

## Critical Thinking Sample Prompts

[Click here for the Critical Thinking rubric](#)

### Critical Thinking Dimensions:

Problem Setting	Evidence Acquisition	Evidence Evaluation	Reasoning/Conclusion
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**General observations about Critical Thinking dimensions:** Because Critical Thinking was the only Essential Skill rated during this assessment cycle, there's a wide variety of courses and general education areas of study represented in this sample collection due to the simple fact that there were more artifacts and assignment prompts to evaluate and select from when assembling this collection.

**Example 1:** The student artifacts submitted according to this assignment description were consistently highly rated in both dimensions by raters.

Gen Ed Area of Study	Course Name	Dimensions Selected	
Mathematics and Statistics	Mathematics in the World	Evidence Acquisition	Evidence Evaluation

*Assignment Description:* Students have several check ins as they work on this project, this is the initial assignment.

#### Data Collection

There is a page on our website with info on how to collect data via the internet.  
<https://sites.google.com/view/uhtonstatistics/collecting-data-via-the-internet>

You can either do a survey or compare some other sort of data that you observe.

These surveys need not be long, you can have just one independent variable and one dependent, or you can have more if you like. Some examples of previous student work are:

- Is there a relationship between gender and number of shoes owned (uh, yes....)?
- Is there a relationship between GPA and number of friends on social media?
- Is there a relationship between being in Honors or not in Honors and hours of sleep per night.
- Does touching/not touching a customer impact the amount of tip received?
- Does birth order impact which Hogwarts house you are sorted into in an online sorting hat app?
- Does the proportion of green M&Ms vary by the size of the package of M&Ms purchased?
- Does the number of people late to class depend on the outside temperature?

These do not need to be world changing questions, we are just practicing data collection and interpretation. Ideally you want at least 30 data points.

**Example 2:** The student artifacts for this assignment prompt were all rated “proficient” for both selected dimensions.

Gen Ed Area of Study	Course Name	Dimensions Selected	
Communication	Logic, Reasoning, and Critical Thinking	Evidence Evaluation	Reasoning/Conclusion

*Assignment Description:* For the final, please submit a 4-5 page philosophical paper. For this assignment you may submit a paper on a new topic on any of the readings we have had during the course, or you may revise, expand, and develop a previous paper. If you choose to revise a previous paper, it should involve a significant expansion and development over what you submitted previously, not merely proofreading and editing. If you have having difficulty picking a topic or formulating a thesis, please let me know and we can work on it. I cannot accept papers after the due date, so make sure that you get them in before 11:59pm on Tuesday, December 8. Midnight is a firm cut-off. You may, however, submit them as early as you would like. For the final paper, I will provide comments only if you would like them. Please send me an email and I will respond with comments on the final paper after grades are submitted.

Please (1) upload a word document on the assignment page AND (2) copy and paste the text of your paper into the text box on the assignment page. The paper should be typed, double-spaced, 12 point Times or Times New Roman font, with 1-1.25" left and right margins. Remember to give your paper a title. For references, put the author's last name and the page number in parentheses after the sentence in which the reference is made. Do not use a cover page. Include a works cited page only if you are using sources other than those assigned in the course (outside sources are not necessary for this paper)

Your paper must advance its own thesis. It is insufficient to merely summarize another philosopher's arguments or state an agreement with it. If you don't have anything to add to the debate, then your reader may as well just read the original article and skip yours. Therefore, a good paper is one in which critically evaluates the ideas presented and attempts to persuade the reader of a more coherent position. (This includes papers in which you discuss more than one author's views. It's not enough to cast your vote in favor of one author or the other - you'll still need to add something of your own to the debate.) Keep in mind, too, that in philosophy it is never enough to simply state a position or opinion. Making a claim in philosophy requires good arguments; that is, a philosopher is always required to give reasons why anyone should accept the claims she makes. Moreover, making a good argument always means accurately representing the views of one's opponents. If you merely argue against a distortion or misinterpretation of your opponent's argument, then you haven't really refuted your opponent at all (The Principle of Charity, remember?).

