INTEGRATING ART IN HUMANITIES COLLEGE COURSES

INTRODUCTION

Art not only has the power to transport us through aesthetic experience but also can provide significant insight into many of the most pressing cultural, political, and social questions we ask students to grapple with. Far from being relevant only for art history courses, art is widely applicable to a variety of humanities discussions. In language departments, art can illuminate connections between culture, history, and texts; for classics and history students, it can illustrate the legacy of the ancient, medieval, and early modern worlds upon modernity. The museum provides an ideal venue for anthropological observations or cultural and cross-cultural discussions, and the works on view can inspire creative projects in film studies and theater departments. This guide offers tangible strategies for integrating art into university humanities courses in rigorous and creative ways.

Arts integration, according to the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, is “an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form. Students engage in a creative process which connects an art form and another subject area and meets evolving objectives in both.” Research has shown that arts education helps students develop “skills such as close observation, envisioning, exploration, persistence, expression, collaboration, and reflection,” and that “people trained in the arts play a significant role in the [product] innovation process” in many of the world’s biggest economies.

Arts-integrated teaching methods help students learn course subject matter in more effective, novel ways, with far-reaching effects that extend well beyond the university. Arts-integrated education can help bridge connections between humanities classrooms and the wider world, illustrating the applicability of humanities thinking approaches in a variety of contexts and teaching students crucial life skills like creative problem-solving, critical thinking, and curiosity.

This guide uses the Hammer Museum’s Armand Hammer Collection (located at the Hammer Museum in Westwood Village) and the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden (on UCLA’s campus) to illustrate arts-integrated teaching strategies. It includes:

• Overviews of the Armand Hammer Collection and Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden.
• Guidance on why, how, and when to use art in humanities courses, and how arts integration can help solve common challenges in college classes.
• Sample assignments that can be tailored to an array of disciplinary and course needs.
• Thematic threads and guiding questions for teaching with works from the Armand Hammer Collection and Murphy Sculpture Garden.
• Additional teaching resources, both at the university and more broadly.

**ABOUT HAMMER COLLECTIONS**

The Hammer Museum manages five collection areas: Armand Hammer Collection, Armand Hammer Daumier Contemporaries Collection, Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden, Grunwald Center Collection, and Hammer Contemporary Collection. This guide focuses on works in the Armand Hammer Collection and Murphy Sculpture Garden because they are almost always on view.

**The Armand Hammer Collection**

The Armand Hammer Collection contains impressive examples of nineteenth-century French art, with significant works by figures such as Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, Paul Gauguin, Edouard Manet, Claude Monet, Gustave Moreau, Camille Pissarro, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. The major themes and movements of the period are on display, including the pastoral realism of the Barbizon school landscape painters; the imaginary, atmospheric Middle East scenes depicted by the Orientalists; and the featherly brushwork and focus on transient moments characteristic of impressionism. The styles explored by the generation of postimpressionists—some symbolist, some naturalist—are represented.

Portraiture and landscapes figure prominently, and several artists are represented by more than one work. Moreau’s resplendent King David and evocative Salomé Dancing before Herod are two of his most renowned paintings, while Vincent van Gogh is represented by three important works, including the remarkable Hospital at Saint-Rémy. The Hammer’s European old master paintings include two major works by Rembrandt van Rijn, Portrait of a Man Holding a Black Hat and Juno, as well as paintings by Titian, Peter Paul Rubens, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, and Francisco de Goya. Among the American artists represented are George Bellows, Mary Cassatt, Thomas Eakins, and Gilbert Stuart. John Singer Sargent’s dazzling, large-scale Dr. Pozzi at Home is one of the most prominent works in the collection.

