

Dear Online Students,

Welcome to Art 101 History of Western Art Part I. My name is Alexandra Lezo and I will be your instructor for this course scheduled to be taught online during the Spring semester 2012 at Los Angeles Valley College. The course will run for 16 weeks and will be taught entirely online. Although we will not meet in person in the traditional in-class setting, we will have plenty of interaction in our online classroom. This letter of introduction will provide you with some basic information that you need to know about the course as well as outside resources that may be used to enhance your online experience. An introduction to the material that will be covered throughout the semester will be available on the first day of class.

First of all, I'd like to say a few words about myself. I am an Art Historian and have been teaching at Valley College for the past nine years. Probably like majority of you, most of my college experience has been based on traditional in-class instruction. Therefore, every online class I teach is also a learning experience for me. I find that I gain a better understanding of my students learning styles through online instruction than I do in class because we usually end up having more contact. I find this aspect to be one of the major benefits of the online learning system; I get to know you better!

Throughout the semester you will be using the Etudes class management system (CMS) to access course information, receive and turn in assignments and participate in discussions with your classmates. Whether this is your first time as an online student or you already have some experience, you will soon discover that the online classroom offers rewards and challenges that differ greatly from the in-class learning experience.

Your final grade in my online class is based less on traditional exams and focuses more on the individual's contribution to the class environment. For example, one of the most popular features of the online classroom is the use of forums to share information and engage in discussions with your "classmates." A good portion of your final grade is based on your contributions to these discussion forums. You will also be forming groups with your classmates to facilitate "group projects" that deal with the course material. The Class Management System also provides access to a virtual "Student Cafe" where you may interact with your classmates on a personal level about class topics or whatever else you may wish to discuss.

One of the first things to keep in mind when taking an online course is that the key to success is motivation. It is advised that you plan your time for completing assignments the same way that you would in a traditional class. As a three unit class, you should be prepared to spend a minimum of 9 hours per week working on course material. Each learning unit has a Begin and End time during which time you are expected to complete the discussions and quizzes for each unit. The discussions and quizzes will not be available after the End date and time, so it is important that you reserve enough time each week to do the readings and complete the assignments. For example, a learning unit will have a begin date and time of August 29, at 8:00 A.M. This does not mean that you will need to log in at exactly 8:00 A.M.; this is just the time when the new material and assignments will become available.

You may wish to check out the "Are You Ready?" online student guide to help prepare you for what to expect (this is included at the end of this letter) And don't forget: although you may not meet me in person, I am always available to help you with whatever needs and questions you

might have. I'm only a click away! You may wish to gain some insight into your own individual learning style by taking the quiz on this website: <http://www.vark-learn.com>

The best way to reach me is via Email. I will respond to your emails as promptly as possible, usually within 24 hours. Weekend responses will be answered on Monday.

Email: [sachalezo@aol.com](mailto:sachalezo@aol.com)

Some more useful information...

You may access the Los Angeles Valley College Etudes site and gain access to the course at: <http://www.lavc.edu/distance.html>

The Help Desk [virtualvalleyhelp@lavc.edu](mailto:virtualvalleyhelp@lavc.edu) or (818) 778-5834 is also available to answer any questions you might have about online classes and technical support.

The text book for this course is: Gardner's Art Through Ages Vol I, Kleiner ISBN 0-495-11549-5 Copyright 09 Publisher Wad Edition.

Earlier editions of Gardner's are also acceptable as long as they are the WESTERN edition and cover Volume I (Pre-Historic-Medieval).

There are various links on this site designed to support the online learning experience.

I look forward to meeting all of you at the end of January.

### ***Are You Ready for an Online Class?***

So, you're considering taking an online class? Well, this is a good time to give some thought the major differences between learning online and learning in a traditional, face-to-face classroom. Is online learning a good match for you? You will find that for some students, online classes are more difficult and for others they are easier depending on your learning style, computer skills, internet access, personality, motivation, and other commitments.

Not every student can effectively take advantage of the freedom and responsibility associated with learning within an online environment. Many students find learning easier in a classroom environment with face-to-face encouragement, immediate instructional feedback and personal interactions. Yet for many, learning online fits well and provides a valuable alternative. Compared to a standard classroom situation in which everyone is in the same room, at the same time, doing the same work, the online classroom has less face-to-face contact, less immediate access to your instructor and interaction with your fellow students usually occurs through electronic (asynchronous, not "real time") communication instead of face-to-face conversation. In contrast to on- ground classrooms, many online students are surprised to find that they get to

know their fellow students better in an online class due to the increased level of student-to-student discussion.

