ASSOCIATION
FOR ART
HISTORY

TEACHING ART HISTORY ONLINE

This document offers practical advice for teaching Art History online. It is based on a survey of teaching under Covid-19 restrictions in 2020 and provides updates on a previous guidelines on teaching Art History during the lockdown. As it is likely that online teaching will continue even after Covid-19 in one form or another, the following document will be updated regularly.[1]

We encourage members to send suggestions and comments, share their experiences or raise issues not included here to the Association for Art History at info@forarthistory.org.uk, to help make this as useful and current as it can be for those in the field.

MUSEUM AND GALLERY VISITS

As of March 2021 museums and galleries remain closed. When they re-open they will have restrictions in place regarding the number of groups that they can accommodate and the number of students within each group. Prior to a full re-opening many will not allow group visits. While individual museum and gallery website may provide specific information, broader suggested guidelines for access to museums have been proposed by the National Museum Director's Council. The guidelines, updated in February 2021 can be found here: Nmdc Good Practice Guidelines For Reopening Museums - National   Museum Directors' Council Website (nationalmuseums.org.uk) Some considerations for accommodating or replacing gallery visits include:

☐ The use of hardware (e.g. headsets) in gallery and the use of software (apps) to enable tour participants to communicate with each other in real time. These may work for teaching in galleries to avoid having larger numbers of students gathering closely together to hear one person speak and to facilitate discussion.

☐ Inviting curators to speak to classes (virtually) or at/outside of a gallery prior to a visit to enhance and focus what could be a more limited in-gallery experience and/or simply for universities to negotiate with often-visited or local galleries as to how their needs could be accommodated.

☐ Members have relayed that, generally speaking, groups of between eight and twelve are optimum. They though, however, that they could accommodate limiting those numbers to five or six students at one time. A couple of galleries surveyed intended to allow groups of at least that size.

OBJECT-BASED LEARNING

Related to the above is the major challenge of teaching in an objects-based discipline. While this concern could be addressed by museums allowing small groups of students to view objects, there will be some galleries which do not allow this. Suggestions for alternatives include:

☐ Having students take photographs of objects during their individual visits to galleries and/or video record their visits and have them bring these into seminars or upload them to a teaching platform for description and discussion.

☐ Teachers visit a museum/gallery to make a podcast or create a worksheet to be taken into the galleries during student visits.

☐ To develop skills in the articulation of visual response, have students describe everyday objects.

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[1] We would like to thank HEC member, Dr. Jutta Vinzent, Department of Art History, Curating and Visual Studies, University of Birmingham, and HEC Chair, Prof. Joanna Woodall, Courtauld Institute of Art, for their efforts in obtaining information from colleague art historians and in reviewing this document. Thank you also to members of the HEC and Heads of Art History Departments for their contributions.

FIELD TRIPS & STUDY ABROAD

- ☐ Replace field trips with virtual tours and guest lectures.

- ☐ Include a digital component of combined instruction/dialogue with colleagues at institutions abroad that were to be visited.

- ☐ Organise field trips to galleries/collections/country houses in Britain as a temporary alternative to visits to collections outside the UK.

VISUAL RESOURCES

A common, and unsurprising, comment was around the need for high resolution still and moving images, particularly when these are to replace live visits.

- ☐ Ensure that students have access to databases and online resources that offer access to reliable art and visual culture resources.

- ☐ Have students tag content on Instagram

VARIABLE CAPABILITY OF STUDENT WIFI, HARDWARE AND FACILITY WITH SOFTWARE

This issue came up fairly regularly in student surveys. The challenge is greater in studio programmes and for those who rely on (streaming) film in their instruction.

- ☐ The recognition that a number of students may do much of their learning via their phones has encouraged members to consider how this could best be accommodated. Solutions could include providing priority library space/access to hardware for such student or to consider the example of some schools which lent machines to students without their own.

"LIVE" TEACHING

- ☐ Screen fatigue and drifting attention: divide live online lectures into shorter segments (20 mins), with a break or a task/activity, questions, polls, etc. to alternate with the lectures. (The time limit was arrived at from experience teaching in the early stage of the lockdown.)

- ☐ Audience cameras should be switched on to encourage student focus.

- ☐ Where available, TAs to deal with the technical glitches and manage admissions, chat and raised hands.

ASYNCHRONOUS TEACHING

This has taken hold in varying degrees and usually in a 'blended' approach with live teaching. It is seen as a way to assist students who cannot readily find a quiet place to study so they can view lectures at the time of their choosing.

- ☐ Members noted that uploading lectures via Blackboard collaborate has worked well, as has Panopto

- ☐ Teachers to be mindful of time limits prior to deletion and restrictions on permissions.

ASSESSMENTS

- ☐ Investigate alternative methods of assessment including students giving interactive lectures or making videos instead of writing papers.

PLACEMENTS AND INTERNSHIPS

While distancing requirements continue to limit these in-person opportunities, organisations and universities have developed virtual offers which broadens student opportunities outside of the UK. There is a chance to go

globally, if placements and internships are designed as virtual offers.

FURTHER RESOURCES

On online teaching
https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/resources-teaching-online
- This is about online teaching transition

Art History Teaching Resources (AHTR)
http://arthistoryteachingresources.org/
- a peer-populated platform for teaching art history
- teaching content including, but not limited to, lesson plans, video introductions to museums, book reviews, image clusters, classroom and museum activities, reading and other resources; most valuable: ideas on online teaching exercises
- probably more for an introductory level
- hosted by academics and university professionals with an American Advisory Board

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