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### Against the "Coverage" Mentality: Rethinking Learning Outcomes and the Core Curriculum

Julia A. Sienkewicz  
*Duquesne University*

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## **Against the “Coverage” Mentality: Rethinking Learning Outcomes and the Core Curriculum**

Julia A. Sienkewicz, PhD

### **Abstract**

This article proposes a revised way of approaching the learning outcomes of introductory courses in art history and art appreciation. Taking into account disciplinary complexities, this article argues that instructors can improve student learning by focusing on "understanding" and "application" (the second and third levels of the revised Bloom's Taxonomy pyramid) rather than "remembering" (the bottom level). The article argues that focusing on student understanding and application of ideas rather than memorization can improve the value of introductory courses both for art history and for the core curricula that these courses often serve.

The founding issue of *Art History Pedagogy and Practice* is an exciting moment for the discipline, as it is a formal recognition of the need for a greater exchange of ideas and research concerning how we teach art history. The scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) is expanding its impact in many disciplines, but art historians as a community have been relatively slow to adopt the habits of documenting teaching and learning achievements in our classrooms.<sup>1</sup> Although many of us have thought about and worked with significant pedagogical concepts, such as Bloom's Taxonomy or active learning techniques, *AHPP* will offer a first real opportunity to share those ideas and puzzle through their application, both to the arts disciplines in general and specifically within art history. There is much to be learned from existing research in higher education; however, developing a body of SoTL scholarship in art history should help us

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<sup>1</sup> Such conversations have already begun at conferences and within such important organizations as the Art Historians Interested in Pedagogy and Technology and the Southeast College Art Conference. In my own journey toward thinking about SoTL and Art History, co-chairing with Leda Cempellin the 2015 College Art Association (CAA) session “Learning to Teach and Teaching to Learn: Developing a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for Art History” was a significant marker. I learned a great deal from Leda, as well as our excellent presenters: Anne D’Alleva, Laetitia La Follette, Beth Harris, Andrea Pappas, and Steven Zucker. I would also like to thank all those who served with me on the CAA Education Committee, as our conversations were very helpful.

ascertain ways in which extant SoTL findings must be adapted to the particular nature of art history, a discipline grounded in the deep scrutiny of art objects and their contexts.

As we collectively launch into such an endeavor, I offer this brief thought-piece. The topic is narrow but has deep application to philosophies of teaching and learning in art departments around the globe. This inaugural issue takes as its central concern the “core curriculum” surveys in most departments, consisting of some variant of the following classes: Art Appreciation, Art History I (Ancient through Medieval), and Art History II (Renaissance to Modern). While it is generally agreed that Art Appreciation serves non-majors, and the “survey” courses target “major stream” students, variations are found from one institution to another and among individual faculty members within a department.<sup>2</sup> My present goal is not to get into those intricacies, though I believe more consistent standards would serve our discipline well in our current era of higher education. Instead, I would like to address the inherent pedagogical logic of one particular category of question pertaining to these surveys—namely, the relationship of “coverage” to student learning. When we put together our syllabi, we grapple with issues of necessary content and geographical sweep of coverage. What list of art objects should be included to fully address the requisite chronological, geographical, and stylistic breadth of the class? Individual faculty members and whole department communities have been vexed by concerns over coverage, including important and long-standing debates about how to offer a more integrated survey sequence that might be more inclusive than the traditional Western canon.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps such conversations have been particularly long-standing and heated in art history, because this is a discipline that few students study before they reach our survey classrooms. Unlike disciplines that are more fully integrated into primary and secondary education, art history must make its case for relevance to its students within the survey classes. Instructors rightly worry that if a student is not introduced to a particular work of art, period, or issue in the survey class, s/he may never have another opportunity to gain this knowledge. Considering these factors, the stakes are justifiably high for these decisions. Rather than offering

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<sup>2</sup> Several sessions at the CAA Annual Conference in recent years have dealt with the diversity of definitions and breadth of these issues. I would particularly like to thank Brian Seymour, who co-chaired the session “What We Teach: Perspectives on the Logic, Scope, and Value of Art Appreciation,” in 2013 with me. Alison Fleming, Deanne Pytlinski, Kathy Quick, and Henry Sayre all were panelists and each of their work has contributed to my own conceptualization of art appreciation and, more broadly, art history surveys.