Finally, making a persuasive argument necessarily involves clearly communicating your position to the reader. After all, if your reader can't understand your argument, he's not likely to be persuaded by it. Therefore, a good paper is one that is also organized, focused and clearly written. I highly recommend emailing me if you have questions about what is required of you, how best to organize your paper, or whether your chosen line of argument is reasonable. I also recommend making an appointment to meet with a CAPS tutor to review an outline or draft of your paper. Another helpful resource for writing philosophy papers is the following:  
<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

**Example 3:** This was a group assignment. The student artifacts for this assignment prompt were all rated “proficient” for both selected dimensions.

Gen Ed Area of Study	Course Name	Dimensions Selected	
Physical and Natural Sciences	Biology for Health Sciences	Evidence Acquisition	Reasoning/Conclusion

*Assignment Description:* The purpose of my activity (found below) is to reinforce actively engaging with videos and animations. Students often passively watch instructional videos and are not able to explain or critically assess the events in the videos. I have created this assignment to model active engagement, critical thinking, and self-testing strategies. Students choose a video from my list of videos used in our course. They watch the video and then describe their understanding of the material. Next, they create a multiple-choice question with answers using the content of the video (which helps them to begin envisioning exam questions). Lastly, they describe their "muddy point" (unclear point) or something they would like to learn more about. I have attached the model and guidelines that I provide to help them with the activity.

Video self-testing activity: TEMPLATE

LEAVE THIS INFORMATION HERE AND ADD TO IT

Name:

Date:

1. Copy and paste green text from 'Model and Guidelines for video self-testing activity' here and then delete this underlined statement: Include 7 sentences or more (a really nice sized paragraph) that describe in your own words several concepts you learned/had reinforced from the video. Refer to the model and guidelines I provided. (4 pts)
2. From the video, write a multiple-choice question you designed with 4 possible answers. You should create this question. Do not copy it from our lecture notes. Circle the correct answer. Refer to the model and guidelines I provided. (3 pts)
3. Describe your 'muddy point' (something you still don't understand). If you are clear on all video content, describe something in the video that you would like to learn more about. Refer to the model and guidelines I provided. (3 pts)

**Example 4:** The student artifacts for this assignment prompt were all rated “proficient” for both selected dimensions.

Gen Ed Area of Study	Course Name	Dimensions Selected	
Humanities	Greek Thought	Problem Setting	Reasoning/Conclusion

*Assignment Description:* Reflection Paper Assignment  
Plato's Protagoras

Write a short essay of about one page, single spaced, on ONE of the following questions. 5 points possible.

Can virtue be taught? If not, why not? If it can, then how?

ALTERNATIVE QUESTION:

What is courage? Do you agree with Socrates that courage is a kind of wisdom? Explain.

**Example 5:** This was a group assignment. The student artifacts submitted according to this assignment description were consistently highly rated in both dimensions by both raters, although the raters did note that they were only able to assess the presentation materials provided rather than the presentation itself (completed in class).

Gen Ed Area of Study	Course Name	Dimensions Selected	
Social and Behavioral Sciences	The Dynamics of Prejudice	Problem Setting	Reasoning/Conclusion

*Assignment Description:* **GROUP Facilitation Feedback Form & Rubric (30 total points possible)**

Students will choose the group of readings that they would be interested in facilitating. All of the students that signed up for a particular day will constitute the group, and this group will work together to create a facilitation of ALL of the readings assigned for that particular day. Each group should be prepared to integrate the main points, share their critiques/agreements with the article and come with critical questions to generate discussion on the reading in a manner that engages the class. How each group decides to facilitate the readings is up to each individual group (whether it be group work, projects, interactive games/conversation, seminar style discussion/dialogue, or other class exercises that the group would like to use), but these activities should be aligned to the module objectives for the week and each student in the group must contribute to the presentation in a substantial manner. Lectures and reading PowerPoints are not acceptable (you may HAVE a PowerPoint to guide you, but you should not just create a PowerPoint as your facilitation). Each group member must turn in a 2 page write up of their experience (double spaced, normal margins, 12-point font). This write-up should

include a summary of the distribution of labor among group mates (how each person contributed), the strategy or the approach to facilitation, the critical main points that the group was intending to teach the class as well as a short reflection of how the facilitation went. **This write up will be due by Friday at 11:59pm on the week of the facilitation module.** Group facilitations **should NOT be separate summaries of each reading divided amongst the group members.**

