

UBC Department of Art History, Visual Art & Theory

Honours in Art History



We acknowledge that the UBC Vancouver campus is situated on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam).

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The Great Hall at the Museum of Anthropology. Paul H. Joseph / UBC Brand & Marketing

Program Overview

The honours program in art history is suited to exceptionally motivated students who intend to continue their studies with advanced and focused work in art history, whether through graduate study or a career in arts, heritage, or a related field. Building on the major program outcomes, as an honours graduate you will gain further research and writing experience, and develop an enhanced capacity for independent and self-directed study in art history by completing an extended research essay.

The honours essay offers students an opportunity to develop a specific research interest and investigate a topic in significant depth. The scope and length of the honours essay are determined in consultation with an art history faculty supervisor. The faculty supervisor will provide guidance and support over a period of two semesters as you work to produce a well-researched and polished essay approximately 25–40 pages in length. Typically, the fall term is dedicated to developing the topic, researching, establishing methods, compiling a bibliography, and drafting an outline and sections of a first draft. The spring semester involves further writing, faculty review of a full draft, revising, editing, and submitting the final essay for grading.

The honours program has the same course requirements as the major program (42 ARTH credits) plus:

- 12 additional credits of upper-level ARTH (four courses numbered 300 or higher); and
- 6 credits of ARTH 499: Honours Essay.

Completing these additional requirements gives honours students a minimum of 48 credits in art history at the upper level and an opportunity to engage with a significant breadth of subject areas through diverse coursework. The additional 18 credits required by the honours program replace elective credits in the minimum 120 credits required to complete the BA and BFA degrees. The addition of a minor or second major program may require more than 120 credits of coursework. Honours students should consult with Arts Academic Advising to ensure they complete sufficient coursework to satisfy the Outside Requirement for their degree.

Eligibility

Students normally enter the honours program at the beginning of their third year, upon the completion of at least 12 credits of ARTH courses, normally at the 100 and 200 levels (6 credits of which can be in visual art [VISA]). Honours students should have a high B average in all first- and second-year coursework and a minimum A- average in art history. If students cannot maintain that minimum average in their third-year art history courses, they will be advised to revert to the major program.

When deciding whether to pursue the honours program, students should consider their ability to be self-motivated, commit to a long-term project, manage their time, and work independently with periodic consultations with their supervisor.

Ultimately, the honours program is designed for students who wish to engage more deeply with the history of art, develop their research and writing skills, expand their knowledge of a specific topic of interest, and develop a relationship with a faculty mentor. Students will graduate with the qualification of an honours degree (required for admission to a few graduate schools), extensive coursework to further support the student in a master's or PhD program, and a highly-polished academic essay, reviewed by their supervisor, which could serve as a writing sample for applications or for publication. Honours students seeking job opportunities will be able to demonstrate to potential employers their abilities to research, write, manage their time, complete complex projects, and work independently.

Declaring

Students who have determined they are interested in and eligible for the honours program should contact the department's undergraduate advisor Greg Gibson, who will verify their eligibility and approve their enrollment in the program. They will also need to secure an art history faculty supervisor who agrees to direct their research, evaluate their paper, and determine their grade for ARTH 499. Before entering the program, students should have a thesis topic in mind, based on their own research interests, and agreement from a willing faculty supervisor with expertise on the proposed topic. To identify potential faculty supervisors, students are encouraged to consult the faculty listing on the AHVA website, the undergraduate advisor, their professors, TAs, and peers. The student does not need to have taken a course with the supervisor they approach: the best fit is a scholar whose research aligns with the student's area of inquiry for the honours project. Initial conversations about a student's interest in the honours program and potential research topic can begin with the undergraduate advisor or with an art history faculty member whom the student would like to work with. All three parties—student, undergraduate advisor, faculty supervisor—must agree to formalize enrollment in the program

Timeline

The honours essay should commence after the student has completed the majority of upper-level program requirements, including the required ARTH 300: Methods and Approaches in Art History. The upper-level coursework will develop the student's skills in research, citations, and art-historical writing.

Refer to the sample timeline below for a four-year honours art history degree with no minor. Every student will have a different path to their degree. If a student is unsure about their degree path, they are encouraged to inquire with both the AHVA undergraduate advisor and Arts Academic Advising.

