**AR/ST252: Medicine and Visual Culture**

Fall 2021

Professor Sheehan

**Writing Assignment 1: 4-5 page paper due Wed, October 6**

In this assignment you will get a chance to apply your “looking skills” to illustrated anatomical treatises from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Select one illustration from a treatise at Colby’s Special Collections (see the attached list) and write a critical analysis of it that explicitly addresses the following questions: What choices did the artist make when representing the anatomical body? What artistic, scientific, social, cultural, and/or political meanings are expressed through those choices?

Spend some time surveying the illustrated treatises on reserve for you at Special Collections before selecting an essay topic. Consider the content, organization, audience, and purpose of each publication. Then look carefully at the illustrations, beginning with their general subject matter and composition. How does the arrangement of figures, objects, and spaces help express particular ideas? What is specifically conveyed through body type, pose, gesture, expression, accessories, or settings? Reflect further on the medium and style of the illustration. Why these? What scientific and/or artistic priorities do they communicate? Finally, return to the matter of when, where, and by whom the illustrations were created. Everyone should consult (and cite when appropriate) *The Fabric of the Body*, edited by K. B. Roberts and J. D. W. Tomlinson (on reserve in Bixler Library), to learn more about the history of anatomical illustration and the specific treatises on view. How can knowing something about historical context help you understand the images?

After selecting an illustration, construct a specific main idea (thesis) that you can develop in a 4-5 page essay. Your thesis must be supported by all of the following:

* **specific visual evidence** from the illustration
* **specific textual evidence** from the anatomical treatise
* **specific textual evidence** from *Fabric of the Body* and any course readings to date
* **substantial** **visual comparison to 1-2 images** from *Fabric of the Body*, course readings, and/or lectures

This assignment does not invite “outside” research, so please stick closely to your selected treatise, our course materials, and *Fabric of the Body*. They will provide you with more than enough material to complete this assignment. If you would like to consult a medical dictionary to understand specific terms and concepts in your selected treatise, please use one of the medical dictionaries linked on our Moodle site.

**Basic elements of the paper**

Please see the syllabus for information about writing style and formatting.

* A short introduction (~1/2 page) in which you identify your selected illustration, clearly state your main idea, and provide a brief sketch of how you are going to prove it in the essay.
* The body of your paper (~3-4 pages) in which you develop your main idea in paragraphs. To ensure you make a strong and clear argument, start each paragraph with an *arguable* topic sentence (something you have to *prove* with evidence) rather than a statement of fact or a quotation. Topic sentences, moreover, should characterize the main idea in a paragraph; if they do not then you either have too many ideas in the paragraph or need to revise your topic sentence. Remember that all of the visual observations you present in the body of your essay must be motivated by an *argument* supported by specific visual and textual evidence; this is what art historians call *analysis*.
* A short conclusion (~1/2 page), in which you return to your main idea and attempt to answer the question, *so what?* Why should readers care about your main idea? What does it teach them about the history of anatomical illustration? What additional questions about the topic might it raise that you could not fully develop within the page limit of the assignment? Briefly address these issues in your conclusion, setting the stage for further exploration of the topic by others.
* Internal citations (e.g. – Schiebinger, 20; Sheehan lecture 9/10/21). Make sure to cite any information you may have acquired from readings and/or lectures.
* Bibliography of works cited (outside the page limit). Please consult the syllabus for more information on citation style.
* Reproductions of all the artworks discussed in your essay(outside the page limit). These should appear at the end of your paper. You can take your own digital photos of the anatomical treatises at Special Collections. You may also use the selected illustration scans posted to Moodle or images from the PowerPoint lectures. Please label your reproductions (Figure 1, 2, etc.) with the artist, title, date, and medium.

**Submission instructions:** Please upload an electronic version to Moodle by the start of class on Wed, October 6.

**Selected illustrated anatomical treatises at Special Collections**

Some of the volumes below have been discussed in our course. In those cases, please select an illustration from the book that was not in our course lectures and/or readings.

1. Giulio Casserio, *Iulii Casserii Placentini : philosophi atq[ue] Medici patavii ultranque medicinam exercentis de vocis auditusq[ue] organis historia anatomica; singulari fide methodo ac industria concinnata tractatibus duobus explicata ac variis iconibus aere excusis illustrate*. Ferrariae: Excudebat Victorius Baldinus, 1600-01. Bates Archives Storage RAREBK QL853.C35; [https://cbbcat.net/record=b2331848~S4](https://cbbcat.net/record%3Db2331848~S4).

Giulio Casserio (ca. 1522-1616) was an important Italian anatomist. This treatise, written in Latin, covers the anatomy of the larynx and ear, illustrated by copperplate engravings. It includes copious examples of comparative anatomy, with illustrations of dissected cats, pigs, and other animals. It also contains a portrait of Casserio as “philosopher, physician and anatomist at the age of 39,” which is accompanied by the text: “The hand is laid bare by the suitably skilled hand, let the [viewer’s] mind reveal the mind [of Casserio].” A modern translation of the treatise’s preface and note to the reader is available on Moodle. Link to the full text of the treatise on Google Books:

<http://tinyurl.com/zvfyxcu>.

1. William Cowper, *Myotomia reformata, or an anatomical treatise of the muscles of the human body* (London: Printed for Robert Knaplock, William and John Innys, and Jacob Tonson, 1724). Special Collections ROBSN FOLIO QM151.C83 1724; [https://cbbcat.net/record=b6393599~S9](https://cbbcat.net/record%3Db6393599~S9).

This treatise on muscular mechanicswas first published in 1694 as a modest volume with ten plates. A British surgeon and anatomist as well as a skilled draughtsman, Cowper worked until his death to create this new and significantly expanded edition, which was published posthumously. All of the illustrations were made by Cowper himself. Some of the folio’s sixty-six engravings were based on artworks by Renaissance and Baroque masters, including Raphael, Peter Paul Rubens, Guido Reni, and Annibale Carracci. The folio also contains engraved vignettes of muscle men and anatomy-themed historiated initials (capital letters at the beginning of a paragraph or section of text). Link to the full text of the 1724 edition online: <https://archive.org/details/BIUSante_01892>.

1. William Cheselden, *The Anatomy of the Human Body*, 7th edition (London: Printed for C. Hitch & R. Dodsley, 1756). Special Collections ROBSN QM21.C5 1756; [https://cbbcat.net/record=b1041892~S9](https://cbbcat.net/record%3Db1041892~S9).

First published in 1713, this volume by British surgeon William Cheselden (1688-1752) became a standard medical textbook for nearly 100 years. The 7th edition includes forty copper plates engraved by Ger. Vandergucht. Link to the full text of the 7th edition (published 1750) online: <https://archive.org/details/anatomyofhumanbo1750ches>.

1. William Hunter, *Anatomia uteri humani gravidi tabulis illustrata [The Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus Exhibited in Figures]* (Birmingham, UK: Printed by John Baskerville, 1774). Special Collections ROBSN FOLIO RG520.H9 1774; [https://cbbcat.net/record=b6395140~S9](https://cbbcat.net/record%3Db6395140~S9).

William Hunter (1718-1783) was one of the most famous anatomists, surgeons, and obstetricians in Britain. This volume of anatomical plates is his best known publication. The plates were mostly drawn by Jan van Rymsdyk and engraved by various artists. A selection of them has been posted online by the National Library of Medicine: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/historicalanatomies/hunterw_home.html>. William Hunter never completed the text for this volume. After his death, the text was expanded and edited by Matthew Baillie and published as *An Anatomical Description of the Human Gravid Uterus* (1794).