**The Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden**

Located in North Campus at UCLA, the Murphy Sculpture Garden is one of the most distinguished outdoor sculpture installations in the country. The Sculpture Garden spans more than five acres of UCLA’s campus with over 70 sculptures by artists such as Hans Arp, Jean Arp, Deborah Butterfield, Alexander Calder, Jacques Lipchitz, and Auguste Rodin. Notable works include the cubist welded-steel Cubi XX by David Smith; a kinetic sculpture by George Rickey; biomorphic works by Joan Miró, Henry Moore, and Barbara Hepworth; and variations on the art historical theme of the nude, from the idealistic forms of Gerhard Marcks to the abstract reliefs of Henri Matisse.

Committed to the idea that works of art are most thoroughly enjoyed as part of everyday life, Franklin D. Murphy, UCLA’s third chancellor, dedicated the sculpture garden in 1967. Murphy worked with architect Ralph D. Cornell to create an environment that fosters the learning process. The garden features flora of Southern California amidst the pleasant informality of a modern campus, rolling across three distinctive areas: a formal plaza paved in brick, a walkway formed by a triple row of South African coral trees, and an informal sloping lawn cut with curving textured pathways. Modernist buildings by architects such as A. Quincy Jones (Charles E. Young Research Library) provide a fitting boundary for the space, balancing the organic curves of the garden’s landscape with clean geometric lines. Informal seating areas that surround sculptures and open lawns punctuated by art were designed to invite passersby to pause, reflect, and enjoy the interplay of art and nature.
ARTS-INTEGRATED PEDAGOGY: WHY

When incorporated into humanities courses, art can achieve the following:

Teach crucial analytical skills: When students analyze and interpret a work of art, they practice vital critical thinking skills that are transferable to any discipline: making observations, formulating inferences, and providing visual evidence to support their inferences.

Deepen understanding of interdisciplinary artists, thinkers, and scholars: Throughout history, writers, musicians, philosophers, scientists, and other important thinkers have engaged with and created visual art. Medieval illustrated manuscripts, early modern botanical drawings, Felix Mendelssohn’s watercolors, Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s painting and poetry pairs, and contemporary multilingual graphic novels are just a few of the many crossovers. To effectively analyze such texts, students need basic art historical vocabulary and visual “close looking” skills.

Strengthen visual literacy: From social media to movies to advertising, young adults engage with the world through images to an unprecedented degree. The ability to infer a work’s purpose, analyze form, and consider context is important in art interpretation, central to visual literacy, and essential to thinking deeply and critically about any topic.

Illuminate historical context: Integrating art can help students learn how to include context in critical analysis. On a macro level, illuminating artistic developments within a wider cultural milieu provides a fuller picture of the society being studied. More narrowly, many artistic circles comprised people making art in a variety of different media. For example, Gaston Lachaise, whose *Standing Woman* is on view in the sculpture garden, was friends with many canonical twentieth-century authors, including E.E. Cummings, John Dos Passos, and Gilbert Seldes. Examining texts and objects made during the same time period has the potential to shed light on personal and intellectual connections, bringing new understandings of both objects of study.

Make esoteric or older work more relevant: Students often struggle with the amount of context necessary to understand older material. Objects of study like a Roman bronze sculpture, a sixteenth-century Dutch mercator projection, or *Beowulf* can seem historically, formally, or linguistically alienating. Connecting these works to modern and contemporary works of art can provide students with a more relatable intellectual entry point. Moreover, discussing transhistorical themes reinforces the critical thinking required for students to make thematic connections within their own analyses.

Aid inclusivity: An arts-integrated approach is well-suited for courses with a high percentage of non-majors and English language learners. Visual art can connect students of all majors to salient themes without being hindered by language barriers or by a lack of understanding of disciplinary norms or discipline-specific vocabulary. For example, in order to successfully analyze a sonnet, students need to understand its technical structure and related vocabulary in addition to the themes explored. However, if the learning objective is focused on thematic content rather than form, students could discuss art that explores similar themes (see *Thematic Threads and Guiding Questions* section) as an entry point and grapple with vocabulary and form later.

Many artworks provoke strong reactions (both positive and negative). Use students’ responses to art to catalyze a larger discussion, and then connect it to your main object of study. For example, one could use Gaston Lachaise’s *Standing Woman* to introduce a discussion about gender, power, and the observer’s gaze in a film, literary text, anthropological study, or historical document.

Gaston Lachaise, *Standing Woman (Heroic Woman)*, 1932. Bronze. H: 88½ in. (225 cm); W: 41 in. (104.1 cm); D: 15 in. (38.1 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur C. Caplan, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Winston, and Mr. and Mrs. Walter McC. Maitland.
ARTS-INTEGRATED PEDAGOGY: WHEN

Visual art can be particularly helpful in humanities classrooms when integrated at the following times:

**When you want a benchmark:** A short discussion of an artwork can help you gauge students’ analytical skills at the beginning of the quarter. Then use it as a verbal assessment tool at the end of the quarter to see if observational and analytical skills have improved.

**When you are introducing a topic or historical context:** Visual art can help students enter quickly into a topic, building a thematic shortcut to your main topic of discussion or introduction to a historical period. This is a great strategy for the first day of class when you’re introducing a new unit. You can foster a dynamic, thematically-engaged conversation in a short amount of time.

**When you want to foster empathy:** The impact of historical events on individual lives may not always be apparent from textbooks. Works of art that depict people immediately effected by war, famine, revolution, or any other large-scale event will bolster personal connections to events of the past.

**When you have a quiet class or there is a course lull:** Holding a class in the Sculpture Garden or the Hammer’s galleries can enliven discussions with provocative works of art and a change of scenery. Additionally students can bond with one another and strengthen interpersonal connections in a new setting.

**When the topic is intellectually challenging or politically charged:** Using art as an entry point can help students engage fully with a theme or topic without the added complexity of considering the formal, discipline-specific aspects of the course.

**When you want students to understand another perspective on a topic:** To better comprehend a cultural norm or the implications of a political decision or character motivation, art that offers alternate viewpoints could further a more well-rounded understanding.

**When you want a creative assignment:** Using visual art as the basis for creative assignments can provide structure and complementary contexts (see Assignment Suggestion).

**When your students (or you!) haven’t read:** Your entire class can discuss one work of art in its entirety without prior preparation. This is a great tool for the day after assignments are due or during finals week. Try comparing a work of art with a short textual passage from the course’s readings that explores similar themes.

Pierre-Auguste Renoir’s *Grape Pickers at Lunch* depicts a sanguine, romanticized scene of workers at rest. This painting can be used when introducing topics related to labor and class or as a focus of a creative assignment that invites students to compare the painting to other representations of labor across Europe during the expansion of industrial society.
THEMATIC THREADS AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

The following thematic threads can be traced across works of art in the Armand Hammer Collection and the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden. See Appendix A and B for lists of specific works related to each theme.

**Historical Allusions:** Referencing the prehistoric, ancient, and classical worlds; mythology; Biblical narratives; and political allegories
- How do these works use elements of the past to represent contemporary societies?
- How (if at all) do these works challenge the binary between ancient and modern?
- Recently, scholars have explored “deep history,” or the history of the universe before humans existed. How do works in this category explore the nonhuman history of the world? Given that art is by definition created by humans, can it ever truly represent nonhuman history?

**Mental States and Psychological Interiority:** Exploring subjectivity, psychological interiority, selfhood, and mental illness with varying degrees of abstraction
- How do these artworks represent emotions or the human mind? In what ways does that work to produce character?
- Art, particularly in the Sculpture Garden, may depict humans who seem at once archetypal and individualistic. Why might this tension exist?
- Is there a difference between male and female representations of interiority in these works? If so, what formal techniques do the artists use to make those distinctions?

**Space and Scale:** Focusing on formal investigations of space, perspective, and scale as a primary component of the work itself
- What is the relationship between figures and architecture within one work of art or between a work of art and its physical environment (e.g., display, museum space, outdoor installation)?
- How does the work’s spatial explorations affect your interpretation of the overall representation?
- How does scale create meaning?
- Many of the works in the Murphy Sculpture Garden interact with one another and the environment. What aspects of each sculpture are emphasized by the surrounding space?

**Language and Meaning:** Investigating the idea of meaning itself: the process and difficulty of obtaining meaning in the world via visual and verbal signifiers, symbology, and the fundamental opacity of language and other meaning systems
- What kinds of sign systems do these artworks explore, and do they represent them as equally trustworthy or useful?
- Ultimately, do these works suggest that stable meaning is attainable through texts or images?
- What techniques do artists use to represent language without actual text, and what other aspects of language besides the characters might they be trying to depict?
- Several of these works focus on the idea of difficulty, opacity, political struggle, and violence. What is the relationship between violence and meaning?

---

**Class:** Depicting class tension or representative members of a particular socioeconomic class
- What markers of class occur in the art? Are these markers superficial (like clothing) or bodily?
- Which figures does the artwork invite viewers to identify with? Which seem less accessible?
- What is the relationship between gender and class in these works, and why might that be?
- What kinds of class depictions are not represented in these works? What is missing?

**Labor:** Depicting labor or occupations, including artistic process as labor; or relating to industrialization through subject matter or material
- What kinds of labor are represented in the work? What is portrayed and what is left out?
- How was the work made? If the artist did not physically make the work, how can we define artistic labor?
- Many of the works in the sculpture garden investigate gender. Is labor represented differently for men versus women in these works?

**Leisure:** Depicting figures, both human and nonhuman, engaging in leisure activities such as travel, resting at home, or participating in holiday celebrations
- Are there differences in representations of leisure for different social classes? If so, what formal strategies do these artists employ to create that divide?
- Compare and contrast representations of female reclining bodies to male reclining bodies.
- Explore the question of leisure as it relates to animals. What do these depictions of animals at rest suggest about the position and treatments of animals in their societies?

**Bodies and Gender:** Examining gendered power, agency, and bodies. Sculptures in this category primarily represent the female body, often archetypically, with varying degrees of abstraction
- Which works represent female power, and how (formally and thematically) is it portrayed?
- Many works in the Sculpture Garden explore the theme of dance or other bodily movements like walking or posing. How are each of these movements gendered, and how do they relate to the larger theme of gendered power?
- Compare various representations of motherhood. In what ways do they present similar perspectives, and in what ways do they differ?
- Artists may explore abstract, hybridized, or mythical representations of bodies. Should these be considered human bodies? Why or why not? What does it mean to be human?
Modernity: Exploring the concept of modernity from a variety of vantage points including the rise of commerce and industrialization, urbanization, nationalism, psychological isolation, individualism, and modern conflict
• What aspects of modernity are presented by the works?
• Which aspects of modernity do these works critique or represent positively?
• What is the relationship between gender and modernity in these works?
• Several works reference classical architecture (like Trajan’s Column) and literature (such as The Iliad) to represent modernity. Why might these artists use aspects of the ancient world to represent the modern one?

Orientalism: Considering artists’ appropriations of Middle Eastern and Asian symbolism or cultural elements
• What aspects of Orientalism are depicted in works in this category?
• What aspects of colonialism do these artists represent in their works, and what kinds of bodies, scenes, and objects are not portrayed?
• Several of these works depict Western (or at least Christian) settings. Should these works still be considered Orientalist? Why or why not?

Nature: Depicting nature, countryside scenes, and animals with varying degrees of abstraction; examining conflicts, instances of hybridization, and symbiosis between humans and the environment
• Consider works that explore hybridity between various aspects of nature or between humans, animals, and nature. In the context of these works, what does it mean to be “natural”?
• Identify works that engage with atmosphere (sky and air). Do the works change over time? If so, can elements of nature be considered part of the artworks themselves?
• How do sculptural representations of nature engage with the garden’s natural environment? Consider scale, color, form, and texture.
• Some of the sculptures in the garden blend into the landscape, while others blatantly stand out. Why do you think the sculptures were installed this way?