Years one and two: Complete minimum of 12 credits of ARTH courses (normally at the 100 and 200 levels), some electives, and other Faculty of Arts degree requirements. Declare ARTH major upon completion of at least 27 credits, with a minimum of 3 credits of ARTH.

End of year two: Discuss honours program eligibility with undergraduate advisor. Approach potential faculty supervisors.

Year three: Upon admission to the program, meet with the undergraduate advisor to determine an area of focus. (Note: the additional upper-level ARTH coursework required for the honours program may relate to the 15-credit area of focus but is not required to.) Summer before fourth (or final) year: Meet with faculty supervisor to establish a project timeline with concrete deliverables and a plan for the year.

Fourth (or final) year: Request registration in ARTH 499: Honours Essay, a six-credit course that spans both terms (the undergraduate advisor processes the registration). The first term is normally dedicated to topic development, research, outlining, and drafting sections, and the second term involves writing, submitting a full draft for review, substantive revisions, copyediting, and formatting the paper for submission.

Roles and Responsibilities

The student and the faculty supervisor are colleagues in the project, with different responsibilities and shared accountability for its success. They should discuss and agree upon expectations, modes of communication, and milestones in the development of the essay. They will need to establish a balance between student autonomy and faculty supervision. The honours project allows the student to conduct a research project independent of a class or syllabus and to determine the direction of their own inquiry, under the guidance and mentorship of a faculty member.

Ultimately, the essay is the student's project and responsibility, not the supervisor's. The student should not rely on the supervisor to provide content, and the supervisor should not commandeer the direction of the paper. The honours essay is meant to challenge the student and hone their abilities in research, writing, and managing a self-directed project.

The colleagues should communicate clearly about their expectations and needs, both at their initial meeting and throughout the year, to ensure the process goes smoothly. Both parties should be accountable to the other and realistic in articulating how the elements of the project/supervision will fit with their other commitments and workload for each term. They should agree upon a schedule for project milestones (such as proposal, bibliography, outline, draft) and a schedule of communication (such as response time for emails, turnaround time for review of drafts, number of expected hours for meetings, advising, or feedback). The role of the faculty supervisor is to support the processes of research and writing. Ultimately they will evaluate student learning through summative assessment of the honours paper (determining a final grade for the submitted paper). However, they should provide formative assessment (constructive feedback, suggestions, advice) of the student's work in progress at multiple stages of development.

The nature of the faculty supervisor's involvement will vary from one student to another, as each project is unique. The supervisor and student are encouraged to communicate clearly about their expectations and come to an agreement about the level of involvement and interaction they will commit to at each stage of the project, which may include:

Early stages—Topic development and research:

- discuss the student's plan and timeline for project milestones and communications
- define the research question(s) and scope of inquiry, select case studies
- suggest potential sources, readings, compile a bibliography
- answer questions the student may have about the readings or the process in general along the way
- discuss interpretations, arguments, and methods the student is developing (when these are emergent and there is still lots of time to consider or pivot)
- review an outline, or review sections of a rough draft

Middle stage—Substantive edit:

- review a complete rough draft to provide suggestions for improvement, further reading, and substantial revisions to the argument (if given enough time for this review and for the student to incorporate the feedback and undertake major revisions if needed, ideally early in term 2)

Final stage—Preparation for submission:

- the supervisor may agree to assist with copyediting and proofreading the final draft, notes, and bibliography. (This is a copyedit—not to be confused with a substantive edit, which focuses on essay structure, argumentation, use of sources; it would also be a separate review from the final assessment.)
- assign a final grade for the paper, and for ARTH 499

Honours Essay

The honours essay comprises the core of the art history honours program. It is a research paper positing an argument or interpretation supported by ample evidence drawn from relevant scholarly sources. It should run approximately 25–40 pages double-spaced with footnotes (not counting images and bibliography), using 12pt Times New Roman or Arial. Footnotes and bibliography are formatted in *Chicago* style. A title page should include the essay title, student's full name, supervisor's name (with "Dr." or "Professor"), and the date submitted.

The approved, final version should be sent to the undergraduate advisor for the department archive. The essay title, date, and author name will be listed on the department website.

Learning Objectives

On completion of the honours paper, students will have developed disciplinary skills in art history, including visual analysis, historical contextualization, and critical interpretation. They will also develop competency in scholarly research and communication, including topic development, self-directed research, long-form academic writing, citation, and editing. The paper gives students the freedom and support to explore their potential for further academic study, and deepen their knowledge in their topic of interest. Students will be well-versed in the academic dialogue around their topic and be well-positioned to pursue the topic in further educational or professional contexts if they so choose.

