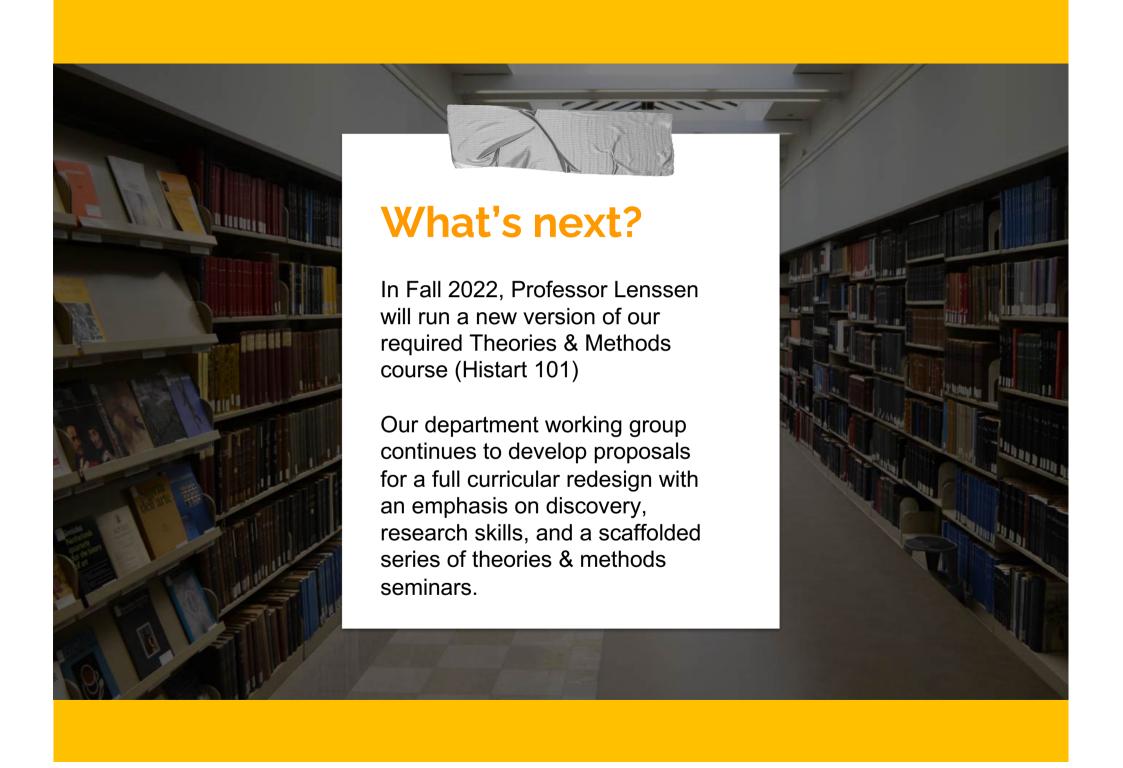
Challenges revealed

SHORT TERM

* Accessing collections in Bancroft during COVID-19 protocols (limited number of research appointments; no existing priority for students or coursework)

INTERMEDIATE TERM

* Budgeting for the life of our public projects

LONGER TERM

* Faculty teaching load. Given the expected teaching loads (8 units a semester), who can teach a 1-unit course of 2-unit course and how should it be counted?

* Potential impact on GSIs

What's next?

In Fall 2022, Professor Lenssen will run a new version of our required Theories & Methods course (Histart 101)

Our department working group continues to develop proposals for a full curricular redesign with an emphasis on discovery, research skills, and a scaffolded series of theories & methods seminars.

Q: How will we evaluate success?

A1: Refine our problem

Are we seeking to increase our number of majors? A: Not necessarily, but we do want to increase our enrollments

Are we seeking to better train our majors? A: YES, we must. Our curriculum should include opportunities for students to acquire discipline specific skills in reading, research, and analysis.

A2: Plan for multi-year assessment

Create an exit survey for majors upon graduation, posing similar questions to our "intake" survey for the Connect course. How would they define and pursue a research question? Where to start?