

work together within specific contexts, revealing the functions or purposes of an artwork, we can also note its relevance and significance for the creator within his or her culture or society, which can lead to greater understanding and appreciation by the contemporary viewer.

In higher education, art faculty can effectively promote student learning through the choices we make with regard to four dimensions of professional pedagogy:

1. Dispositions refers to professional expertise in one's discipline and to performance as a teacher and role model. This includes professional art training and development, experience, value systems, knowledge, and skills—the bedrock of solid education—as well as our teaching performance through body language, voice quality, management style, control, enthusiasm, use of praise, ability to engage all students, and outreach to special students. Further, educators should advocate for the arts, not just in school but also in society.

2. Planning refers to the research and preparation for developing instructional plans that effectively provide art skills and knowledge that meet the specific needs of students. These instructional plans include lesson construction about visual concepts, subject matter, media, style, product, ideas about art, artists, relationships among ideas from other subject areas, choice of materials, techniques, art exemplars and their multiple meanings, studio problems, and written papers. Most important, however, is the organization and sequencing of the learning process.

3. Instruction refers to lesson implementation in which we use communication skills, problem-solving tasks, materials, and resources to engage students with art knowledge and experiences leading to proficiency. This includes delivery of the lesson; motivation and questioning strategies that lead students to critical thinking; use of quality visuals, demonstrations, and directions; pacing and guiding students in elegantly solving problems; classroom management; outside class assignments; use of critiques; sharing of work; and linking art content to individual and collective learning processes in a meaningful way.

4. Assessment refers to examining the value of art teaching and learning. This includes formative and summative evaluation of instruction that may be embedded into the planning sequence. Beyond

Problem-Based Learning in the Art-History Survey Course

Molly M. Lindner, assistant professor of art in the Art Department at Kent State University, Stark, in Canton, Ohio, offers an alternative to teaching the art-history survey through Problem-Based Learning.

Part 1: Survey Courses and Today's Students

Would that I could teach art history the way that my college professors taught me: seamless lectures, brilliant analyses, smooth transitions from one image to the next through the diligence of little jockey-size men who perched on stools behind the gently whirring slide projectors. The art historians were experts who talked about what they knew best. I hung on their every word. Everything was magical, and I was transported to far-away places to learn about beautiful objects and lofty ideas that only made me want more. Well, that's how I remember it. Lecture courses in graduate school perpetuated my favorite mode of learning by immersion in art:

looking, listening, reading, studying, and writing.

Many of us still cling to the lecture, discussion, and exam format for teaching art-history surveys, despite the disconnection this teaching method may have for many students in our classes. They can sit still and listen for seventy-five minutes, if that is what we require them to do, but the classic art-history survey course was designed for students who came to college with experiences and life expectations very different than those of today's students. Our students are focused on getting through liberal-education requirements—of which the art-history survey course is often one—while others are overwhelmed by trying to fit studying into lives already filled with work and family responsibilities. A shocking percentage of students have not visited the nearest art museum, large or small; many have not traveled beyond their home state. Only a few possess knowledge of a language other than English, and their composition skills need

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direction and correction.

My fellow academics and I jokingly call the first year of college the “thirteenth grade,” but behind this quip lies our frustration with making up for the shortcomings in our students’ educations. So many college freshmen seem to have learned to think about complex questions in only elementary ways. For many, art is remote, irrelevant, and too abstract for them to comprehend and value. When they ask “Will it be on the test?” and “Did you cover anything important in class today?” they reveal not only their anxieties about doing well but also that they do not perceive learning as a lifelong, cumulative, and organic process that delights and fascinates them.

Far from being negative about art history, however, they are neutral, perhaps because they do not know what to expect. Some students become fascinated with our discipline and love the richness of the visual material that they encounter in lectures and textbooks. While they want to know more about the history of art, they write in their course evaluations that they prefer learning about fewer works of art in

greater depth rather than being blitzed by endless slide lists and facing requirements to memorize facts that they quickly forget. Students express that they learn best when working out a problem with their peers.