Grading

The faculty supervisor is responsible for assessing the paper, and entering the final grade by the last day of the grading period. To allow ample time for grading, the paper should be submitted a week before this term-end date, or an alternate deadline may be offered at the discretion of the supervisor. When grading, the supervisor should consider the student's performance over their time together holistically, taking into account the student's dedication, effort, and growth alongside the strength of the paper itself. The supervisor will devise their own grading rubric; it is reasonable for the student to ask to see this rubric at the outset of the project.

Grading considerations may include:

Argument	Topic is significant. The author articulates a thesis statement and builds a convincing argument, supported by evidence; paper is well-organized, employs a clear structure and logical development of ideas and evidence from one paragraph to the next.
Analysis	Critical analysis of the case study, engaging in visual analysis, historical contextualization, interpretation, comparison, evaluation using sound methodology and reasoning.
Research	Effective research; identification of relevant scholarly sources; proper documentation and use of sources with due acknowledgement. Effective and critical use of primary sources if applicable.
Formatting	Paper is formatted correctly, with citations, footnotes and bibliography, according to the current edition of the <i>Chicago Manual of Style</i> .
Punctuality	Student responds to communications within a reasonable timeframe; student meets agreed-upon deadlines.

Tips

The honours essay is challenging even for strong writers because of its length, the time commitment involved, and the nature of independent study. Students are encouraged to have produced an outline and robust bibliography (already consulted and annotated or mined for evidence) by the end of the first term, and begun work on a rough draft, which would ideally be ready for the supervisor to review early in term 2.

Students must budget their time for ARTH 499, as it has no designated weekly meeting time, like a regular course. The student and supervisor should agree on their approach to this: i.e., how many hours a week or month should the student invest in the project, how often will the two meet, what deadlines or milestones the student must meet. Students are responsible for holding themselves accountable.

The student and their supervisor should create and adhere to a list of deadlines to ensure that the project is completed on time, i.e., breaking the paper up into sections, completing citations by a certain date, etc.

Facilities, Programs, and Resources

Guest Lecturer and Visiting Artist Programs

Each year the department invites distinguished international and Canadian critics, curators, artists, and scholars to address challenging and topical themes relevant to the study and practice of art. In addition to the short-term distinguished visitors, AHVA also hosts artists in residence at the Audain Art Centre. Past artists in residence include Beau Dick, Marianne Nicolson, and Stan Douglas. Visiting artists, guest lecturers, and artists in residence may deliver a public lecture, lead an intensive seminar, participate in graduate student critiques, conduct studio visits and assist students in the development of their work and early professional career.

These programs are made possible by the generous support of the Rennie Collection, Joan Carlisle-Irving Endowment, Audain Endowment for Critical and Curatorial Studies, and the Koerner Foundation.

The AHVA Visual Resources Centre (VRC)

The Visual Resources Centre (VRC) houses a community study space, meeting spaces and over half a million visual materials. The VRC has total holdings of over 450,000 35mm photographic slides, videos, films, DVDs and a growing database of 60,000 digital images, covering all areas of art history and visual art as represented by the curricula of the AHVA department and the film program. As a vital teaching and research facility for both faculty and students, the VRC continues to extend its resources and services to the university communities through collaborative projects in the areas of e-learning and distance education.

Irving K. Barber Learning Centre: Music, Art, and Architecture Library

The Music, Art, and Architecture Library is located in the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre. The collection includes books and journals on visual art, art history, architecture, community and regional planning, dance, design, and music. Special materials include exhibition catalogues, pamphlets, microforms, clippings, picture files, CD-ROMs, and online indexes and databases.

Circulating books are located in the open stacks of the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre.

Most material circulates for two weeks. The library provides many areas for students to study: silent and group study spaces, a graduate research room, and a digital media commons. Library staff with specialization in visual art and art history is available to assist with reference, instruction, and tours.

<http://ikblc.ubc.ca/>

The Museum of Anthropology

UBC's Museum of Anthropology, designed by Arthur Erickson and opened in 1976, is situated on the Point Grey cliffs overlooking Howe Sound and the North Shore mountains. Both its setting and architecture are inspired by coastal First Nations settlements of British Columbia. The collections include the famous Northwest Coast First Nations collection, the Walter and Marianne Koerner Collection, an international textile collection, and archaeological findings of British Columbia and the North Pacific Rim.

