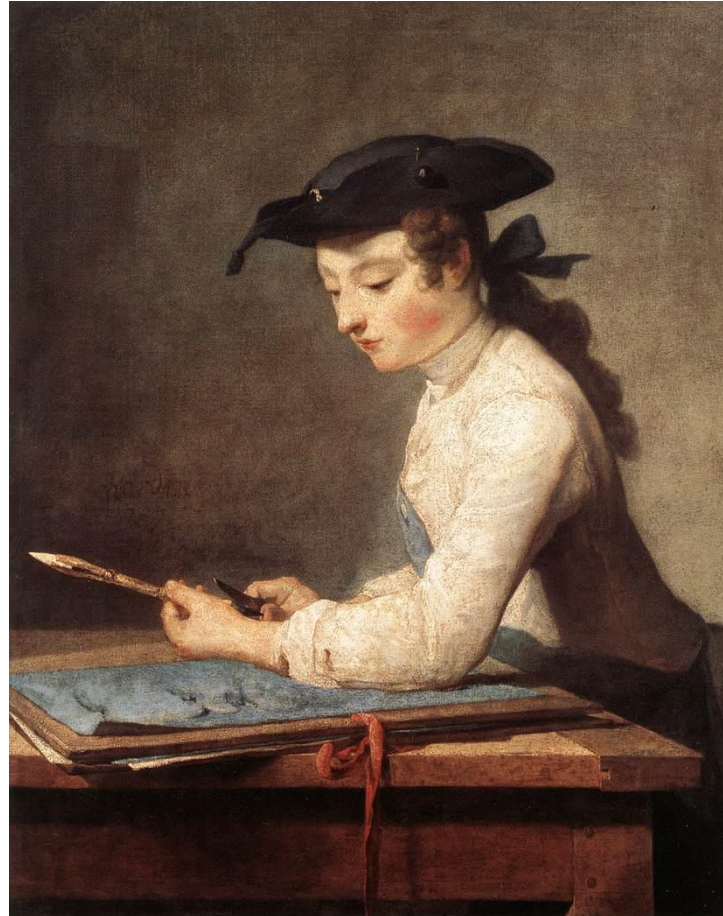


# Formulating a good interpretation for an essay



# Formulating a good interpretation for an essay

- **Qualities of a Good Interpretation**

- Covers a significant amount of material
- Has unity and coherence
  - The parts are clearly linked to one another
  - There are no sections that are just hanging
  - In most cases there will be material from the course that is not incorporated
- Can be supported given the evidence available
- Is potentially interesting to readers

# Formulating a good interpretation for an essay

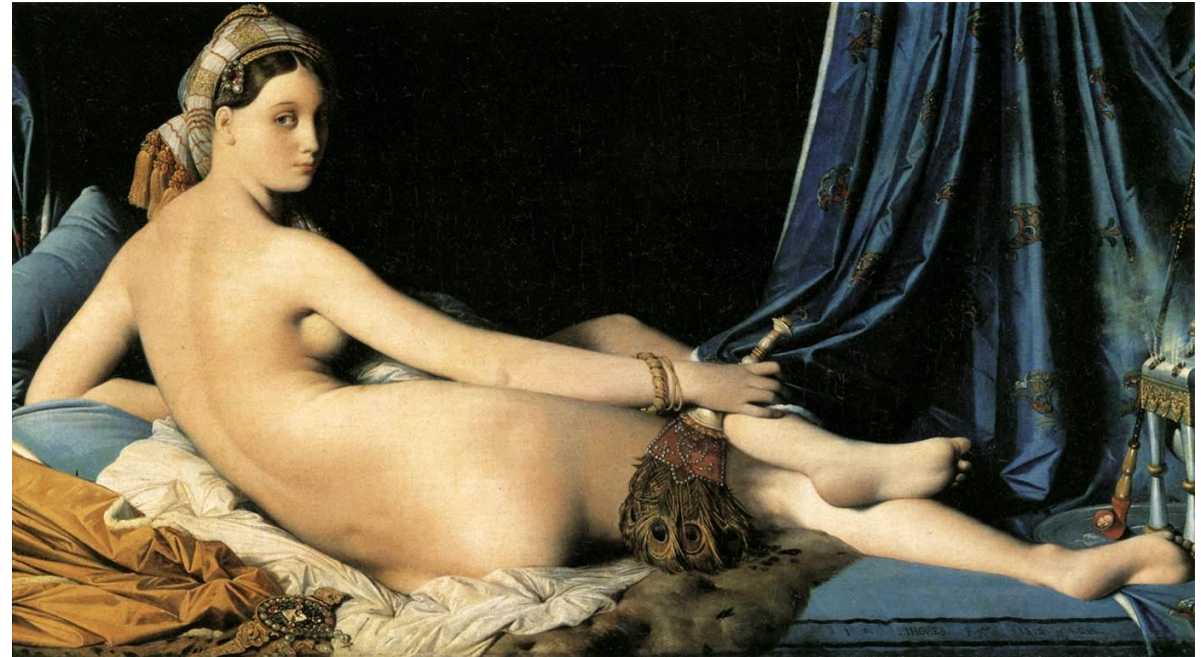
- How does one get to a strong interpretation?
  - **Route #1 – Look for connections between the topics**

