

chicago style for art history coursework

Art History Coursework and Chicago Style: A Comprehensive Guide

chicago style for art history coursework is an essential component for students aiming to produce clear, credible, and academically sound research papers, essays, and presentations. Mastering this citation style ensures that your scholarly work adheres to established academic conventions, allowing your arguments to take center stage without distraction. This comprehensive guide will delve into the intricacies of the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS), specifically as it applies to art history, covering everything from in-text citations and footnotes to bibliographical entries and formatting guidelines.

Understanding these principles will not only elevate the professionalism of your art history submissions but also build a strong foundation for your academic future in the humanities. We will explore the dual citation systems available, the nuances of citing various art forms, and practical tips for seamless implementation.

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Understanding the Chicago Manual of Style for Art History

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) is a widely respected style guide that provides comprehensive recommendations for writing, editing, and citing. For students of art history, adhering to CMOS is crucial because it standardizes the presentation of research, making it easier for readers to follow the lineage of ideas and evidence. It emphasizes clarity, accuracy, and completeness in scholarly communication, which are paramount when discussing complex visual and historical information. The manual's flexibility allows it to adapt to the diverse needs of various disciplines, including the visual arts, which often involve the unique challenges of describing and referencing artworks.

Art history coursework demands a meticulous approach to documentation. Whether you are analyzing a Renaissance masterpiece, a contemporary installation, or an ancient artifact, every claim you make about its provenance, interpretation, or historical context needs proper attribution. CMOS provides a robust framework for this, ensuring that your arguments are supported by credible sources and that you give due credit to the scholars and creators whose work informs your own. By following its guidelines, you demonstrate a commitment to academic integrity and scholarly rigor, hallmarks of successful art

historical research.

The Two Citation Systems: Notes-Bibliography vs. Author-Date

The Chicago Manual of Style offers two distinct citation systems: the Notes-Bibliography (NB) system and the Author-Date (AD) system. Both are widely accepted in academic circles, but one is generally preferred in certain disciplines. For art history, the Notes-Bibliography system is the more traditional and prevalent choice.

The NB system uses footnotes or endnotes to cite sources within the text, accompanied by a comprehensive bibliography at the end of the paper. This system is particularly well-suited for disciplines where extensive quotations, detailed source discussions, or complex argumentation are common. In art history, where scholars often engage in nuanced interpretations and build upon previous scholarship, the ability to interject explanatory notes and provide detailed source information directly at the point of reference is invaluable.

The Author-Date system, on the other hand, uses parenthetical citations in the text (e.g., Smith 2020, 15) and a reference list at the end. While less common in traditional art history departments, it is sometimes used in interdisciplinary fields or when a particular professor prefers it. It is more common in the social sciences and natural sciences, offering a more concise in-text citation. Regardless of the system chosen, consistency is key. Students must confirm which system their instructor or institution requires.

Crafting Effective Citations: A Deep Dive into the Notes-Bibliography System

The Notes-Bibliography system is the cornerstone of Chicago style for many art history courses. It involves two main components: footnotes or endnotes for in-text citations and a bibliography listing all sources consulted. Understanding the structure and content of each is vital.

Footnotes and Endnotes

Footnotes appear at the bottom of the page where the reference occurs, while endnotes are compiled at the end of the document. Both serve the same purpose: to identify the source of quoted material, paraphrased ideas, or specific data. The first time a source is cited, a full note is required, containing all bibliographical information. Subsequent citations of the same source can be shortened, typically including the author's last name, a shortened title, and the page number.

A typical first footnote for a book might look like this:

- 1. E.H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, 16th ed. (London: Phaidon, 1995), 45.

A subsequent footnote for the same source would be:

- 2. Gombrich, *Story of Art*, 112.

The Bibliography

The bibliography is an alphabetical list of all sources cited in the paper. It provides a complete overview of the research undertaken. Unlike the notes, which can include descriptive information or commentary, the bibliography entries are strictly for identification and location of the source. Each entry should be formatted consistently.

Here are examples of common bibliography entries:

- **Book:** Author Last Name, First Name. Title of Book. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year.
- **Journal Article:** Author Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." Title of Journal Volume, no. Issue (Year): Page numbers.
- **Exhibition Catalogue:** Author Last Name, First Name. Title of Catalogue. Exhibition location, Dates of Exhibition. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year.