- 1) Did all the members of the group contribute equally to the end presentation/facilitation? How did each group member contribute? (0/5)
- 2) Main points/arguments understood and presented to the class in a way that demonstrates an understanding of these key terms/ideas. Your critiques/agreements as a group can fit in here as well: (0/5)
- 3) Ensured that the activities and questions were aligned to the module objectives (these were emailed to your group prior to the facilitation): (0/5)
- 4) Presented class with two to three questions that generated discussion: (0/5)

Were the questions:

- Relevant to the main points brought up in the argument (Y/N)
  - Successful in creating discussion that moved the class along a path of unpacking the topic/concepts (Y/N)
- 5) Did the group facilitate to the class in an innovative and engaging manner (whether through class discussion, small group work, or other interactive facilitation methods): (0/5)
  - 6) Did you turn in your individual detailed write up? Did the write up include a division of labor, the ideas and main topics that the group planned on covering, and group weaknesses/successes? What was the overall strategy/gameplan of the group? Was there a reflection on what could have been improved and what was done well? (0/5)

**Example 6:** The student artifacts submitted according to this assignment description were consistently highly rated in both dimensions by both raters.

Gen Ed Area of Study	Course Name	Dimensions Selected	
Arts and Design	History of Art	Evidence Acquisition	Reasoning/Conclusion

**Assignment Description: Virtual Exhibit Guide**

**The Assignment:**

During the Covid-19 pandemic museums, galleries, and cultural sites all over the world have had to shut their doors for the health and safety of their visitors and staff. In the aftermath, museums across the globe have turned to the internet sharing their collections through social media, and online resources. While nothing compares to seeing a work of art in person, virtual exhibitions have become a vital tool for museums and galleries by allowing them to craft a virtual museum experience in this age of social distancing.

This semester you will create a virtual exhibit using the online exhibition builder Artsteps. Your exhibition should center around a thesis or big idea. Each exhibition will consist

of 7-10 artworks that support or illustrate your thesis in a concise and effective way. You will design the exhibition space and write the texts that are normally seen on gallery walls. This assignment has 4 parts with different due dates.

**Your exhibit will include:**

**Gallery Space designed through Artsteps**

Using Artsteps (<https://www.artsteps.com/>), a free online exhibition builder, you will design your gallery space. This includes the location and placement of walls and doorways as well as the location of works of art and exhibition texts. You will need to think about the best way to organize your gallery space. Your organization is very important as it will determine how a visitor moves through your space, the order in which they see the artworks, and thus how they experience your argument. What is the first work they will see? What is the last? How does the placement of works of art serve your argument? Think about this like the organization of a research paper. What is your thesis, and how is it best supported and argued with your objects, exhibition design, and text?

**Object Checklist of 7-10 artworks.**

You will need to research, and choose 7-10 images to include in your exhibition. Your images should be chosen with care as they will need to successfully illustrate or support your thesis.

**Exhibition Texts**

Read Chapters 1 and 3 *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach* by Beverly Serrel)

Exhibition texts help to guide museum visitors through the exhibition. Texts will communicate your thesis, and provide contextual and interpretive information that supports and illustrates your argument. This information must come from scholarly sources (see Researching Your Work below), must be cited in your Exhibition text document (footnotes), and be included in your bibliography.