War and Remembrance: Primarily relevant to works in the Sculpture Garden, this category includes art that focuses on conflict and remembrance. Many sculptures explicitly act as war memorials; others critique art historical depictions of war, or explore the relationship between industrialization and violence more broadly. Sculptures created to memorialize specific people, such as Franklin Murphy and Ralph Bunche, are also included here
• How are female bodies used to memorialize violence in these works, and what is the significance of that artistic choice?
• Several of the sculptures that were studies for war memorials make allusions to classical mythology. Why might the artists have chosen to use the classical epic to memorialize twentieth-century wars, and what is the effect of that choice?
• Are there significant differences between works that memorialize different wars? If so, what can we discern about changing views on violence and conflict from these shifts?
• What is the relationship between memory and memorialization in these works? What is memorialized, and what is remembered?

Salomé Dancing before Herod by Gustave Moreau depicts the biblical story of the Judaean princess Salome dancing before her stepfather, King Herod, and her mother, Herodias. This multi-layered and enigmatic painting could connect to the following themes: historical allusions, mental states and psychological interiority, space and scale, language and meaning, class, labor, leisure, bodies and gender, and Orientalism.
ASSIGNMENT SUGGESTIONS

This section provides guidance for creating arts-integrated assignments in a variety of humanities disciplines. The assignment suggestions were created with the Murphy Sculpture Garden and Armand Hammer Collection in mind. Educators should tailor the assignment guidelines to fit their course’s disciplinary norms and specific learning objectives.

Visual Analysis and Evidence-Based Reasoning: Close analyses of works of art offer students the opportunity to make close observations of a text, formulate inferences, and provide visual evidence to support their inferences. These key skills are crucial for enhancing critical thinking in any discipline. Select any work of art and invite students to respond to the prompts: “What is happening in this work?” and “What do you see that makes you say that?” Then use similar prompts to analyze a text in your discipline of study.

One Theme, Two Forms. Direct students to examine a transhistorical theme (see theme examples on p. 6–7) in a work of art and a text from the syllabus. Students can compare and contrast the two based on visual evidence and “close looking” analysis. They can use outside research to historically contextualize the similarities and differences. The assignments should address the form and thematic context of both objects of inquiry, paying particular attention to how form shapes meaning in each.

Disciplines: Anthropology; Art; Art History; Classics; Clusters; Comparative literature; English; Film, Television, and Digital Media; French & Francophone Studies; Gender Studies; History; Italian; Philosophy; Theater; World Arts and Cultures/Dance

Object Histories. Have students select a work of art as a thematic nexus to explain a larger history of ideas from the course. Students should position their chosen work as a microcosmic exemplification of a particular historical moment, culture (as defined by larger course discussion), or intellectual tradition, providing specific examples from 1-2 objects of course study to supplement their argument.

Disciplines: Art; Art History; Anthropology; Classics; Clusters; Comparative literature; English; French & Francophone Studies; Gender Studies; History; Italian; Philosophy; Sociology; Theater; VAPAE (Minor); World Arts and Cultures/Dance

Personal Connections. Direct students to research the historical or intellectual relationship between an artist featured in the Hammer’s collections and a figure from the course discipline (e.g., an artist, author, musician, thinker, scientist). Students should select one object created by their chosen figure and present it in the context of the artwork (or vice versa). Rather than simply delineating how the works informed one another or the historical connection between the two objects, students should formally and thematically analyze both objects to help the audience understand them in a new way.