Citing Artworks in Notes and Bibliography

A significant aspect of art history citation involves referencing specific artworks. This typically includes the artist's name, the title of the work (*italicized*), the date of creation, the medium, the dimensions, and the current location (museum or collection). The specific format can vary slightly depending on whether the artwork is being discussed in a note or a bibliography entry, but the core information remains consistent.

Example of an artwork citation in a note:

- 3. Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas, 73.7 cm × 92.1 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Mastering the Author-Date System for Art History Papers

While less common in art history, the Author-Date system can be used. In this system, parenthetical citations within the text include the author's last name and the year of publication, along with the page number if necessary. A corresponding reference list at the end of the paper provides full details for each source.

For instance, a sentence using an Author-Date citation might read:

"The symbolic use of color in medieval illuminated manuscripts has been extensively documented (Jones 2018, 56)."

The corresponding entry in the reference list would be:

- Jones, Eleanor. 2018. *Colors of Faith: Symbolism in Medieval Art*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The Author-Date system is efficient for readers who want to quickly locate a source by author and year. However, for art history, the detailed descriptions and contextual notes possible with the Notes-Bibliography system often prove more beneficial for nuanced scholarly discourse.

Citing Visual Materials: Photographs, Reproductions, and Digital Images

Art history coursework heavily relies on visual evidence, making the proper citation of images paramount. This includes photographs of artworks, reproductions in books and journals, and digital images found online. Accuracy and completeness are key to ensuring your audience can locate the original source or a reliable reproduction.

Photographs and Reproductions

When citing a reproduction of an artwork found in a book or journal, you typically cite the original artwork and then provide information about the publication where you found it. The note would include the artist, title, date, medium, dimensions, and location of the original work, followed by the publication details.

Example for a book reproduction:

- 4. Claude Monet, *Impression, soleil levant*, 1872, oil on canvas, 48 cm × 63 cm,

Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, reproduced in Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 123.

Digital Images and Online Resources

Citing digital images requires careful attention to the source of the image. If the image is from a museum's online collection, include the museum name, the artwork details, and the URL. If it's from a scholarly database or other online platform, include all relevant details. Always try to cite the original artwork and its institutional home whenever possible, rather than just the website hosting a reproduction.

Example for a museum website:

- 5. Frida Kahlo, *The Two Fridas*, 1939, oil on canvas, 173.5 cm × 173 cm, Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City, accessed October 26, 2023, <http://www.museoartemoderno.org/collection/kahlo/twofridas>.

When citing an image found on a general image-sharing website, if no other authoritative source is available, prioritize information about the artwork and its original location, and include the website URL and access date.

Formatting Your Art History Paper According to Chicago Style

Beyond citations, Chicago style dictates specific formatting conventions for academic papers. Adhering to these guidelines ensures a professional and polished presentation, allowing your research to shine.

Manuscript Formatting

Standard manuscript formatting includes double-spacing throughout the entire document, including notes, block quotations, and the bibliography. Margins should typically be one inch on all sides. The font should be a readable serif typeface, such as Times New Roman, in 12-point size.

Title pages are usually required. The title of the paper should be centered on the page, followed by the author's name and course information. Page numbers should be placed in the upper right-hand corner, starting with page one.

Structuring Your Paper

A typical art history paper will include an introduction that sets up the research question and thesis, body paragraphs that develop arguments supported by evidence, and a conclusion that summarizes findings. Ensure smooth transitions between paragraphs and ideas. Block quotations, used for longer passages of text, should be indented from the left margin without quotation marks.

The Notes-Bibliography system requires notes to be placed either as footnotes at the bottom of each page or as endnotes collected at the end of the paper. The bibliography then follows the notes, providing a complete list of sources.

Consistency in Formatting

The most critical aspect of formatting is consistency. Whatever choices you make regarding the placement of notes or the specific presentation of certain elements, apply them uniformly throughout the paper. Referencing the Chicago Manual of Style or its online resources will clarify any ambiguities.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid in Chicago Style Art History Papers

Even with careful attention, students can sometimes stumble when applying Chicago style to art history coursework. Awareness of common mistakes can help prevent them.

