

AP Art History Reviewer:

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- 1) Go to <http://apcentral.collegeboard.com>
- 2) login after registering (if not already)
- 3) Click on Resources tab
- 4) Choose Art History as subject area for retrieval of all reviews
- 5) John Nici's Advanced Art History is the fourth entry on the list (as of 3/29/06)

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Title:	<i>Advanced Art History</i>
Author:	John Nici
Course:	Art History
Abstract/Summary:	<p><i>Advanced Art History</i> is the best handbook in print for beginning and experienced AP teachers looking for practical help and high-quality classroom materials. John Nici's publication includes syllabi, a pacing guide, daily lesson plans, class notes, assessments (with keys), a student activities workbook, state standards, and excellent practical advice.</p> <p>In Nici's introductory comments to <i>Advanced Art History</i>, he asserts that art history extends well beyond the mere accumulation of facts to the synthesis of ideas and the active interpretation of function and meaning of artworks within their historical context. The significance of this statement and its placement cannot be overestimated, because it aligns the philosophy behind this book so closely with AP Art History that it increases its usefulness exponentially. The book is published in two parts: the paper form with assignment keys for teacher reference, which includes easily removed pages for copying, and the electronic form on a CD that can be customized and printed in bulk by the teacher. The introduction opens with some general practical advice on topics such as memorization -- on which he draws a distinction between comparison (essential) and companion (for amplification and thus nonessential images) -- the use of non-English names, difficult terms, writing assignments, grading, finding a middle path between ignoring the AP Exam and teaching to the exam, textbooks and other resources, College Board resources such as past exams (I might also add AP Central), and the use of slides versus digital images (he suggests keeping old slides but not buying new ones).</p> <p><i>Advanced Art History</i> comprises four large sections. The first is "Lesson Plans." In it, a sample syllabus is divided into six sections that correspond by art historical period and/or area to roughly the same percentages of study recommended by the AP Course Description. Nici organizes his "Pacing Guide" by class period to cover the full academic year. It is also keyed to the class notes, student activity guide, homework, and assessment sections of his book. For a beginning AP teacher, this chart alone is an absolute treasure.</p> <p>The "Daily Lesson Plans" are clearly organized and presented. They are detailed, standardized, and thoroughly researched. They include everything needed to begin the preparation of a well-organized, creative, interesting, and challenging art history class, except for further reading. Each lesson plan includes a unit overview, an objective for the day's class, skills to be attained, topics to be covered, vocabulary, a procedure to be followed, a materials list (slides), a motivation summary, a content summary, and a homework activity.</p>

Section 2 is entitled "Assessment Keys." The three-ring binder includes the keyed, or teacher, version, while the CD version is customizable, allowing the teacher to modify quizzes, exams, and essay questions for particular lessons or classes. The "Student Activity Book" (section 3) comprises 288 pages, many with illustrations. The teacher's version includes the answers and a superb set of rubrics for grading essay questions. "Class Notes" (section 4) comprises 334 pages of large-font notes organized into bullet points on individual works of art so that they can be read easily from a distance or can be transcribed to a blackboard.

Overall, this is an invaluable handbook to help one structure, organize, and create an imaginative course of one's own in AP Art History. It is thorough, complete, and professionally presented (Nici's art historical credentials are impressive); his pedagogy is in full agreement with AP Art History. Significantly, these final two points set *Advanced Art History* quite apart from most of the other products like this on the market at the moment, including many online. Yet *Advanced Art History* is still exactly what it purports to be. It is a handbook, designed to assist in the preparation of a class. It should not become the class. Nor should it replace the study of many other art history books. The AP teacher should not ever think that what is contained here (which focuses heavily on visual analysis rather than context because that is the area in which most teachers need assistance), even in combination with a good textbook, is enough information to teach AP Art History. Having said that, this book is the best handbook on which to build an AP Art History course that I have ever read, and I have read most of those published. There is no other such handbook in any medium currently in print that can be described as even remotely competitive with *Advanced Art History*.

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