<sup>3</sup> Several recent and excellent panels at CAA have addressed this topic. For reflections on this question, see, Joanne E. Sowell, “A Cross-Cultural Approach,” pp. 72-75 and Romy Golan and Christopher S. Wood, “Charisma and Self-Doubt in the Western Tradition,” pp. 78-81 in *Art Journal*, Special Issue: *Rethinking the Introductory Art History Survey* 53:3 (Autumn 1995).

answers about specific details of coverage or concerning the theoretical, methodological, or field-related priorities that should drive such decisions, I propose that we should make such decisions subsidiary to carefully weighed learning outcomes that are aimed at maximizing student benefits from our classes. The question of coverage is significant, but perhaps it should not be the driving force of our syllabi. If we acknowledge the greatest value of survey courses does not lie in students remembering, for example, that Édouard Manet completed *Olympia* in 1863, but rather understanding some of the significance of the form and content of this specific work within its historical context and within the long story of art history, then we have determined that the understanding and application of ideas are more important learning goals than is the large body of discrete factual remembering that drives the traditional concept of coverage. Remembering, understanding, and application, in that order, are the first three levels of the pyramid of Bloom's Taxonomy.<sup>4</sup> This essay will focus on explaining what it means to reconfigure our understanding of the surveys in terms of understanding and application and why it is important that we do so, even at the expense of contradicting Bloom by prioritizing these two "higher order" levels of thinking over the base level of remembering in our disciplinary pyramid of learning. Such a revision represents a significant alteration in how our discipline has long approached the survey courses. Nonetheless, as this essay explores, there is great potential for this change in our pedagogical priorities to pay significant dividends.

I am not jettisoning the idea that survey courses are responsible for introducing students to a certain quantity of historical and stylistic knowledge. I am suggesting that we seek to offer students deeper learning about a more modest selection of objects within these parameters. This strategy allows for greater social, historical, formal, and cultural knowledge about a smaller core quantity of objects. Ascertaining exactly how many works of art are "right" for any class might depend on an instructor's teaching style, on the key conceptual points around which a course is organized, or on a range of other factors (such as research-based determinations concerning student learning). What I offer here, then, is not the final word in arguments concerning what range of works to include in the survey, but I hope that these reflections might be of some use to colleagues contemplating the pedagogical rationale behind such decisions.

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<sup>4</sup> Here I am using the terms of the "reformed" Bloom's Taxonomy of Lorin Anderson, which was published in 2001. The original taxonomy dates to the 1950s. Given the long history of Bloom's Taxonomy and its broad acceptance there is an extensive bibliography which it would be needless to repeat here. For one excellent web source that gathers together bibliography, history, and explanation of the theory, see: [http://epltt.coe.uga.edu/index.php?title=Bloom%27s Taxonomy](http://epltt.coe.uga.edu/index.php?title=Bloom%27s_Taxonomy) [last accessed July 15, 2016]

Many aspects of a core curriculum class change if understanding and application are given primacy over remembering in the composition of a syllabus, and these changes would additionally help to fit such classes more seamlessly into the curricula of what our programs hope to achieve for students on the path toward their majors and as part of their larger college degree experience. Factual knowledge will always remain a vital component of any survey class, and I do not propose eliminating slide identifications or memorizing vocabulary—indeed, these are significant portions of any survey class exam that I offer. Instead, we, as a discipline, would do well to reconsider why and how we ask our students to build these bases of knowledge. If such learning is clearly built as scaffolding into a syllabus structured around understanding and application, then the students' intellectual growth will be greater, the demonstrable value of their education higher, and, hopefully, the retention and dedication of students will grow. As we consider a possible future where faculty positions are threatened by increasing automation of teaching and learning, reconfiguring the outcomes of our core classes emphasizes that their primary value does not lie in the sphere of memorized factual knowledge but rather in the modes of thought cultivated in our students—a type of learning much more tied to the individual faculty-student mentorship and the peer-to-peer learning of a class (in person or online) than to automated quizzes and computer-scored writing.<sup>5</sup>