Inconsistent Citation Practices

The most frequent error is inconsistency in how sources are cited, whether in notes or the bibliography. This can manifest as variations in punctuation, the order of elements, or the inclusion of information. It's crucial to use a single, correct format for each type of source and apply it universally.

Incorrectly Citing Visual Materials

Another common pitfall is failing to provide sufficient detail when citing artworks. Omitting crucial information such as the medium, dimensions, or location of an artwork can make it difficult for readers to verify your sources or appreciate the physical object you are discussing.

Misunderstanding Footnote/Endnote Usage

Students sometimes use footnotes for commentary rather than citation, or they may cite every single mention of a source rather than only the first time or when introducing new information. Remember that the primary purpose of notes is to attribute sources clearly and efficiently.

Ignoring Formatting Guidelines

Beyond citations, neglecting general manuscript formatting, such as correct spacing, margins, or font choices, can detract from the professionalism of your work. These details signal attention to scholarly convention.

Avoiding these pitfalls will ensure your art history papers are not only well-researched and argued but also meticulously presented, reflecting a strong command of academic writing standards.

Resources for Further Chicago Style Assistance

Navigating the nuances of the Chicago Manual of Style can sometimes be challenging, especially when applying it to the specific demands of art history. Fortunately, numerous resources are available to help students achieve mastery.

The official Chicago Manual of Style Online is an indispensable tool, offering up-to-date guidance and search capabilities. University writing centers also provide valuable support, with tutors trained in various citation styles, including CMOS. Many art history departments or individual professors will offer style guides tailored to their specific expectations, often building upon the foundation of CMOS. Furthermore, consulting exemplar papers or scholarly articles published in reputable art history journals can provide practical examples of how CMOS is applied in the field.

For any lingering questions or complex citation scenarios, referring to these resources will ensure that your art history coursework is presented with the highest level of academic integrity and clarity.

Q: What is the primary citation style recommended for art history coursework?

A: The primary citation style recommended and most commonly used for art history coursework is the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS), specifically the Notes-Bibliography (NB) system. This system utilizes footnotes or endnotes for in-text citations and a comprehensive bibliography at the end of the paper, which is ideal for the detailed scholarly discussions common in art history.

Q: Can I use the Author-Date system for my art history paper?

A: While the Chicago Manual of Style also offers an Author-Date system, it is less common in traditional art history departments. However, if your instructor or institution specifically permits or requires it, you can use the Author-Date system. Always confirm the preferred system with your professor before you begin writing.

Q: How should I cite an artwork in my art history paper using Chicago style?

A: When citing an artwork in Chicago style (Notes-Bibliography system), you should include the artist's name, the title of the work (italicized), the date of creation, the medium, the dimensions, and the current location of the artwork. For example, in a footnote: Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas, 73.7 cm × 92.1 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Q: What are the key differences between the first note and subsequent notes for the same source in Chicago style?

A: The first time a source is cited in a paper using the Notes-Bibliography system, a full note is required, providing all relevant bibliographical information. Subsequent citations of the same source can be shortened, typically including the author's last name, a shortened title of the work, and the page number where the information can be found.

Q: How do I cite an image of an artwork that I found in a book?

A: To cite an image of an artwork found in a book, you should provide details about the original artwork first, followed by the publication information where you found the reproduction. For instance, a footnote might read: Claude Monet, *Impression, soleil levant*, 1872, oil on canvas, 48 cm × 63 cm, Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, reproduced in Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 123.

Q: What are the general formatting requirements for a paper written in Chicago style?

A: General formatting requirements for Chicago style include double-spacing the entire document (text, notes, and bibliography), one-inch margins on all sides, and a 12-point readable serif font, such as Times New Roman. Page numbers are typically placed in the upper right-hand corner.

Q: Is it acceptable to use online images from general websites without specific attribution in my art history paper?

A: It is generally not acceptable to use online images from general websites without proper attribution. You should always attempt to find the original source of the artwork and its institutional home. If you must cite an image from a general website, include the artwork details, the website's name, the URL, and the date you accessed the image. Prioritize finding more authoritative sources whenever possible.

Q: What is the purpose of the bibliography in Chicago style?

A: The bibliography in Chicago style is an alphabetical list of all sources that were cited in the paper. Its purpose is to provide the reader with a complete and organized record of the research consulted, allowing them to easily locate and consult the original sources if they wish.

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