To: Students in the Arts, Museum, and Theater Internship Program  
From: Allen Topolski, Professor of Art & Art History  
Re: Analytic Journal for AH 397 European Arts Internship

Your grade for the internship will be based primarily on your journal, although the evaluation of your supervisor will also be taken into account. Your journal should record both your activities and your reflections on your experience; it should reveal what you are learning rather than simply detailing what you are doing. You should write in it frequently, not only after a day's work in your museum or other institution, but also after other experiences that are relevant to your understanding of the culture, of museums, of art, of theater, of history, of your host country and your own. (Visits to other museums or cultural institutions, plays, films, travel to other cities, things you’ve learned in your classes, articles you’ve read in the newspaper, conversations, or telling incidents of daily life might be discussed.)

• You may write your journal in ink or using a computer; date your entries, and number the pages. If you hand-write the journal, write on only one side of each page. You may wish to include press clippings or other items in an appendix. The journal should be written in English.

• It may be useful to set aside a page to serve as a key to the people you will be discussing, to which you can add new names. Talking to people should be an important part of your experience.

• At the beginning of your journal you should describe your internship in some detail, and you should record any changes along the way. At some point in your journal take some time to discuss your institution -- what its goals are, how it communicates to the public, how it is funded, what kinds of politics are involved etc.

Most of the journal should chronicle your internship and life in a way that demonstrates what you are learning about the subject matter involved in your internship, museums or arts institutions, and the country in which you are living. It should include specific information (which may be useful to you later) about the systems of organization, activities, and philosophy of the place you are working, as well as about the project you are working on. Facts have a place, but so do impressions and reflections. Raise questions and note things that you want to ask about or look up. For instance, rather than writing: "Typed for three hours" you might reflect on the kind of paperwork the museum has, how computers are allocated, what kind of demands the museum has for information and how it deals with them, funding, etc. You can return at later points in your journal to such queries.

Sometimes people seem to be so absorbed in the immediate work that they don't step back to look at the bigger picture. People working in the theater often don't say anything about the plays they're working on, or mention that
they’re seeing other plays—perhaps in a new way. People cataloguing works of art or arms forget to mention that the objects they are studying came from a particular time or place and were used in particular ways. People interning in museums forget to take a look around their museum and other museums— at least that they record in their journals.

Try to see the works of art, exhibitions, plays, or projects that you are working on as part of a larger picture. What was or is their social and economic context? By what criteria are they categorized or judged? In the case of objects what do their distinguishing features tell about their making or use or why they were valued? What message is the museum or gallery conveying with its presentation of works? What public is the theater or film studio addressing? What is the mission of your institution and how is it carrying it out?

Students often have difficulties achieving a balance between overwhelming amounts of detail and laconic notations. One way of doing this is by discussing one particular example or incident. If you are cataloguing, you can discuss the criteria, procedure etc through one item.

You may wish to include a copy of written material you produced if it is relevant, and especially if you don’t discuss its content in your journal.

Remember that your journal can serve as later point of reference for you. You will not always remember specific information, last names of people who might be useful contacts etc. It may be more useful for you later, as well as for your reader, to record examples from what you may imagine you won’t forget: what the criteria are for distinguishing on object from another, what you saw in a museum, what it was about a play that interested you, how your thinking about something is changing.

It may often be helpful for you to have to write down specifics in your discussion of what people said, criteria for making distinctions, institutional history etc. because it may help you clarify your thoughts on the subject. There is nothing more frustrating than reading comments such as "So and so and I had a fascinating conversation at lunch." Later you too may wish you’d noted more of what you talked about. Records of such conversations can often be very revealing in charting your learning about another culture.

Comments on the courses are much more helpful if they are specific and discuss how the courses connect or don’t connect with what you are doing or want to know than if they are: "I’m really enjoying ... " or "... is an inane waste of time."

At the end of your stay you should write a final entry summing up your experience. You will probably want to go through your journal before you do this. You should discuss the following: What did you learn from the internship? What did you appreciate knowing before you began it, and what did you wish you had known? What did you accomplish, and was there
anything you failed to accomplish? What did you gain, intellectually and personally, from the experience of being abroad?