# Formulating a good interpretation for an essay

- How does one get to a strong interpretation?
  - Route #1 – Look for connections in the topics
  - **Route # 2 -- Begin with one item from the course and think about things that are similar or different until you see a pattern**

# Looking for a place to start

- Let me hear no more of that absurd maxim: "We need the new, we need to follow our century, everything changes, everything is changed." Sophistry -- all of that! Does nature change, do the light and air change, have the passions of the human heart changed since the time of Homer? "We must follow our century": but suppose my century is wrong. Because my neighbor does evil, am I therefore obliged to do it also? Because virtue, as also beauty, can be misunderstood by you, have I in turn got to misunderstand it? Shall I be compelled to imitate *you*!
  - Ingres, *Notes and Thoughts on Art*



# Themes in this artifact

- Let me hear no more of that absurd maxim: "We need the new, we need to follow our century, everything changes, everything is changed." Sophistry -- all of that! Does nature change, do the light and air change, have the passions of the human heart changed since the time of Homer? "We must follow our century": but suppose my century is wrong. Because my neighbor does evil, am I therefore obliged to do it also? Because virtue, as also beauty, can be misunderstood by you, have I in turn got to misunderstand it? Shall I be compelled to imitate *you*!
  - Ingres, *Notes and Thoughts on Art*
- The most important things do not change
- The eternal is more important than the contemporary

Look for Connections, Similarities, Differences

**Ingres –  
Opposition  
to Change**

# Look for Similarities

The Academy



French Classical Tradition



The Salon



**Ingres –  
Opposition  
to Change**



# Look for Similarities

The Academy



Memory of the  
Reign of Terror



French Classical Tradition 2<sup>nd</sup> Empire



**Ingres –  
Opposition  
to Change**

The Salon



Nostalgia for Old Paris



# Look for Differences

The Academy



Memory of the Reign of Terror



Romanticism



Haussmanization



French Classical Tradition



2<sup>nd</sup> Empire



**Ingres –  
Opposition  
to Change**

Impressionism



The Commune



The Salon



Nostalgia for Old Paris



# Look for Differences

The Academy



Memory of the Reign of Terror



Romanticism



Haussmanization



French Classical Tradition



2<sup>nd</sup> Empire



**Ingres –  
Opposition  
to Change**

Impressionism



The Commune



The Salon



Nostalgia for Old Paris



Fashion



Department Stores



# Formulating a good interpretation for an essay

- **Let a tentative question emerge from these connections**
  - What attitudes towards change shaped the experiences of Parisians in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century?

# Formulating a good interpretation for an essay

- Let a question emerge from these connections
- **Turn the question into a tentative thesis**
  - Parisian society in all of its aspects was torn between a desire to hold on to the past and a drive to explore new forms of life

# Decide whether all the material you have found should be included

The Academy



Memory of the Reign of Terror



Romanticism



Haussmanization



French Classical Tradition



2<sup>nd</sup> Empire



**Ingres –  
Opposition  
to Change**

Impressionism



The Commune



The Salon



Nostalgia for Old Paris



Fashion



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# Decide whether all the material you have found should be included

The Academy



Memory of the Reign of Terror



Romanticism



Haussmanization



French Classical Tradition ~~2<sup>nd</sup> Empire~~



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The Commune



~~The Salon~~



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# Decide whether all the material you have found should be included

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# Rearrange the material in a logical order

The Academy



Romanticism



Impressionism



**Ingres –  
Opposition  
to Change**

# Rearrange the material in a logical order

The Academy



French Classical Tradition



**Ingres –  
Opposition  
to Change**

Romanticism



Fashion

Impressionism



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# Rearrange the material in a logical order

The Academy



French Classical Tradition



Nostalgia for Old Paris



Romanticism



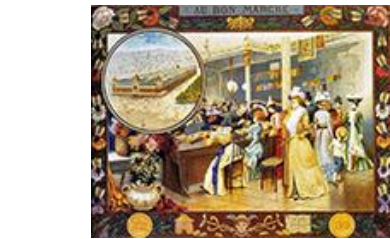
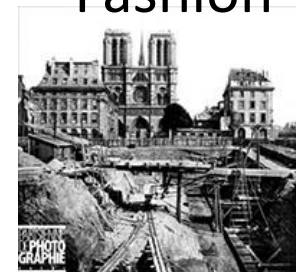
Impressionism



