

Essay #2 Prompt

The image below is a rank badge from the late-eighteenth century in China during the Qing dynasty. It is currently in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City (<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/68969>). In a short essay (at least 3 pages), please perform the following tasks/answer the following questions:

1. Write a visual analysis of the work. This should be at least 50% of the essay.
2. What is a rank badge? What was its main function? How was it used? Try to find an image that could visually support your answers and include that image in the essay. You will need to do some research online. ONLY legitimate sources will be accepted, so be sure to check the academic credential of the person or institution providing the source. The image will not count toward the final page count.
3. Checking the validity of a source is more than simply verifying the author's credentials. In May, CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) published this article (https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/26/5/AC-2605_article) to explain why they have chosen the rank badge below as the cover image for their journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases*. While the visual analysis in the article is serviceable (I hope you can do better!), the connection that authors have made and the conclusion they have chosen are highly charged and problematic. The analysis insinuates and perpetuates the racial stereotyping of Asian-Americans and Asian-heritage people in the United States. While I have no doubt that the authors are brilliant scientists, they lack the tools to critically analyze images, the same tools I hope you are all learning in this class. In another word, this is a good example of what NOT to do in an art history paper. Several commentators have already written on this topic, including my LSU predecessor Michelle C. Wang (<https://hyperallergic.com/562771/emerging-infectious-diseases/>). This misstep was more than unfortunate, especially coming from a source whose creditability we are all depending in this pandemic. Please provide a thoughtful critique and analysis of CDC's approach on this rank badge. Be sure they are your own ideas and words and not a repetition of articles like the one written by Wang.

The essay is due on October 21 on Moodle or by email.



Rank Badge with Leopard, Wave, and Sun Motifs, late-18th century. Silk, metallic thread.
Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC.