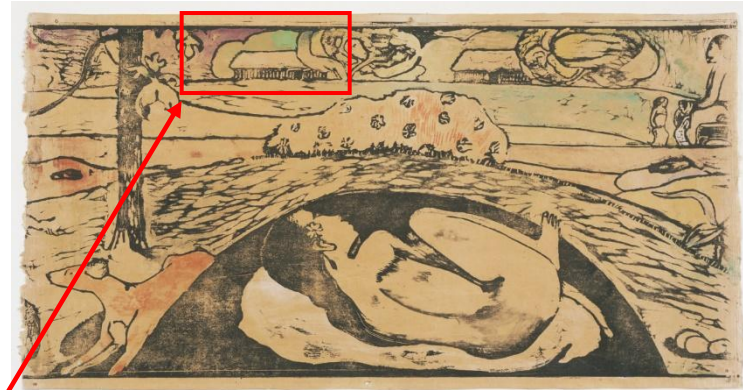


## ARTH 3020: Methods of Object Study – Understanding Works of Art on Paper

Spring 2025. Thursday afternoons, 1:45-4:45 pm



Paul Gauguin, French, 1848 - 1903  
*Manao tupapau (The Spirit Watches Over Her)*.  
Printed by Gauguin, 1894

Woodcut printed in black ink and color  
monotype, with touches of watercolor (hand  
coloring) 1950-129-16



Detail showing black woodcut lines, colored  
monotype inks (purple and orange), and touches  
of blue-green watercolor, as well as inherent  
cockling of the paper

### Course Location

Paper Conservation Laboratory, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Perelman Building, 2525 Pennsylvania Ave  
Trips to off-site workshops may be included.

### Instructors

Nancy Ash, Senior Conservator of Works of Art on Paper, Emerita  
Thomas Primeau, The Charles K. Williams, II, Senior Conservator of Works of Art on Paper  
Christina Taylor, Conservator of Works of Art on Paper

### Office Hours & contact information

The instructors will be available before or after class or by appointment to continue the class discussions and to advise on student questions and projects.

Nancy Ash	nancyeash@gmail.com
Thomas Primeau	thomas.primeau@philamuseum.org
Christina Taylor	christina.taylor@philamuseum.org

### Requirements

Brief readings for each session are intended to educate and stimulate discussion about the physical aspects of the materials and their context. The readings will be available on Canvas in the File Folder for each individual session.

Participation in class will be a significant part of the course grade (55%).

Condition Report. This assignment will count for 5% of the course grade.

Final Assignments. In the second half of the semester each student will carry out the technical examination of two works of art, and the instructors will be present to guide them. The resulting reports will discuss the objects in terms of their materials and condition but also within their art historical context and the artist's body of work.

The students will share their findings in brief class presentations (15% of final grade), followed by written reports (25% of final grade).

All course assignments must be completed for credit to be awarded.

### **Course Description**

*This immersive seminar will stress the importance of developing the visual literacy essential for connoisseurship of works of art on paper. It will introduce students to methods of analyzing and describing the material, physical, and visual aspects of objects. Students will learn to use close observational skills to understand artist's choice, the subtle inherent characteristics of the material and physical aspects of works on paper, their context and significance. They will learn about essential tools used in visual analysis and engage in close observation of materials and techniques.*

The focus will be on examination and discussion of works in the Philadelphia Museum of Art collection to study materials and techniques used by artists from the fifteenth through twenty first centuries. We will begin by considering what questions to ask about a work of art on paper and the approaches and tools for looking and informing our answers. Throughout the semester students will engage in direct examination, study, and discourse about the physical characteristics of papers, dry drawing materials, watercolors, inks, and print processes, and their implications for understanding the completed artwork – its appearance, purpose, condition, and historical context. Condition and other conservation considerations will be addressed.

### **Class Sessions** (subject to revision)

#### 1/16 Session 1. Introduction:

- . What questions do we ask about a work of art on paper? Why did the artist choose this paper – paper characteristics, availability, context & references? What is the artist's intent?
- . Approaches and simple tools for looking: Learning to use close observational skills – examination using magnification and a range of lighting (normal, raking, specular, transmitted)

#### 1/23 Session 2. Papermaking workshop with conservators or hand papermaker

A hands-on workshop to provide a basic understanding of the material components and characteristics of Western papers

#### 1/30 Session 3. Looking at paper

- . History and technology of paper, looking closely at paper samples and artworks in the collection.
- . The papers chosen by artists examined within the context of the completed work
- . Subtle inherent qualities in paper including those introduced during creation of the work
- . Drawings for different purposes – studies, working drawings – special considerations.
- . Visit PMA Exhibition: *The Time is Always Now*

#### 2/6 Session 4. Introduction to condition and conservation considerations and approaches.

- . Inherent characteristics and alterations introduced through inherent vice, age, storage, handling, or conservation treatment.
- . Safe handling, housing, and storage.
- . Condition Reporting

#### 2/13 Session 5. Introduction to final projects & Looking at dry drawing materials – graphite, charcoal, chalk, pastel. Origins and manufacture of different kinds of drawing materials

- . Distinguishing black dry drawing materials by physical characteristics and use
- . Distinguishing colored dry drawing materials by physical characteristics and use
- . Students experiment with dry drawing materials

2/20 Session 6. Session begins with a brief visit to the PMA exhibition Wanda Gag  
Looking at wet drawing materials – watercolor and ink

- . Paint vs. ink
- . Types of ink
- . Types of paints and their characteristics
- . Students experiment with wet drawing materials.

2/27 Session 7. Identifying and describing what you see

- . Once you can identify it, how do you describe it? The importance of doing this – accuracy, consistency, internal & external audiences. Descriptive Terminology Guidelines.
- . Looking at Collage.
- . In class exercise – choose a collage and describe it.

3/6 Session 8. Introduction to Prints with focus on Intaglio, relief, pochoir.  
First viewing of works chosen for final projects.

*3/8 - 16 Spring Break*

3/20 Session 9. Looking at prints with master printmaker Cindi Ettinger. Learn about print processes and techniques, technical identification and condition considerations. Meet at C.R. Ettinger Studio, 2215 South Street. Intaglio.

3/27 Session 10. Study of printmaking techniques continues with focus on lithography, relief and screen printing. Session includes a demonstration of screen printing.

4/3 Session 11. Looking at rare books with Sarah Reidell, Head of Conservation, University of Pennsylvania Libraries. Bound structures. Determining the authenticity of the parts and considerations in retaining structural authenticity/integrity. Session held in Steven Miller Conservation Laboratory, University of Pennsylvania Libraries

4/10 Session 12. Scientific analysis and technical examination and research that informs treatment decisions and advances Art Historical understanding.

4/17 Session 13. Student Presentations

4/24 Session 14. Student Presentations

Writing assignments due