

BEYOND THE ANECDOTE: LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND SOTL

HEATHER HORTON, QUEENS COLLEGE, CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

What Learning Objectives can do for you:

- Help you manage content and escape the “coverage” loop
- Provide a path toward skills-based teaching
- Motivate Generation WHY
- Provide Structure for SOTL projects

Learning Objective (LO): specific, student-centered statement describing what a learner will know or be able to do by the end of a course, module, lesson

-- or conference presentation.

Learning Objectives

- La** Explain the cultural foundations of the diverse ways art has been defined and characterized.
- Lb** Distinguish four ways art historians investigate works of art.
- Lc** Identify the components of the four-part method of art historical investigation that leads to the historical interpretation of a work of art.



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Lesson Objectives

- Students will determine their understanding of art history by collecting data from the four historical monuments: Parthenon, Stonehenge, Giza Pyramids, and Taj Mahal.
- Students will determine their understanding of mathematics by analyzing different three-dimensional forms used in historical monuments.

Big Idea 1: Artists manipulate materials and ideas to create an aesthetic object, act, or event.

Essential Question: *What is art and how is it made?*

- **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1.1:** Students differentiate the components of form, function, content, and/or context of a work of art.
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- **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1.2:** Students explain how artistic decisions about art making shape a work of art.
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- **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1.3:** Students describe how context influences artistic decisions about creating a work of art.
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- **LEARNING OBJECTIVE 1.4:** Students analyze form, function, content, and/or context to infer or explain the possible intentions for creating a specific work of art.

By definition, LOs should be:

- **Student centered**, focused on what the student will accomplish, rather than on what the instructor will present
- **Measurable**, allowing for assessment of whether the LO was fulfilled
- **Action-Oriented**, emphasize a specific action students will do, rather than “know” or “understand”
- **Goal-oriented**, provide a focus and purpose for the learning process



“First draft” LO for this presentation:


Listeners will consider how Learning Objectives can not only guide their classes, but also provide structure for SOTL projects.

Student-centered? Measurable? Action-Oriented? Goal-Oriented?

Better LO:

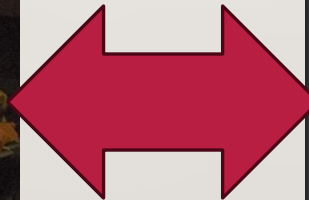
Listeners will reflect on at least one LO in a course that they currently teach and reframe the LO in the context of a SOTL project.





Learning Objectives got me through Covid disruptions and changed my teaching.

- Socratic-style lecture, with the mute button?
- Slide Essays, online?
- Exams...



I needed to figure out

- what I was doing,
- what I wanted students to learn from it,
- and how I was going to measure what they had learned.

In other words, I was writing and assessing learning objectives for my classes.

Light-bulb moment: LOs were the foundation of my teaching all along, even if I wasn't thinking of them that way.



Links of Relevance

- [Teams Medieval Institute Publications](#)
- [Middle English Texts Series \(METS\)](#)
- [TEAMS Facebook](#)



"Teaching Medieval Jerusalem: Student-Centered Approaches to Interpreting Historical Objects and Spaces," Heather Horton (Queens College, CUNY)



Teaching Medieval Jerusalem:
Student-Centered Approaches to Interpreting Historical Objects and Spaces
 Heather Horton, Queens College, CUNY

I developed an undergraduate seminar on medieval Jerusalem in Pratt Institute's History of Art and Design Department.¹ The idea began when I was invited to teach a long-standing course in the department on the Crusades and their impact on European art. One of my colleagues, since retired, had taught this consistently popular class for some time. When the course came into my hands, it presented an opportunity to reconsider its goals and scope and better align with the department's commitment to cross-cultural themes, as well as to strengthen our offerings in material outside the European canon. Moving the geographical "center" of the course from Europe to Jerusalem offered a logical way to present students with a multi-layered, wide-ranging exploration of medieval art in at least three traditions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and across even more cultures. At the same time, the emphasis on a single city provided a consistent focus, giving the course a coherence that made it approachable for undergraduates.

<https://teams-medieval.org/teaching-medieval-jerusalem-student-centered-approaches-to-interpret-historical-objects-and-spaces/heather-horton-queens-college-cuny/>

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HELP YOU MANAGE CONTENT AND ESCAPE THE “COVERAGE” LOOP

- Course planning can emphasize content (History of Photography, Survey of Medieval Art, Female Artists...)
- This approach emphasizes “content and coverage.”
- Learning objectives are one path out of the false idea that a course could (or should) cover everything on a topic.

COURSE DESIGN: LEARNING OBJECTIVES, THEN CONTENT

‘Introduction to Art History’ that wasn’t about cave-cathedral (or adaptations of that formula), but focused on

- visual and comparative analysis
- analyzing primary sources alongside secondary sources
- identifying research questions and documenting the research process

***almost* no content in these Learning Objectives**

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and classify key monuments of architecture, sculpture, painting, and design in art, from ca. 1300 to the present day.
- Analyze important visual elements (line, shape, texture, color, space), design principles (balance, contrast, movement, unity), and techniques across media, using proper terminology.
- Examine artworks both as aesthetic objects and as historical artifacts by discussing the social, political, and religious contexts within which a work was made.
- Analyze and critique how concepts about art, artists, and art-making from the past serve as a foundation for ideas about art today.
- Effectively communicate and analyze, compare and contrast (verbally and in writing) works of art.

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

ARTH102: History of Western Art II

[Heather Horton](#), *CUNY Queens College*

Follow

Document Type

Syllabus

Publication Date

2024

Abstract

Syllabus for History of Western Art II, a chronological survey of major periods, styles, artists, and monuments of western visual arts, primarily painting, sculpture, and architecture beginning with the development of the arts from about 1300 to the present day.

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[History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology Commons](#)

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PROVIDE A PATH TOWARD SKILLS-BASED TEACHING

- Learning objectives are all about skills.
 - Use “Active verbs” (define, describe, analyze in writing...) so that these skills can be measured.
- What if you plan a course based on the skills students will gain rather than the content you will cover?

MOTIVATE GENERATION 'WHY'

- Why are we doing this? Why do we have to? What's the point?
- As we all know, 'because that's how I learned' is not a strong answer.
(But implicitly, it might be why we do some things.)
- Learning Objectives can push us to better answers.
 - We're doing this exercise to build these skills and learn this material...

PROVIDE STRUCTURE FOR SOTL PROJECTS

- A lot of pedagogical resources are based on anecdotes.
- I tried this; it worked; here's what I learned.
- Useful and helpful! But not SoTL

SOTL, **SYSTEMATIC** INQUIRY INTO STUDENT LEARNING

- Inquiry focused
- Grounded in context
- Methodologically sound
- In partnership with students
- Appropriately public



Felten, Peter. 2013. "Principles of Good Practice in SoTL". *Teaching and Learning Inquiry* 1 (1):121-25. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.1.1.121>.

HOW DO WE GET FROM THE ANECDOTE TO SYSTEMATIC INQUIRY?

- emphasizing LOs could give you a systematic way to study your teaching

SOTL PROJECT ON VISUAL ANALYSIS, FOR EXAMPLE

Students will be able:

- To identify and analyze key visual elements (line, shape, value, texture, color, space), and design principles, (balance, contrast, movement, economy, unity), in writing, using appropriate terminology.
- Could be applied across courses covering a wide range of content
- Could be applied across instructors, or even schools
- Potential to end up with a significant body of information

PROJECT ON AI AND DESCRIPTIVE SKILLS?



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