- **Title Wall**
  - Located at the entrance of your exhibit.
  - Identifies the name of the exhibition.
  - Your title should arouse interest in the viewer and hint at your thesis.
- **Introductory Text**
  - Located near your title label.
  - 2 or 3 sentences long
  - Articulate the big idea of the exhibition and why it is important.
- **Group Labels (optional)**
  - Use when you have a group of artworks that are closely related or are grouped together in a way that supports your thesis.
  - Includes a title or header for the section.
  - Up to 65 words.
  - Text should help the reader understand the connection between the objects.
- **Object Labels (also known as Tombstone labels)**

- Located next to an artwork to provide general known information about the object
- Artist(s) (if known)
- Title (in italics)
- Date
- Medium
- Credit Line (owner)
- **Extended Object Labels**
  - Located below the tombstone label and helps interpret the work of art.
  - 100-150 words
  - Texts should include any inscriptions that are included on the work of art.
  - Texts should refer to what the viewer is looking at.
  - Texts should connect the object to the thesis or theme of the exhibition, and illustrate how it supports your thesis. (Without saying so directly.)

## Assignment Parts

### Part 1 Exhibition Theme and Thesis:

You will turn in a one page explanation of your exhibition theme. For this assignment you should determine an initial theme that can be developed into a strong thesis. Your writing should address the concept or idea you are going to present in your exhibition, also what types of images will you include, and what research questions you have. I don't expect you to have your thesis yet, that will develop as you do research. (See Barnett, "Getting Ideas for Essays: Asking Questions to Get Answers" on pg 77 in *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*.)

- Choose a theme.
  - You might start with a big idea, or you might start with a type of objects you are interested in such as West Mexican Ceramics, or Gothic Manuscripts from France.
  - You will need to do a little bit of research before you choose your theme or topic. Look at virtual exhibits online, museum web sites, and books to help get ideas on themes you might address.
  - Do research using the UNM libraries to ensure you can find scholarly sources about the works of art you choose and/or your topic.
  - As you research your topic or theme your exhibition will develop a thesis. This thesis should be the focus your entire exhibition.

### Part 2 Object Checklist and Bibliography:

You will turn in a list of 7-10 images that will be included in your exhibition with a working bibliography (Follow the Art History Style Guide in Learn). You must include a minimum of 5 sources at this point. At the end of the project you should have at 8 sources minimum.

Remember, your sources must be scholarly. **Websites are NOT scholarly sources.** (See Researching Your Work below.)

### Part 3 Draft of Exhibition Texts:

You will turn in a late draft of your Exhibition Texts with citations.

- Write your Exhibition Texts

- You do not need to provide footnotes on your Artsteps exhibit, but you must cite in the exhibition texts document.
- You must use footnotes and provide a bibliography.
- Cite using Art History Style Guide located in Learn.

#### **Part 4 Exhibition:**

You will turn in your final exhibition texts (cited with footnotes and a bibliography) and your link to your Artsteps gallery.

- Design strategy and gallery space using Artsteps. (See guide in Learn. YouTube also has several tutorials.) All aspects of the exhibition planning process are interpretive and work to support big idea. Not simply just painting walls and displaying objects. How does color enhance objects, does it contextualize objects aesthetically, historically, anthropologically (think of how different museums display work), how do different colors on wall subconsciously guide visitors (these are called anchor walls)
- Write Introductory Text and Extended Object Labels

**See the Art History Style Guide** for citation information.

#### **Academic Integrity:**

Students should be familiar with the student code of conduct which can be found at <http://pathfinder.unm.edu> as well as <http://handbook.unm.edu/section-d/d100.html>. By enrolling at UNM, you have agreed to follow and uphold these standards of academic integrity and honesty. University policy makes clear that cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated, and specific penalties are set forth, including an F for an assignment, an F for the course, all the way to expulsion from the university.

Be above suspicion. Come to me with questions and guidance.

#### **Art History Research Guide**

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Adapted from "[Art History](#)," UNC–Chapel Hill:

#### **Formal Analysis (the *how* of the work):**

This is a detailed analysis of the formal qualities of the work or monument (qualities related to the form). This is more than a description. You will analyze the individual design elements, such as composition, color, line, texture, scale, proportion, balance, contrast, or rhythm, for example, as required by the work you are analyzing. Your primary concern is to explain how these various elements contribute to the work as a whole. How do they define the work, or reflect the artist's intent? An explanation of the materials and techniques used to create the work is necessary for good formal analyses.