Conceptualizing the core courses in this manner may not seem exceptionally radical. If we examine both how our core surveys have traditionally been taught and how the textbooks for these classes are organized, however, we will realize just how different prioritizing understanding and application is from seeking to remember via memorization. If a semester is organized around ensuring that students are exposed to a long battery of significant objects, artists, and movements, then the focus is on remembering more than on understanding and application. If classes are so big or faculty so under-supported that writing must be reduced or eliminated from the semester, then the focus of a class shifts to remembering rather than understanding and application. If classroom learning consists of the student's passive consumption of faculty knowledge and does not integrate active student ownership of learning, then the emphasis of the class will remain on remembering more than on understanding and application. Any of these scenarios results in less than optimal student learning and diminishes the value of the core curriculum course within the student's overall higher education. Such

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<sup>5</sup> The pedagogical significance of active learning techniques has been discussed extensively in the interdisciplinary research of SoTL, though relatively little has been published on the application of these ideas in the art history classroom. Two thought pieces on this topic were published in *Rethinking the Introductory Art History Survey*: Thomas E. Russo, "A Collaborative Learning/Assessment Model": 82-83; Brian D. Steele, "The One Minute Paper": 88.

results do not assist our discipline at a time when the humanities are under attack and institutions seek to cut loss centers and winnow the ranks of full-time and tenure-stream faculty. While these realities do not apply exclusively to the art history classroom and have been considered within other humanities disciplines, my goal in this article is to consider the dynamics of their application to our understanding of the core foundations courses in the arts disciplines.

My undergraduate experience of a core survey course can serve to introduce how these areas of remembering versus understanding and application appear in our survey classrooms. The one-semester survey required for my art history degree consisted of the standard “art in the dark” lecture accompanied by a once-a-week discussion section. I do not remember any student participation in the two lecture-based days of each week, other than some questions and answers at the end of class sessions. I do, however, remember the excitement of listening to these lectures, which were divided among all the department’s full-time faculty, so that each professor taught a few weeks’ worth of material in his/her primary area of specialization. In addition to the material introduced during lectures, we were responsible for reading the (then new) Stokstad Art History text, with which lecture material was integrated. Exams consisted of slide identification, vocabulary, and short answer and essay questions. With some variations, this formula is not too different from the system in place in my graduate institution, though there we teaching assistants led the discussion sessions and graded all materials.

While I, like many professional peers with whom I have reminisced, remember the allure of sitting in the darkened classroom, lulled by the atmosphere of the glowing images and erudite speakers, I do also remember occasionally dozing off, despite my strongest attempts to resist the classroom’s soothing darkness. When I review my notes from classes, I also see blanks where a key vocabulary word flew by too quickly and misspellings of phrases and terms in languages with which I was not yet familiar. As I reflect on my own years of college teaching, I realize that what I took away from that course and applied to my professional body of knowledge was less the “facts” about any individual work of art (which, anyway, I always need to update for my own classes) but more the beginning kernels of knowledge of how to think about, look at, and write like an art historian. The foundations of this knowledge came largely from the discussion sections (some of which were held in front of real objects in the college’s museum), from working with faculty mentors who cared about teaching writing and were able to take the time necessary to teach it well (in that semester, everyone in my section had to rewrite our visual analysis, because it did not reach the standard desired by our faculty mentor, a story I enjoy sharing with students every time I assign their first visual analysis), and from listening to faculty

who modeled ways of thinking and analysis in their own research areas, about which they were clearly passionate.

I am sure that the department's faculty had debates or discussions about what to "cover" during the semester. I am equally confident they each made hard decisions about what to keep or cut from their own lectures. Yet, without my notes, I would have no particular memory of which works were discussed and which were omitted. Though the factual knowledge I gained certainly helped me and my peers to achieve success on our path toward our degrees, it was the teaching in the areas encompassed within understanding and application that have remained of greatest enduring value. From the structure of this class, I learned how the fields fit within the larger discipline (modeled by each faculty member teaching in an area of expertise) and core arguments and intersections of the discipline within and across these specializations. Certainly, I learned about individual works of art I had never encountered before, and this exposure built my enthusiasm for the discipline, but within the structure of the course, knowledge of each individual work was most significant as it applied to my introduction to the discipline as a whole. This discussion of my own undergraduate experience is anecdotal, but is nonetheless valuable as it reflects on considerations still pertinent to the discipline. These takeaway memories from an undergraduate experience tentatively support the notion that what we as individual instructors tend to think of as the crucial decisions for a survey class—how to maximize coverage, perhaps while integrating some active learning to help it sink in—are actually just the supporting structures for the more significant learning experiences of the courses.