To achieve success in an online class, you must be significantly more self-motivated, assertive, and skilled in your ability learn independently. To a large extent, you must be able to generate your own enthusiasm and excitement about learning the material, especially when people around you (at home or elsewhere) are all doing something else. This is not to discourage you from enrolling in an online course, but only to raise your awareness of the potential personal challenges which may be associated with successful online learning.

### ***Identify Your Learning Preference***

How do you learn best? Each of us has an individual learning preference (or a mix of preferences) that indicates how we prefer to take in information. Those who learn through listening are Aural learners, those who learn through pictures or diagrams are Visual learners, those who learn through doing are Kinesthetic learners, those who learn through reading and writing are Read/Write learners. In most online classes (this varies depending on your instructor), there is little to no audio which means a student with an aural learning preference is more likely to feel challenged. Students with a read/write learning preference generally feel more comfortable learning in an online environment due the amount of information that is presented and submitted in written form. Get to understand how you prefer to learn and this will help you become a more successful student (in all types of learning scenarios!). To take an online quiz to identify your learning style, go to: <http://www.vark-learn.com>!

### ***Independence and Freedom Bring New Learning Challenges***

Online classes offer you an alternative method for completing your educational requirements while maintaining a busy work schedule and meeting your other obligations. However, the freedom from having to be in a specific place at specific times requires that you be more disciplined and more accurate budgeting your time. It will take time for you to read and fully understand the information provided, write out questions for your instructor, and complete other online tasks. If your learning style is predominately aural (learn through listening), you may find the online class particularly challenging, but not impossible. Also recognize that you must be more "proactive" in seeking out positive interactions with your fellow students and with your instructor if you want to become involved in "class."

## ***More Tips for Succeeding in an Online Class***

**1. *Have Reliable Internet Access*** -- Would you enroll in a face-to-face class without a way to get to campus? Hopefully, not. You need to think about your internet connection as your transportation to class. When your connection doesn't work, you are unable come to class and you will not learn. You are encouraged to have regular access to an internet connection and identify a back-up plan. Talk to people you know to identify an alternative connection to use if yours fails. And research the availability of the campus computer labs for your learning needs, as well.

**2. *Read Carefully*** – Classes held on campus rely very heavily on instructor verbal directions and presentations. For some classes, students can get by with just skimming over reading assignments. In an online class, reading every word of online directions and assignments is essential.

**3. *Get Organized!*** -- Successful online students stress the importance of buying a calendar to record all major due dates and class schedule information. If you are enrolled in more than one online class, consider using a different color for each class. One online student suggests, “making appointments with yourself” to ensure you dedicate time in your schedule to complete course assignments.

**4. *Polish Your Computer Skills*** – For online courses, computer and internet skills are obviously a requirement. Online instructors will assume that students are computer literate, which generally means that the student is expected to be acquainted with various standard software packages and their operation, load new programs if necessary and handle any hardware needs as they arise. DO NOT expect the instructor to extend due dates because of problems you are having with your computer

**5. *Participate*** – Because of the reduced amount of verbal interactions between students and the instructor found in traditional on-campus courses, online “discussion” is often accomplished through discussion boards, email, and/or chat rooms. Students should be comfortable communicating online and should be aware of accepted standards in “netiquette”. In fact, there is a direct correlation between a student’s success in an online course and that student’s participation. DO NOT underestimate the importance of contributing to online discussions. For more info about Netiquette, go to: <http://www.albion.com/Netiquette/corerules.html>

**6. Log-In Regularly:** Successful online students recommend logging in several times a week to check for instructor announcements and stay connected to/participate in discussion board conversations.

**7. DO NOT Procrastinate!** When you are relying heavily on technology, expect failures and connection challenges. Waiting until the last minute increases these risks and puts your grades in jeopardy. Additionally, you will never fully understand how long an assignment or project will take until you do it. Waiting until the last day/hour/minute is poor planning and reduces your chances at learning successfully and performing well on assessments.

***So, Are You Ready?***

For more information about online classes, go to: \_\_\_\_\_

***Good luck to you!***

Let's work together for a successful semester!