Disciplines: Art; Art History; Comparative literature; English; French & Francophone Studies; Gender Studies; History; Italian; Musicology; Philosophy; Sociology; Theater; World Arts and Cultures/Dance

Artistic Inspiration: From John Keats to John Cage and beyond, creators in a variety of disciplines have drawn profound and sustained inspiration from art. Direct students to respond creatively and intellectually to a work of art through one of the forms discussed in your course (e.g., poetry, fiction, film, or theater scene). Additionally, students could write a response contextualizing their creative project within the history of other artists who have drawn inspiration from similar sources; researching the artwork and tangibly including the findings in their creative project; or considering the form, content, and subject of the sculpture.

Disciplines: Art; Art History; Classics; Clusters; Comparative literature; English; Design / Media Arts; Film, Television, and Digital Media; French & Francophone Studies; Gender Studies; Italian; Musicology; Theater; VAPAE (Minor); World Arts and Cultures/Dance

Camille Pissarro’s painting Boulevard Montmartre, Mardi Gras captures the liveliness of the Parisian carnival along the Boulevard Montmartre. This depiction of the boulevard, widened as a result of the new urban plan conceived of by Baron van Haussmann, offers an opportunity to discuss the “Haussmannization” era of French history and urban development broadly.
Adaptations: Instruct students to write a proposal for an adaptation of an artwork. This should include sustained critical analysis explaining their proposed artistic choices in terms of larger course themes (e.g., medium, scale, colors, etc.). They should also explain how those choices would deliberately develop aspects of a theme the original piece explores (or fails to explore). The project should be graded based on critical analysis, connection to transhistorical themes, and intentionality.

Disciplines: Art; Art History; Classics; Clusters; Comparative literature; English; Design / Media Arts; Film, Television, and Digital Media; French & Francophone Studies; Gender Studies; Italian; Musicology; Theater; VAPAE (Minor); World Arts and Cultures/Dance

Space and Function. Taking spatial and cultural inspiration from European piazzas, the Murphy Sculpture Garden is a hybrid space, negotiating the public and private, recess and thoroughfare, work and play. Direct students to think critically about the space of the Sculpture Garden in relation to a concept or object of study from your course’s discipline. The activity could direct students to sit in the garden for an hour, observe how people interact with—and in—the space, and write a short response paper. They may choose to research the design using the sculpture garden catalogue or even the landscape architectural drawings housed in Young Research Library.

Disciplines: Anthropology; Architecture and Urban Design; Art History; Clusters; Film, Television, and Digital Media; Gender Studies; History; Philosophy

Scene Performance. Direct students to stage a theater scene (either from a course text or one written by them) or create a short film that incorporates the artwork or environment of the garden in some way (without touching the sculptures). They may choose to use the sculptures as frames, thoughtfully incorporate the landscape, or respond to the space in another way. Their post-performance write-up should clearly detail how their staging incorporated the space of the garden, and how this engagement sought to illuminate or develop aspects of the scene that otherwise would have been less apparent.

Disciplines: Classics; Clusters; Comparative literature; English; Film, Television, and Digital Media; French & Francophone Studies; Gender Studies; Italian; Theater; VAPAE (Minor); World Arts and Cultures/Dance

Monologues: Direct students to choose a sculpture or figure from a painting that relates to a course theme or text from the syllabus. Students can imagine the figure as a character and write an original theatrical monologue, adapt or creating a short film that highlights the artwork (without touching it). Their accompanying reflective essays should clearly detail how their choice of artwork either responded to the original text or engaged with specific course themes.

Disciplines: Classics; Clusters; Comparative literature; English; Film, Television, and Digital Media; French & Francophone Studies; Gender Studies; Italian; Theater; VAPAE (Minor); World Arts and Cultures/Dance

Emile Bourdelle’s Noble Burdens portrays a woman striding forward while holding a heavy basket in one hand and a child in another. The narrative depicted lends itself well to writing monologues or scenes, comparing the work to other representations of motherhood or labor, or adapting the work for a re-envisioned “noble burden” for contemporary times.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Hammer Museum Collection Resources


General Art History Resources


Arts Integration Resources


Credit: This guide was created by Jessica Cook with contributions by Theresa Sotto.