According to the logic of Bloom's Taxonomy, we have been right to devote the greatest real estate of our introductory survey courses to knowledge. This is the foundational block in the pyramid and the area that answers to the lowest-common denominator of student ability. Yet, because of the nature of the discipline of art history (and I would imagine that this is potentially true in the other Humanities), overemphasis on remembering can actually be counterproductive for student growth in terms of their interest, enthusiasm, and abilities within the discipline. Much of the knowledge base students are asked to build in art history survey courses is visually grounded, and students do not enter the college classroom with the basic training needed to understand this visual material.<sup>6</sup> By contrast to their lack of visual fluency, students who have never had an art class or been to a museum likely still have some degree of knowledge of Western history, literature, and other themes significant to an art history survey course. Yet,

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<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of students' lack of visual preparation see my article: "Critical Perception: an Exploration of the Cognitive Gains of Material Culture Pedagogy," *Winterthur Portfolio* 47 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 2013): 117-138.

barraged by dozens of new works of art in each textbook chapter, a large quantity of foreign and visually grounded vocabulary, and a strong emphasis on visual form, they may not manage to make the connections necessary to build and refine their knowledge and apply it to the material at hand.

This point is worth explaining further, as it gets at the distinction between remembering and understanding. Over the course of a survey class, we ask students to learn key terms, movements, objects, and artists, all of which are remarkable largely for specific formal attributes. Memorizing a slide identification, for example, depends not just on the student's ability to memorize the facts themselves, but also to cross-list these in their mind with the formal identifiers of the pieces. This is fundamentally a different type of remembering than what students may have developed in other disciplines. Research in teaching students to write has conclusively shown that students may build solid skills in writing courses but then fall backward to a significantly lower-level writing ability when they are faced with new subject matter or a discipline with which they are struggling.<sup>7</sup> It stands similarly to reason that, even though students may have mastered the concept of memorization, they need to learn how to retain this ability all over again when faced with new disciplinary challenges. So, remembering facts can actually be difficult for a student to master in a survey classroom in which the discipline and its manners of thought are completely foreign. Indeed, the degree of this unfamiliarity is something difficult, but necessary, for art historians to grasp. My general education students have often struggled just to wrap their heads around the concept that the art objects we study are at the crux of the factual and historical evidence for the class. They are used to art-as-illustration; processing the phenomenon of art-as-agent is a major step.

Without an investment in the discipline or a reason to believe that these facts will be applicable to life outside of that college classroom, a student might justifiably be reluctant to put in the time to complete the work of memorization. A student who sees memorization of slides and vocabulary information as merely an exercise in "busy work" in order to attain a particular grade in the course will not be an intellectually motivated student. Indeed, if memorized knowledge is included in exams simply for the disciplinary significance of these facts, then this is asking students who will not stay in the discipline to learn only for an exam and reinforces a grade-

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<sup>7</sup> For two recent sources on teaching writing in the college classroom and these sorts of interdisciplinary struggles, see: Gary R. Hafer, *Embracing Writing: Ways to Teach Reluctant Writers in Any College Course* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2015); Barbara E. Walvoord, *Assessing and Improving Student Writing in College: A Guide for Institutions, General Education, Departments, and Classrooms* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2014).



centered mentality that does not necessarily promote growth of knowledge. There is nothing per se wrong with such an approach, but I think many humanists would agree that this is not what we hope to achieve through our teaching.

Let's modify this model, then, and think about the possibility of teaching in a fashion where remembering is understood as necessary only as it supports a student's mastery of the understanding and application of ideas. Admittedly, these are levels two and three of Bloom's Taxonomy and theoretically require greater abilities from the student. However, taking into account the struggles of many students to master visual memorization—and the recognition that application of that memorization is largely isolated within the arts disciplines—there is some merit to thinking of these as the foundation stones of our core survey classes rather than fact-based knowledge, as they will provide some of the baseline intellectual ability that will make the visual memorization easier and more relevant. Indeed, if slide identification requires students to process visual memory through the comparison and identification of particular attributes of works, this visual cross-listing grows out of a level of understanding and application, suggesting that remembering is in this case best situated on a foundation of knowledge. Again, based on the experience of my own survey classroom, I have found students much more willing to do the work to master facts about the works of art we study if this is tied to evaluation of their ability to understand these facts in the context of larger course ideas. Further, students also seem more willing to work toward this mastery if they are being asked to weave this understanding together in demonstrations of applied learning (through such things as visual analysis papers or thought-provoking exam essay prompts).

