

# Research Assignment Stipend Report

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**Course: ASAG6300 Graduate Seminar**

**Semester: Spring 2025**

## Introduction

The Graduate Seminar is a course taken by MFA students of the Division of Art, with the objective of giving them theoretical support in their artistic production and written MFA thesis. At the Division of Art, this course is offered once per semester, for the four semesters that constitute the MFA program. A different professor is chosen to lead this course in each semester, to guarantee that different approaches are applied to this course's objectives.

My initial plan was to conduct this course as a reading group, in which I would propose the reading of a different text in relation to each of the seven enrolled students. Each student would also propose their own reading. The sum would amount to 14 texts, corresponding to the 14 weeks of the course.

With the Research Assignment Stipend, however, I decided to change my plans from a reading group to a writing group. This would address a need for academic writing skills that are usually not very well developed among art students, and that are commonly overlooked.

I would like to say a BIG THANK YOU to Kate Alleman for her help and dedication in the development and the execution of this course.

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## Description of the information literacy assignment or activities

This research assignment consisted in the research and production of a Literature Review by the students, based on keywords related to their artistic practices and proposed MFA in Art projects, involving the following steps:

Reading and discussion of introduction by Umberto Eco in Candida Höfer: Libraries. Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 2005

Workshop 1: What is a Literature Review? (With the help of Hamon Arts Librarian Kate Alleman)

Workshop 2: The SMU Libraries Research Guides: Art & Art History (With the help of Hamon Arts Librarian Kate Alleman)

Reading of materials selected.

Written analysis of materials selected.

Workshop 3: The Chicago Manual of Style (With the help of Hamon Arts Librarian Kate Alleman)

Workshop 4: How to write and abstract.

Apart from the presentations by Kate Alleman and myself, the classes consisted of small exercises in writing, with the objective of making the students progressively more knowledgeable and confident in their academic writing skills.

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## Method of assessment

Assessment for this course was done based in the students' participation during in-class exercises.

The students were given small assignments related to the topics addressed on a given day and, because the group was small (seven students), each one read their contributions, and we discussed the results in group critiques.

Four of the seven students were committed to writing their MFA thesis, and they used their time during classes to do that. I offered to help them in this process by reading their drafts and making written comments.

The other three students still had one year ahead of their deadline for thesis submission and submitted drafts of their future dissertations.

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### **Results and impact on student learning**

I could observe clearly the development of the students' understanding of academic writing during this course, and see it applied to their dissertation drafts.

The students also commented on how those skills were helpful for their academic writing, and how they could be applied to other aspects of academic and artistic life, including in proposals for grants and applications for residencies and further study.

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### **Summary and next steps**

Thank you for the opportunity to address, with this research assignment stipend, the much-needed topic of academic writing skills in Art.

I believe that the content of this course had a big impact on my students' academic skills and will continue to help them in their professional lives after SMU. I will continue to develop this aspect of academic knowledge for artists undertaking an MFA program and apply it the next time I teach this course at SMU.