In addition to the stress of handling complex information in college, students do not want to make mistakes. Recent scholarship on the biology of the human brain provides insight into the ways that students process complex information, why they write simplistic answers on essay exams when class discussions usually occur on a higher level.¹ Their simplification of the course’s content happens because of frustration and fear. When students are overwhelmed by having to memorize too many works of art for an exam, they boil everything down to a level that they can manage. We think that they are lazy or are not trying, but fear and anxiety have taken over their cognitive functions and blocked the transfer of information to long-term memory. The amygdala—the part of the brain that filters out all unnecessary information—reduces detailed lecture information to the simplest concepts necessary to the part of the brain that

makes snap decisions: friend or foe, flee or stay. Because the brain is chiefly an emotional organ, we must be aware of the ways in which we activate students’ emotions and avoid triggering such feelings as fear because the amygdala monitors fear and overrides the brain’s cognitive functions.²

Is there a better way to utilize and direct both the energy and enthusiasm of the traditional college-age student and the maturity and dedication of the nontraditional student? By applying recent scholarship on the human brain and how emotion relates to learning, I have experimented with a teaching approach called Problem-Based Learning (PBL) to teach art-history survey courses.

In a PBL course, students learn by carrying out research projects during the semester rather than by listening to lectures, taking exams, and writing a single research paper.³ The professor lectures very little (if at all) but instead designs “problems” that groups of students research and present orally and in writing. Most commonly in PBL, students coauthor research papers and receive the same grade. Group partici-

PART *object*



■ PART *sculpture*

symposium

ON VIEW OCTOBER 30, 2005–FEBRUARY 26, 2006

This groundbreaking exhibition traces a sensual, handmade genealogy of sculpture from WWII to the present. Artists range from Marcel Duchamp and Louise Bourgeois to Robert Gober and Josiah McElheny.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2005

A DIFFERENT KIND OF READYMADE

This session seeks to unpack the implications of rethinking the ready-made (as handmade, bodily, and erotic) in specific and the oeuvre of Marcel Duchamp more generally.

SPEAKERS: David Joselit, David Deitcher, Rachel Haidu

MODERATOR: Helen Molesworth

PART OBJECT

This session explores the ways the exhibition uses psychoanalysis to think through object relations and the problem of sculpture.

SPEAKERS: Rosalind Krauss, Briony Fer, Mignon Nixon

MODERATOR: Lisa Florman

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2005

PART SCULPTURE

This panel looks at the wide range of sculptural practices deployed by artists in the exhibition, and the various narratives that emerge.

SPEAKERS: Stephen Melville, Molly Nesbit, Peggy Phelan

MODERATOR: Michael Mercil

gallery conversation

Louise Neri and Josiah McElheny with David Weinberg

registration

The symposium is free and open to the public, but advance registration is strongly encouraged. For more information and updates, contact EDWEB@WEXARTS.ORG

Part Object Part Sculpture was organized by the Wexner Center for the Arts. Major support is provided by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Additional support is provided by the Altria Group Inc., Nimoy Foundation, The Judith Rothschild Foundation, Greater Columbus Arts Council, National Endowment for the Arts, Art Alliance for Contemporary Glass, and the Corporate Annual Fund of the Wexner Center Foundation. Accommodations are provided by The Blackwell Inn.

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pation in and out of class is another major component of students' grades. A PBL class rejects exams to assess students' learning. Conversely, PBL emphasizes group research. Thus, students become responsible for their own learning, and the skills they obtain are transferable to any discipline.

PBL means relinquishing control over what the students learn, especially the works of art that they know by the semester's end. This does not necessarily destroy the purpose of introducing potential majors to the discipline and teaching the fundamental principles and methods of art history. Quite the opposite: using PBL to teach introductory art-history courses can attract majors as effectively as the traditional two-slide lecture method while at the same time capturing the energies and enthusiasm of today's students and respecting their wishes for an engaging course.