How do such ideas look within an actual college classroom? To explore this, I will begin by explaining the shift in the conceptualization of our “learning outcomes” that might result in such a change to our syllabi. Then, I will outline the principles I have developed for my own survey classes as I have begun to apply this approach toward understanding and application rather than remembering.

Based on the formula of Bloom's Taxonomy, learning outcomes in a survey course organized around remembering might focus on memorized concepts, terms, and key figures. By contrast, aiming toward understanding might mean evaluating a student's ability to interpret, compare, or defend an idea. Application builds further on this by asking students to use examples to construct

their own argument, to offer criticism, or to use knowledge within a new context.<sup>8</sup> Thoughtful use of evaluation mechanisms (in class activities, writing assignments, and exams) can enable instructors to gauge each of these levels of outcomes.

In my own survey classes, I have developed four organizing principles that support my interest in shaping my classes around understanding and application. The first principle is to dedicate time in my survey classes to teach study skills and to self-consciously introduce students to the discipline. Indeed, as all of my classes are “core curriculum” with no prerequisites, this is how I begin the first week of every semester. While this means I have fewer days of class devoted to content “coverage,” I have found the trade-off to be worthwhile. Students understand from this introduction that they are learning a discipline with its own logic, they are introduced to the idea that they must learn to look differently, and they are aware that they will need to develop new study skills. Most generally, these class days are valuable, because they make the expected process of teaching and learning more transparent to the students, which increases their role as stakeholders in their own learning.

A second way that I have found to build understanding is to focus on selecting objects that speak to one another across sections of the course and help students to realize the knowledge that they have built. For example, in the second half of the art history survey, Titian’s *Venus of Urbino*, Manet’s *Olympia*, and Guerilla Girls’, *Do Women Have to be Naked to be in the Met Museum?* resonate with each other in very satisfying ways across a semester and provoke learning about form, content, and interpretation—all of which is invaluable for students. Drawing such connections sometimes involves including lesser-known works of art by standard artists or even deviating from the main pillars of the discipline—but it is worthwhile for the gains in the intellectual growth of students.

Third, I have found it is necessary to make choices to winnow the number of works of art we study together over the course of the semester. A slower pace to the class, allowing for greater time spent thinking as a group about a work of art and enabling the possibility of airing a larger number of scholarly and student perspectives about the work, gives students the opportunity to gain greater mastery of a work of art and its significance. If you have spent the better part of a class day with *Olympia*, then students will more readily make the connection when the Guerrilla Girls appear in the next class unit. This trade off means many significant works are not

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<sup>8</sup> An excellent web-based source that breaks down the levels of Bloom’s taxonomy into learning outcomes is provided by the University of Oregon: <http://sa-assessment.uoregon.edu/Resources-and-Training/Writing-Student-Learning-Outcomes> [Last accessed October 24, 2016]

individually addressed within the classroom. Hopefully, though, students have constructed the scaffolding to understand aspects of these works on their own if they encounter them in a museum, textbook, or other context later on. It is worth reiterating here that my goal in this essay is not to take a stand on which works of art we should include in the survey but rather to recommend focusing their number. Each instructor will find an individual balance between coverage and content that supports their students' understanding and application of knowledge; however, I would assert that the selection of objects in order to forward these goals is more important than any specific arguments about the coverage of the course. Core courses are introductory, not comprehensive. If we open the door to manners of thought, reflection, and understanding, this is much more valuable than exposure to works without the tools for understanding.

Finally, incorporating active learning into the survey class allows the students to apply what they have learned. Whether they are answering questions about a primary source text, solving problems in a group, practicing visual analysis, having a debate, or merely discussing what they see, students engage and learn when they become active players in the classroom. These activities take time, and if the educator's mind is on factual knowledge to be "covered," they can appear as inefficient "time sucks" against the inclusion of greater coverage. Nonetheless, they richly reward attempts to grow student understanding and students' ability to apply their ideas. Another example from my Art History II course can illustrate this point. Early in the semester, students are asked to read excerpts from Giorgio Vasari's biography of Giotto. In class, they then work in groups to answer a series of questions about this passage. In completing the exercise, students are guided to understand the particular formal innovations that Vasari highlights and also to consider his text as a manipulated historical argument. We are able to use this exercise both to introduce some traditional core ideas about the origins of the Renaissance, and also to expose the students to the origins of the discipline of art history. Having had the opportunity to grapple with the text and apply it to works of art, students gain a deeper understanding about and enthusiasm for the material in the unit.