<http://moa.ubc.ca>

The Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery

This standalone contemporary art gallery opened in 1995. The gallery is a public facility contributing to the cultural life of the campus, the city, the province, and beyond. Throughout the year the gallery hosts a variety of informative and provocative exhibitions that confirm the creative and eclectic aspects of contemporary art. Exhibitions are generated internally or borrowed and draw on work from local, national, and international artists, other Canadian art institutions, art organizations and international sources. The gallery attempts to expose the broadest possible spectrum of visual concerns to both the university community and the public at large. It also sponsors visiting speakers as well as occasional symposia.

<http://belkin.ubc.ca>

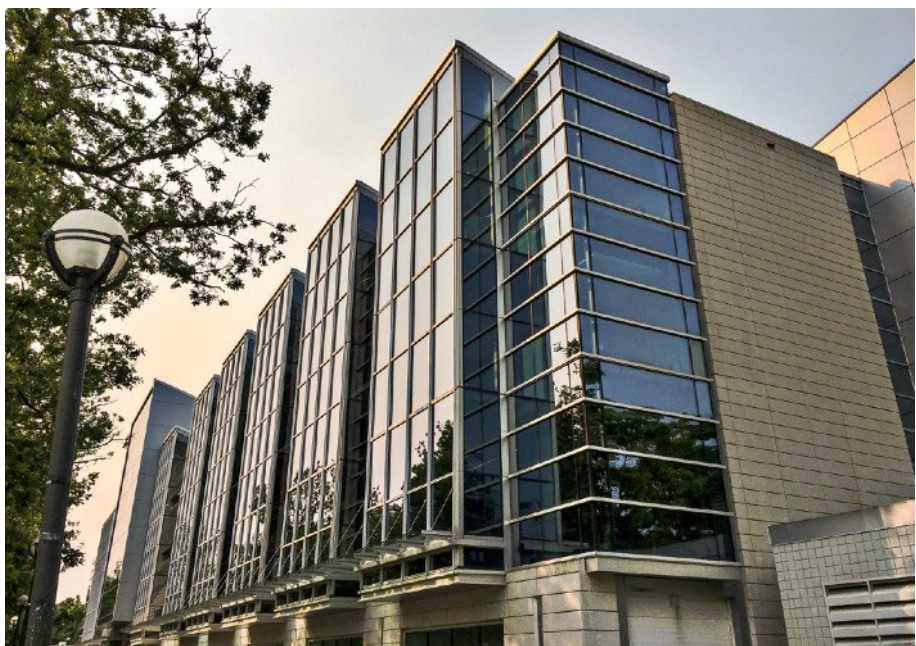
Xwi7xwa Library

Xwi7xwa (pronounced whei-wha) began in the 1970s with the founding of the Indian Education Resource Centre. The collection later came under the care of the Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP). When the First Nations House of Learning opened the Longhouse in May of 1993, NITEP transferred the collection to Xwi7xwa Library. Xwi7xwa Library, now a branch of the UBC Library, has collections consisting of

approximately 12,000 items, including about 6,000 books, 450 videos, 5,000 vertical file materials, curriculum resources, journals and newspapers, maps, posters, theses and dissertations, the G.A. (Bud) Mintz special collection, and some archival materials. The collections focus on First Nations in British Columbia, but also include contextual materials about Aboriginal people in Canada as a whole.

In addition to special collections, Xwi7xwa has research librarians expert in Indigenous areas, and is an international leader in Indigenous classification research.

<https://xwi7xwa.library.ubc.ca>



TOP The Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery

BOTTOM The Music, Art, and Architecture Library (inside the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre).

Contacts

Faculty and Areas of Research

Please visit ahva.ubc.ca for AHVA faculty biographies and research areas.

Staff Contact Information

Please visit ahva.ubc.ca for AHVA staff contact information.

Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery Contact Information

Please visit belkin.ubc.ca for staff contact information.

For questions and inquiries, please contact:

Undergraduate Advisor: Greg Gibson

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Disclaimer

This brochure in no way contradicts or modifies any rule laid down in the University Calendar, which should be consulted when precise information on any specific point on course program requirements is required. This is obtainable from the Office of the Registrar:

Brock Hall, 2106

1874 East Mall

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V6T 1Z1

(604) 822-2844

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/>



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Faculty of Arts