**Art and Art History Assessment Report 2022-23 AY**
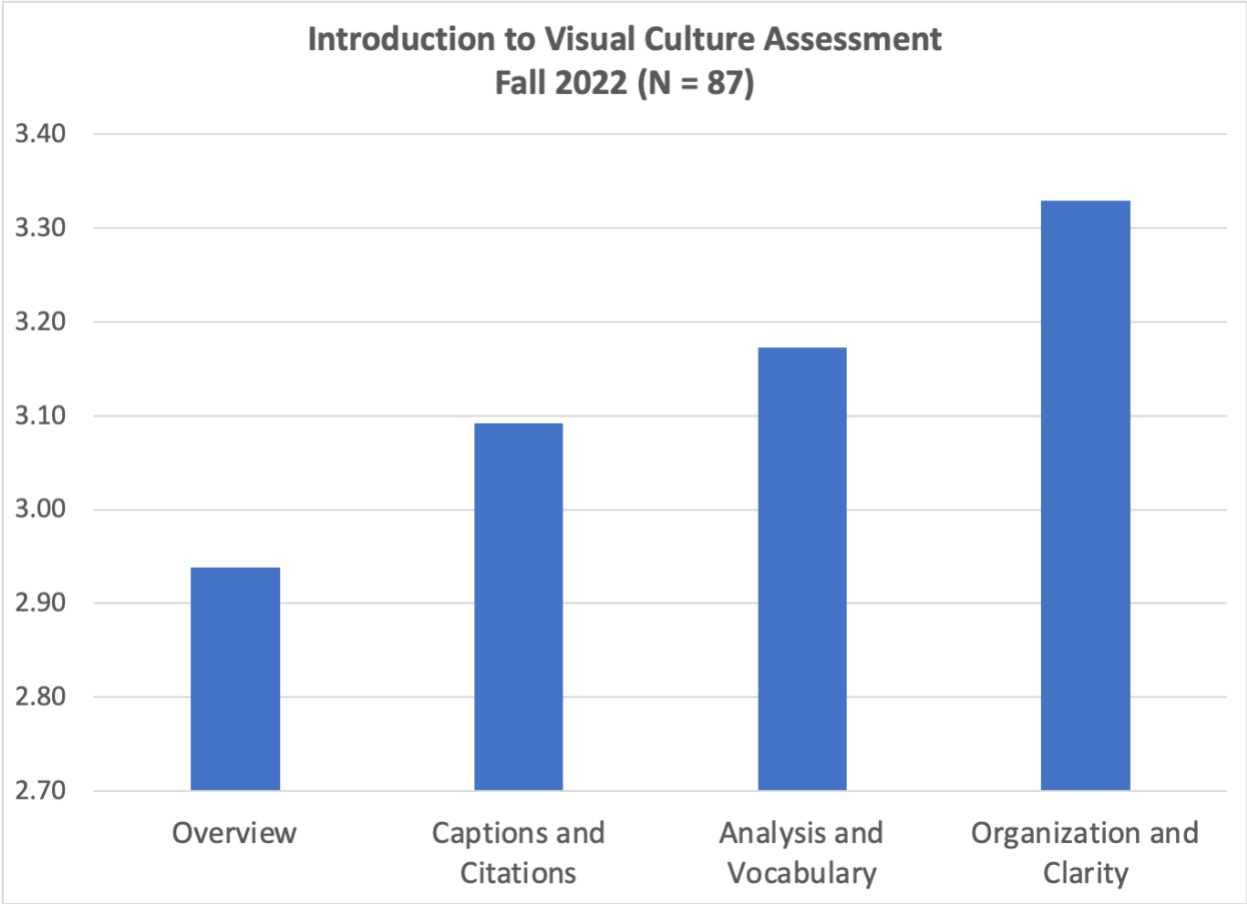
**Courses: Introduction to Visual Culture (ARTH 105)**

**Summary**

In the 2022-23 Academic Year, the department examined student performance in the final project in Introduction to Visual Culture – the Collections Project Synthesis.  In this assignment, students choose three visual pieces and present an analysis. Student samples were from all sections of the course from the Fall 2022 semester.

In general, the panel found student work to be inconsistent and not at the level they would have liked to have seen. However, they also noted that since this is a first-year course, perhaps the expectations for the Collections project need to be streamlined and the expected skills demonstrated in the project need to be reinforced throughout the term.