Most art historians include formal analyses in their essays, so there are many examples to look at in the textbooks (brief ones) and scholarly readings. I expect a detailed, thoughtful, and original analysis of the work or monument.

In writing a formal analysis, focus on creating a logical order so that your reader doesn't get lost. For example, you may want to summarize the overall appearance, then analyze [not just describe] the details of the object which most assist in understanding its meaning or function.

Art history students: get to know Heinrich Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History*.



### **Iconographic Analysis (the *what* of the work):**

Iconographic analysis is the study of subject matter (iconology is the meaning of that subject matter). For example, consider the *Mérode Altarpiece* (c. 1425-1428) by the "Master of Flémalle" (most likely Robert Campin). Each object can be read as a metaphor of Christian spirituality. The woodworking tools by Joseph's feet not only represent his trade (carpentry) but also refer specifically to a poem in Isaiah (10:15). The mousetrap sitting on his workbench is not just a mousetrap, but might be a symbol for catching the Devil.

Since some of the iconography may not be familiar to you, you should consult the published literature on the work and/or its creator. A formal title, if given, is frequently the best place to start. Be sure to make clear what passages or opinions are derived from the literature and what are your own (*always avoid plagiarism*).

You will find that the iconology (meaning of the subject matter) is not always apparent to the viewer without an understanding of the context. Your scholarly sources will help you to see beyond the pure subject matter, to the underlying meaning (or possible meanings, in some cases). When expressing your own opinion, make sure you base it on an informed understanding of the imagery in its original context.

In writing your analysis of the iconography and iconology, describe the subject matter accurately and in detail, following some logical order (perhaps like you organized your formal analysis).

Try to arrange your discussion of the meaning in a manner that clearly elucidates the main thrust of the work first.

Art history students: get to know Erwin Panofsky's *Meaning in the Visual Arts*.

### **Contextual Analysis (the *world* of the work):**

Art is made by people. People live in particular places at particular times. These particulars influence not only the people, but the art they make. This analysis should explain the world of the work or monument—how that world influenced the creation of the work; how the work reflects the world in which it was created. Be careful that you don't simply provide a biography of the artist—that is not the assignment. Certain aspects of the artist's life, however, may provide insight for your analysis.

Think in terms of the larger historical and societal framework of the artist's culture: gender relations, class distinctions, religious influences, political conditions, and so forth. Even if the artist is not known, these issues are important for understanding the context of the work's production and reception.

Thinking of things like: Why was the work made, and how did it originally function? Who was the work's intended audience (including the patron, if known)? Was the intended audience a wide, public one, or a restricted, private one? How is the iconography given meaning by the period and place of the work's production? What, if any, are the textual sources necessary to understand the meaning of the work/imagery? How does the work reflect earlier artistic developments, and how does it influence subsequent work?

Art history students: get to know Michael Baxandall's *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*.

### **Researching Your Work**

All sources should be the most authoritative sources available. Broad surveys of a period or culture can provide valuable information for more detailed searches, like the names of key researchers, important terms, significant ideas about the politics, religion, or arts of a particular time and place. Good sources will always lead you to better sources; use the best you can find.

Start by browsing your textbooks and their bibliographies. Get and *read* the sources they recommend. You may also want to consult other general surveys of art history (such as Gardner's, Adam's, or Janson); however, these books are not acceptable as references for your papers. Websites are also not acceptable sources for this class.

UNM's libraries have excellent collections, but you might need to order books and articles from other libraries by using Interlibrary Loan. You shouldn't have to pay to borrow books and articles.

Some useful bibliographic tools for finding books, scholarly journal articles, and exhibition catalogues are: Art Index, BHA (Bibliography of the History of Art), RILA (International Repertory of the Literature of Art), and ARTbibliographies (Modern works). When consulting these indexes, always begin with the most recent volume and work your way back.