Further advice:

The internship is what you make of it. Make sure you understand what is expected and what is going on at the institution. If you don't understand something, ask questions, do reading, look it up. Routine work is part of any arts professional's task, but if you feel you are doing only routine work, discuss it with your supervisor or your Program Director. If you have a particular interest in something, mention it. It may be possible for you to propose projects.

The internship offers you a chance to participate in the activities of the museum or institution. Talk with people. Visit other departments (by appointment -- often this can be done with other interns), participate in the installation of exhibitions, go to openings and other events.

Reply to a student who had reservations about the journal and said: "I don't want to lose what I felt about what I did and learned. How does one grade these things? It can hardly be based on quality of experience, nor can it be through eloquence of writing or proper grammar. Can you grade a person's thoughts and reactions? Can you really know what they learned?"

The journal is not the only basis for the grade; supervisors' comments are definitely important. However the comments of the supervisors, especially now with the brief form, are not always informative. In some cases the journal serves as a check on unrealistic expectations-- that is supervisors complain that the student didn't do things, but the journal makes it obvious that the internship didn't really offer them such possibilities.

I suspect that if you read the journals you might feel it is actually surprisingly easy to tell what people are getting out of their experiences. What they learn is not always academic, and that's fine. Journals that don't get high grades have some predictable problems. Some people do the minimum of writing -- often at the end of the semester. Reflections on day-to-day activities simply aren't there. I also look for evidence of responsible fulfillment of the requirements of the internship. But mostly I am interested in the way in which the student is making sense of the experience. This can include specific knowledge of some area, an understanding of the institution within which he or she is working, larger issues of communication with the public, ways in which British and American cultural assumptions are expressed, etc. In some cases students in not particularly stimulating internships have written very good journals.

Those who record what they are feeling about the experience are usually more self-aware and open to knowledge of many sorts than those who keep a more impersonal record-- as long as they don't just talk about the feelings without dealing with the content.
Plagiarism. Normal stipulations about plagiarism apply. A statement on plagiarism is enclosed.

Sending your journal. Be sure to send your journal to the Center for Study Abroad in Rochester so that it is received within two weeks of the official end date of your program. You may email or mail your journal, but in either case, it must be received by the deadline (not postmarked). Your journal will be returned to you after a grade is awarded.

Journals received more than four weeks after the program has ended will have their grades lowered by 1/3 of a point (e.g., A- to B+, B+ to B). Journals cannot be accepted for evaluation eight weeks after the program has ended, without exception.

Confidentiality
As a student intern, you will have access to places, persons, and information that should be considered confidential. While you may wish to share information about your placement with friends and family, keep in mind that you should share no more than the name of your organization, e.g., House of Commons, Victoria and Albert, King’s College London and its mission (government, museum, teaching hospital). Divulging more than that could be detrimental to the department or organization. Your internship supervisor will let you know if there is other information that is off-limits. If in doubt, ask.

It’s easy to share information with friends and family via email, texting, blogs, Facebook, My Space, and other means of communication. Remember that these are not confidential; anyone can access your private accounts or pages. Therefore, do not discuss your internship or your co-workers using these, or similar, modes of communication. Many businesses and organizations regularly check electronic communications and pages for mention of themselves. Your internship may be terminated if you publicly share information about your placement.

BREACH OF PROFESSIONAL COURTESY: University of Rochester guidelines prohibit any personal use of your internship’s office stationery and supplies. This includes any envelopes, copier paper, correspondence notes, or letterhead. If your supervisor indicates that you may use a departmental printer to print your journal or personal correspondence, you must supply the paper. Printer paper, notebooks, envelopes and the like are reasonably priced and are widely available at stationers and department stores everywhere in Europe. Questions concerning the use of your supervisor’s office equipment and property, such as computers, typewriters, copiers, fax machines, or telephones, are to be directed to your Internships in Europe on-site director. NOTA BENE: Journals submitted on stationery embossed or watermarked with your office’s logo, or mailed in an envelope belonging to an office or department will have grades lowered by one full letter grade, e.g. A- to B-, or B to C.

Rev. 6/12