**Results:**

| Category | Mean |
|---|---|
| Overview | 2.94 |
| Captions and Citations | 3.09 |
| Analysis and Vocabulary | 3.17 |
| Organization and Clarity | 3.33 |

**Introduction to Visual Culture Assessment**
**Fall 2022 (N = 87)**

| | |
|---|---|
| Overview | |
| Excellent | 16% |
| Very Good | 22% |
| Good | 23% |
| Acceptable | 18% |
| Poor | 21% |

Another way to look at the results is the distributions of ratings for each category:

| Overview | |
|---|---|
| Excellent | 16% |
| Very Good | 22% |
| Good | 23% |
| Acceptable | 18% |
| Poor | 21% |

**Overview**
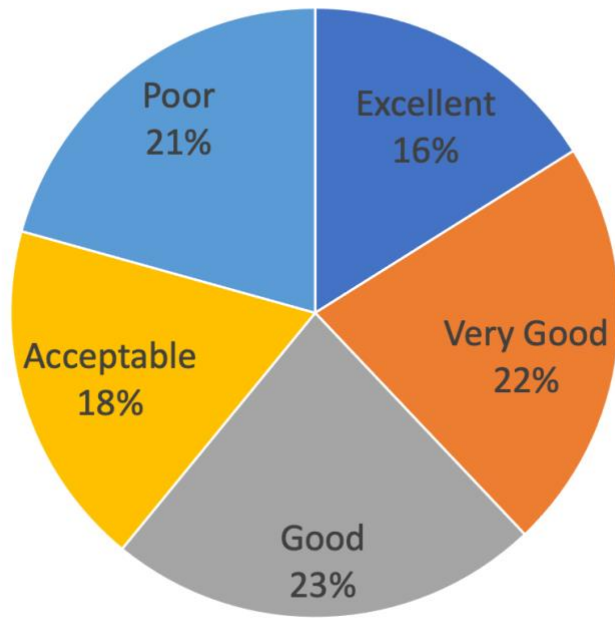
| Captions and Citations | |
|---|---|
| Excellent | 20% |
| Very Good | 26% |
| Good | 18% |
| Acceptable | 15% |
| Poor | 21% |

## Captions and Citations
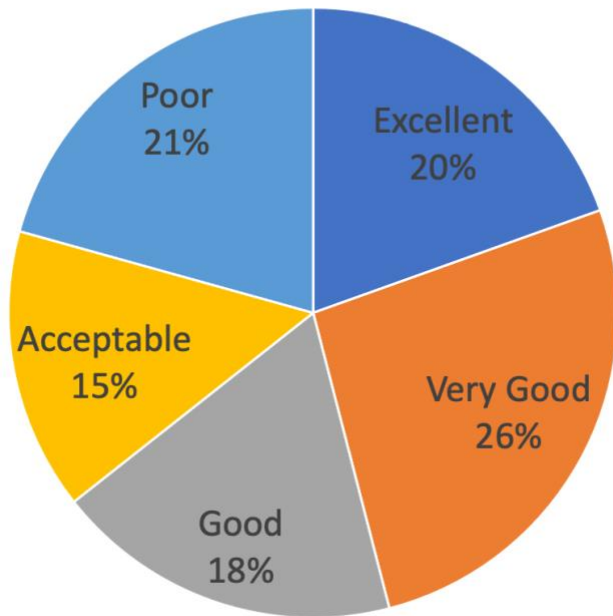
| | |
|---|---|
| Excellent | 20% |
| Very Good | 26% |
| Good | 18% |
| Acceptable | 15% |
| Poor | 21% |

| Analysis and Vocabulary | |
|---|---|
| Excellent | 23% |
| Very Good | 24% |
| Good | 21% |
| Acceptable | 10% |
| Poor | 22% |

**Analysis and Vocabulary**
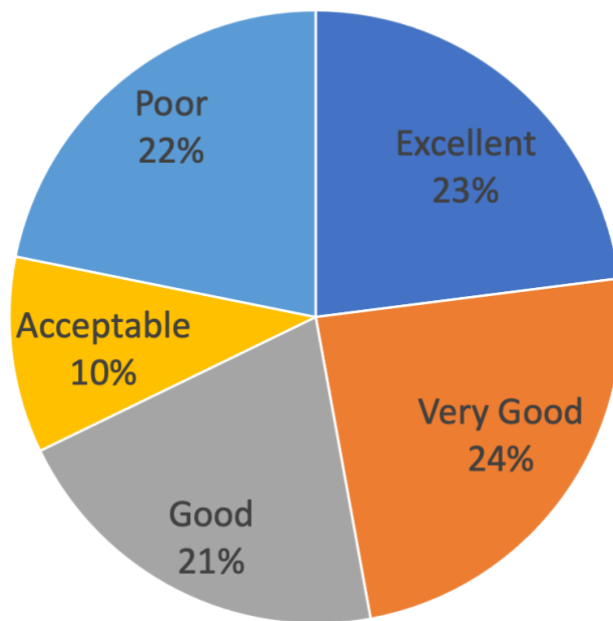
| | |
|---|---|
| Poor | 22% |
| Excellent | 23% |
| Acceptable | 10% |
| Very Good | 24% |
| Good | 21% |

| Organization and Clarity | |
|---|---|
| Excellent | 27% |
| Very Good | 21% |
| Good | 21% |
| Acceptable | 20% |
| Poor | 12% |

**Organization and Clarity**

Poor 11%
Excellent 27%
Very Good 21%
Good 21%
Acceptable 20%

**Comments on the Results and the Project**

The three faculty panelists were asked to respond to the three assessment questions based on the results and their participation in the project.