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:**

<http://pathfinder.unm.edu/index.html>

<https://grad.unm.edu/aire/academic-integrity.html>

**UNM Plagiarism guidelines:**

[https://grad.unm.edu/aire/aire-](https://grad.unm.edu/aire/aire-docs/plagiarism-guidelines.pdf)

[docs/plagiarism-guidelines.pdf](https://grad.unm.edu/aire/aire-docs/plagiarism-guidelines.pdf)

### Recognizing Scholarly Sources

You should be able to demonstrate that all of your sources are credible, scholarly publications.

**Articles** published in academic journals are among the most reliable scholarly sources you will find. Academic journals are published by respected professional organizations or universities (*The Art Bulletin* is published by the College Art Association, and *The Journal of Roman Studies* is published by Cambridge University, for example).

**Books**, including edited volumes with chapters by individual authors, should meet four important criteria. None of these are absolutely necessary except criteria **4**, so consider these carefully when deciding if a book is a credible source for college-level research.

- 1) Is the book specifically focused on some aspect of your research topic, or just a general survey? Is it written for a specialized audience or for the general public?
- 2) Has the author published books or articles on the topic (consult bibliographies and research databases)?
- 3) Is the publisher an academic (university) press?
- 4) Is the information supported by copious footnotes, endnotes, or in-text citations?

Scholarly sources provide extensive citations on every page and almost every paragraph (more great sources).

Museum catalogues are sometimes great places to start research, but not all catalogues include scholarly essays (look for well-developed analyses with copious citations). Magazines and other periodicals with advertisements throughout are rarely scholarly. Do not mistake book reviews for research articles.

**Dissertations** and Master's Theses are also very reliable, but might be too dense for most undergraduate research.

See also: Prof Claude Bélanger's [How to Recognize Scholarly Sources](#)

**Good sources** for writing about art include: Barnet, *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*; Taylor, *Learning to Look*.

Reading good art history is the best way to learn to write about art! Great journals include: *Art Bulletin*, *Art Journal*, *Burlington Magazine*, *Journal of Roman Studies*, *Art History*, *Oxford Art*

*Journal, Winterthur Portfolio, Muqarnas, Gesta, Artibus Asiae, Artibus et Historiae, Studies in Iconography* — you have many great sources available through The Fine Arts Library.

## **Grade Expectations**

Adapted from Skidmore College's "[Standards and Expectations for an Art History Paper](#)"

### **90-100: Distinguished**

A thorough and thoughtful treatment of the assigned topic is presented in a logical and convincing manner. The distinguished essay will have a clearly articulated thesis that leaves no doubt as to what the writer thinks and why. The ideas are original and complex. The writing is not hampered by grammatical or stylistic problems, but is notable for its clarity and verbal fluency.

### **80-89: Proficient**

A pretty good paper in most ways, but this work is generally less thoughtful than distinguished work. Often proficient papers are those which mostly parrot back what the professor and readings have taught, but do so in a way that makes it apparent that the student understands the concepts. The student doesn't add much original thought. The writing style may be less fluid or sophisticated than the distinguished paper's, but it is still quite competent and easily readable.

### **70-79: Average**

The average essay shows an understanding of most of the concepts involved in the assignment, but doesn't thoroughly treat them or doesn't synthesize them in an entirely satisfactory manner. Its thesis is usually vague; if the thesis is clear, perhaps it is contradicted by arguments or evidence in the essay itself. It may show a tendency to "over-quote" others and generally lacks originality. The writing is comprehensible but often awkward due to grammatical errors that make understanding it an effort.

### **60-69: Below Average**

Below average work is seriously flawed. The student neither demonstrates understanding of the material nor articulates any coherent argument about it. The paper might wander among several ideas without developing any single one. There will not be a thesis in this kind of work. A student might rely on quotations and others' work, rather than developing original ideas.

### **0-59: Unsatisfactory.**

Little redemptive appears in unsatisfactory work. The paper fails to address the assignment in fundamental ways. There is no real answer to any of the problems posed by the assignment, and there will be no real engagement of the topic in any way. The writing often consists of "stream-of-consciousness" prose that fails to cohere at all.