**Ingres –  
Opposition  
to Change**



Fashion



Department Stores

Haussmanization

# Rearrange the material in a logical order

The Academy



French Classical Tradition



Nostalgia for Old Paris



Memory of the Reign of Terror



Romanticism



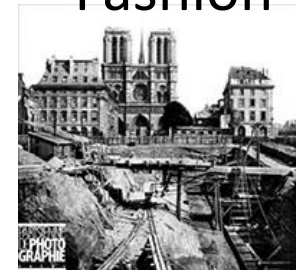
Impressionism



**Ingres –  
Opposition  
to Change**



Fashion



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Haussmanization



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# Formulating a good interpretation for an essay

- How does one get to a strong interpretation?
- Turn the question into a tentative thesis
- Decide whether all the material that you have found should be included
- **Look for deeper patterns in the material**
  - Foregrounding, assumptions values

# What deeper patterns do you see?

The Academy



French Classical Tradition



Nostalgia for Old Paris



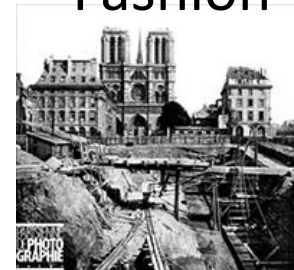
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# What values underlie each position?

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Memory of the Reign of Terror



Romanticism



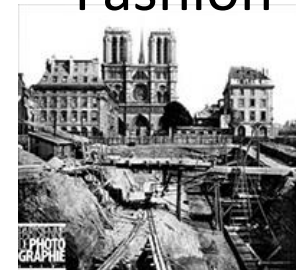
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Opposition  
to Change**



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# What assumption underlies each position?

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French Classical Tradition



Nostalgia for Old Paris



Memory of the Reign of Terror



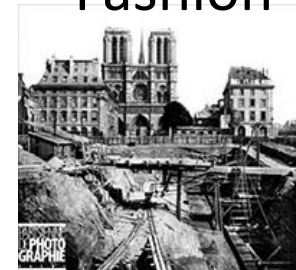
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Opposition  
to Change**



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# In each case what is being foregrounded and ignored?

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French Classical Tradition



Nostalgia for Old Paris



Memory of the Reign of Terror



Romanticism



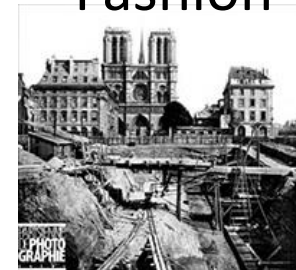
Impressionism



**Ingres –  
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Fashion



Department Stores



Haussmanization



The Commune

# Formulating a good interpretation for an essay

- How does one get to a strong interpretation?
- Turn the question into a tentative thesis
- Decide whether all the material that you have found should be included
- Look for deeper patterns in the material
  - Foregrounding, assumptions values
- **Sharpen and reformulate your thesis as you begin to write**

# Formulating a good interpretation for an essay

- How does one get to a strong interpretation?
- Turn the question into a tentative thesis
- Decide whether all the material that you have found should be included
- Look for deeper patterns in the material
  - Foregrounding, assumptions values
- Sharpen and reformulate your thesis as you begin to write
- **Consider alternative interpretations and prepare defenses against them**
  - Change your thesis if you find alternatives too convincing

# Formulating a good interpretation for an essay

- How does one get to a strong interpretation?
- Turn the question into a tentative thesis
- Decide whether all the material that you have found should be included
- Look for deeper patterns in the material
  - Foregrounding, assumptions values
- Sharpen and reformulate your thesis as you begin to write
- Consider alternative interpretations and prepare defenses against them
- **Make sure everything is in the right place and everything follows logical path**
  - Drop sections that don't fit

# Rewrite

- **Distance yourself from what you have written**
  - Let time pass and come back to the process
  - Read it aloud or have someone else read it to you
  - Have some one else (not in the class) read the paper and summarize it for you
- **Create an outline of what you have already written**
  - Write your thesis in one sentence
  - Summarize in one sentence what each paragraph is supposed to contribute to making the thesis credible
  - Move sentences that don't fit in the big idea for their paragraph
  - Make sure that the paragraphs are progressing in a logical order

# Rewrite

- Distance yourself from what you have written
  - Let time pass and come back to the process
  - Read it aloud or have someone else read it to you
  - Have some one else (not in the class) read the paper and summarize it for you
  - Create an outline of what you have already written
  - **Concentrate on introduction and conclusion**
    - Are they both clearly connected to the thesis
    - Are they absolutely clear