1. **What surprised you about the results?**

Panelist 1:
Most surprising to me was the uncertainty students seem to have about the overall point of the Collection Project. Many seemed very unclear how the three objects they selected could/should actually function as a coherent group of images, objects, spaces reflecting themes or formal qualities or anything (!) tying them together. Some collections seemed completely random and only tied together because the student had selected them! As a result, too many students seemed to be grasping at straws in their analyses.

Panelist 2:
I found it surprising that there was some inconsistency within individual projects. It was expected to see students consistently performing either well or poorly for all items, but it was a little unexpected to see that multiple students did exceptionally well for the analyses but missed citations, and so on.

Additionally, it was a little disappointing to see some uninspiring selections. Our goal was to let students explore visual culture on their own terms, and while there was some great variety and many very creative selections, there were also some very traditional and repetitive choices.

Panelist 3:
I found it surprising that students were inconsistent in their understanding of the modes of analysis. Given that we work so hard to define each, it made me want to reconsider the scope of the project and how it is presented to students.

I was also surprised to see some instructors using the older instructions for the interpretation section.

I would also like to see more students select works that are relevant to their majors, but given that they have yet to really explore content in these areas, it is not surprising that few chose such images.

Finally, I was surprised at how few students brought in vocabulary specific to the formal analysis and central to one of the modules—here I am thinking of perspective, composition, foreground, middle ground, etc.


2. **What did not surprise you about the results?**

**Panelist 1:**
I was not surprised that students struggled to apply the theories studied in the course to their Collection. Only a couple of students in the sample I reviewed were able to do this in a coherent manner that actually made sense.

**Panelist 2:**
I was not surprised with the overall weak performance of the students for the collection reflection section. I tried tackling this in multiple ways throughout the years, but that portion of the project is only introduced for the final step and students get a little bit overwhelmed with the number of questions posted.

It is also normal to see weaker interpretative analysis since this is an introductory course. Our primary goal was to expose our students to a set of critical thinking skills early in their undergraduate students, we did not expect them to fully digest these advanced theoretical discussions.

I am delighted but not surprised by our students' strong formal and contextual analyses and citations. These are the techniques we consistently practice in this course.

**Panelist 3:**

Like my colleagues, I was not surprised with the overall weak performance of the students for the collection reflection section. I feel that we need to better incorporate this assignment with the goals and interests of their majors. I am thinking of a sort of mind mapping exercise or journaling might help.

Overall, the interpretative analysis also seemed less developed which is not surprising given the challenging nature of this intellectual discourse. Ideally, IVC serves as a beginning point for this type of critical thinking that will be further honed and synthesized in more advance classes.

3. **Based on your participation in this activity, what are the implications for curriculum and pedagogy?**

**Panelist 1:**
The big take-away for me from this assessment is that IVC is too complicated and demanding for a first year intro course. As it currently is being taught, IVC is overly ambitious and based on the student work reviewed, I would conclude that many students don't really get the point of the course. The implications of the assessment point to the need to simplify the learning outcomes, pare down the topics/theories taught, develop a visual culture archive for students and faculty to work with, come up with a range of projects that emphasize activism as well as visual analysis, redesign the course (including the Canvas site) for better accessibility for students and faculty.

**Panelist 2:**
We need to continue seeking simpler and more clear content delivery methods.

Despite loving the idea of each student creating their own collections of visual culture, maybe it would be more beneficial just to focus on just one selection to ensure a more in-depth understanding and application of the three modes of analysis: forma, contextual, and interpretative.

Additionally, it is important to introduce and practice the desired skills early in the classroom activities and assign homework that allows for repeated practice of those skills.

**Panelist 3:**
We all concurred that our project needs to be streamlined and connected to the students' respective majors. Having one image, closely read in the three modes of interpretation better meet the learning objectives. We need to continue seeking simpler and more clear content delivery methods.

Classroom time and application of the skills via active learning project would also further hone students' familiarity. I experimented with some of this approach this spring and am hopeful with the results.