While a survey class structured around these principles may expose students to a radically smaller number of works of art than one focused on "coverage," it has the distinct advantage of training students more completely in how to think about art and how to express themselves both orally and in writing about what they see. Focusing on deep learning about a modest number of works of art enables students to gain a basic level of understanding of each piece and to have some ability to think in an integrative fashion across the works of art. Organizing my surveys in this fashion allows me to explain to students that studying for slide identifications should be

integrated alongside preparing for short answer, vocabulary, and even essay questions. Remembering becomes a tool for building knowledge that serves the portions of evaluations that test understanding and application. Students are thus led to realize that their learning is integrative and that it can permit them to become part of evaluating and, possibly, shaping history through the writing process. Armed with this mental training, they are more skilled for future art history classes. They also have gained cognitive abilities they are aware have application outside the art history classroom—whether in their other college courses or life beyond higher education. By training minds that are curious and skilled in understanding the world of art, we can provide students with the skills to fill in any gaps in the “coverage” of their introductory semester. Such mastery of fact-based knowledge, thus, becomes something a student may want to pursue avidly through individual reading and upper-level courses, rather than something they are forced to cram, regurgitate, and forget based on the testing cycle of the introductory semester.

Finally, some thoughts concerning how such a reconfiguration of the survey mentality might influence the larger structure of learning goals across our curricula. Many articles explore the ability of the arts disciplines to train students in “critical viewing,” a concept I have developed elsewhere as the teaching of “critical perception.”<sup>9</sup> While highly useful in everyday life, this is not a skill that frequently enters classrooms of higher education outside of art and design classrooms. Arguably, promotion of this learning outcome would increase the understood value of art and art history courses within the college experience.

Admittedly, maximizing students’ ability to develop fine-tuned skills of critical perception is beyond the scope of an introductory classroom. However, the survey class can lay the first foundations of ability in this area—but emphasis on fact-based learning, which is inherent to the “coverage” mentality, will not achieve this foundational result. Given that many students only come to an arts classroom while fulfilling general education requirements, filling these contact hours with instruction geared toward memorization will provide them with information they have little incentive to retain beyond an exam and even less motivation to digest analytically. In other words, although this knowledge could be useful in eventually building the fabric of their skills in critical perception, it will not achieve this goal unless the student is one of the rare few who proceeds on to complete a degree in art history, progressing through the increasingly higher levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy as their education continues. If, instead, we focus our survey classrooms on the goals of building understanding and application, then we help our students to

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<sup>9</sup> Sienkewicz, “Critical Perception.”

develop real skills of critical perception, which they may, in fact, be able to apply elsewhere (such as in their exposure to science, medicine, advertising, the Internet, or other spheres). Further, we may even inspire them with a respect for these ways of thinking and analysis, such that they return to pursue more coursework in these areas. In order to cultivate such real-world applications, I require my students to write a formal analysis of an everyday object that they own in addition to the longer formal analysis of a museum object toward the end of the semester. In art appreciation, I limit the students' writing to analyses of common objects in the form of a larger and more complex assignment aimed at developing their engagement with the world around them.

As preparation for upper-level courses in the discipline, surveys based on understanding and application will also prepare students more fully for the writing and research necessary for greater command of the discipline. At my current institution, no courses have prerequisites, and they must all be approached as "introductory" surveys in terms of building requisite knowledge and skills in the discipline. This has taught me to be patient in working over and over again with students to build their skills at understanding and application, no matter what the specialized level of the course. For those privileged enough to teach at institutions with sequential curricula of courses, such an emphasis would provide students with skills that they can necessarily take from one class to another. If studying American Art, Roman Art, or African Art, the skills gained in building understanding and application will be of greater use to the student than a cache of facts and terms that are not fully applicable to the individual fields of the discipline on which mid-level surveys often focus. This approach to pedagogy will also mean that students are more likely to reach the highest levels of critical thinking and critical perception by the time that they complete their undergraduate work, as they will have been trained from their earliest classes in the intellectual growth necessary to, eventually, reach "Create" or "Evaluate," in the highest reaches of Bloom's Taxonomy.

In closing, then, let me briefly consider what it might look like for our discipline to wholeheartedly embrace the values of understanding and application as the foundational outcomes of our survey classes in the place currently occupied by knowledge.

First, the types of survey texts on which we rely would ideally need to be adjusted. While it is invaluable for students to read an art historical textbook as a model for thinking and writing in the discipline, the approach taken in current survey texts is to inundate the reader with fact-based coverage. Like the priorities already stated for the classroom experience, these books might best bolster our students' formation by discussing fewer works of art with greater depth and nuance.

A textbook that I have found to be very useful in building the understanding of my students is Anne d'Alleva's book *Look!*, which offers an introduction to the habits of mind and typical assignments of the discipline.<sup>10</sup> Although no such survey textbook exists to my knowledge, a text that reduced the quantity of objects discussed in order to increase the depth and conceptual focus would be a more useful resource for such a survey classroom than one striving for breadth and inclusivity within each area covered.

Second, departments would need to look for ways to support faculty workloads so that those teaching the survey classes could grade several written products during the semester without being overburdened. These need not necessarily be long projects, but essay exams and one or two papers help students to grow as thinkers in the ways necessary to display evidence of greater levels of understanding and application.

Third, and related, departments would recognize the foundational intellectual work done for students' training in these classes and would seek out an array of ways to support the faculty assigned to teach these classes—whether by assigning more full-time faculty to teach surveys and/or by integrating part-time faculty more fully into conversations about teaching and learning and offering them similar support in exchange for similar investment in these survey classes. Although asking students to complete research projects of their own in survey classes may exceed their abilities in the discipline, students will likely be most inspired to think and analyze in ways appropriate to the discipline if this is modeled for them by faculty who, themselves, are researchers as well as teachers. Institutions that support understanding- and application-based education should find ways to balance those two areas of faculty ability while also encouraging faculty to find engaging ways to build tastes of their research even into survey classrooms.

Finally, departments would need to look for mechanisms to evaluate students' abilities in understanding and application that would offer demonstrable evidence of these outcomes. It is easy enough to test students on a uniform list of slide identifications, names, and vocabulary, but we need to have a strategy for gathering evidence to show student learning in areas that are actually of greater value to disciplinary growth.

If we replace a mentality of "coverage" with one that esteems depth of student understanding, we will not be reducing the value of our survey classes or watering down our discipline. Rather, we will be focusing on the core aspects of learning most likely to help our students understand why

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<sup>10</sup> Anne d'Alleva, *Look! Art History Fundamentals* (New York: Pearson, 2006).

the discipline is relevant to their lives, worthy of their time, and intellectually inspiring. By embracing the introductory surveys as vital gateways of the mind rather than as hurdles of fact-based memorization, we may also be able to strengthen the position of our discipline in the face of increasing institutional and social pressures. Finally, as the discipline begins its formal dialog about SoTL in art history, this concept may give us something on which to ruminate with regard to (re)adapting the models of extant scholarship to our discipline. I have advocated here for rearranging the building blocks of Bloom's Taxonomy, or at least for understanding that even in our entry-level classes, our discipline will succeed best when it prioritizes understanding and application over fact-based memorization. As our body of SoTL for art history grows, we may encounter other paradigms wherein accepted knowledge of student learning applies differently within the context of our perception-based discipline. We should look for and embrace these realizations even as we look to adopt the best practices gained from the preexisting literature of teaching and learning in the college classroom.

As scholars of art history, we are all aware of the intellectual spark that eventually led us to the discipline. SoTL may enable us to understand how to inspire more students in the current generation to feel connected to the discipline through their core classes. Although we may feel nostalgia for our own youthful excitement during "art in the dark" slide lectures, research in student learning has made it clear that it is time to take the survey class in another direction. While jettisoning "coverage" may feel like dumping the most valuable cargo, it is a way of liberating students' minds to focus on the core habits and values of the discipline. As they continue in our classes, they will add their own valuable armature of facts, but it is only by persuading them to commit mentally to the cause that we can get them to enlist in the first place. Less may well be more in keeping our discipline sailing safely in the rough waters of higher education in the twenty-first century.