As a mode of course design, PBL has the potential to reshape art-history surveys and to accomplish the goals of introductory courses in new and creative ways. By recasting the "problems" of Problem-Based Learning to topics and questions (see part 2 of this essay), an art-history survey course becomes learning through research. The occasional lecture—never completely abandoned—sets the stage for the students' research by providing an overview of topics and problems to be encountered. But a PBL course also introduces students to research skills and fosters community through small-group collaboration—in effect, creating the same kind of community that we participate in as scholars.

PBL requires the students to research problems (or topics) in small groups.⁴ Letting students loose on open-ended research might sound like a nightmare. This approach does require support and guidance to make students maximize their prior knowledge and their social skills to interact in small groups. PBL hinges on group dynamics: students draw on their own and each other's strengths. Discussions include doubts about the appropriateness of past research in relation to their own findings; their peers provide complementary information. Group interaction forces students to think harder and challenge each other; as a result, they retain more knowledge.⁵ Interactions among students and discussions during class activate

the neurons that help to move new information into short-term, working memory.⁶ The neurons continue firing after students leave our classroom, and such activities as reading, thinking, and writing promote long-term memory. How many times during lectures have I wished that I could talk to students in depth about a question or problem in art history? PBL lets me do that when I sit at a table with a small group. Those deafening silences we so often encounter at the lectern are a thing of the past.

Practically speaking, presentations, papers, and group collaboration are the bases for grades. I divide the semester into four units, preceded by an introduction to PBL; I also schedule time to practice small-group work and electronic communication, which most students need to be taught to use (two or three classes). Each unit is allotted at least three weeks and culminates in student-led presentations and/or discussions of the ideas, concepts, and information that the students have learned. Small-group research in the library and oral presentations take place during class time, while postings of papers and online discussions take place on the course website, which has a listserv for each group. Students work best in an environment free from ridicule and embarrassment, and learning how to manage problems that can arise in small-group work is the responsibility of both the students and the professor. As the professor, I guide, advise, consult, discuss, and give minilectures, thereby carrying out my part in PBL, which ensures its success.

Part 2: Structuring Art History I Using Problem-Based Learning

Using the familiar (to us) chronological approach, Unit 1 of the course "Art History I" encompasses the Paleolithic through the Bronze Age. Depending on how many different problems or topics you design, two or more groups would research the same problem. The topics for Art History I reflect exam questions and the themes in former lectures. The topics are: 1) the role of technology, techniques, and materials in producing art and architecture; 2) iconography and the nonverbal language of art; 3) religion's impact on art; 4) the representation of the human figure

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CAA Teaching Award Winners Speak

CAA News invited former winners of the *Distinguished Teaching of Art and Art History Awards* to comment on pedagogy, reflect on their practice, or share a teaching-related anecdote. Here's what some of our top professors have to say:

Cecelia F. Klein, University of California, Los Angeles

One of my most successful strategies for attracting student interest in pre-Columbian art has been to start, on the first day of class, by showing slides illustrating a variety of present-day uses of pre-Columbian art. The slides range from a blond-haired white man heavily tattooed with exoticized and sexualized pre-Columbian motifs to a Chicano mural depicting a chronologically impossible mélange of famous buildings and sculptures from ancient Mexico that were painted on the wall of a building in Koreatown in Los Angeles. The images tap into important factors such as ethnic pride and heritage, tourism, New Age exoticism, commercial sensationalism, and nationalist propaganda. Students are asked to speculate on who commissioned these contemporary artworks, who was intended to see them, why these particular motifs and themes were chosen, the meaning of the works to their viewers, and whose interests were ultimately best served by them. The immediate goals of the exercise are to demonstrate: 1) the continuing relevance of pre-Columbian imagery for ordinary people and major institutions; 2) the variety of ways in which these motifs and themes have been adapted to contemporary needs; and 3) the many ways in which viewers today are likely to understand them.

Not only are students excited to see the contemporary relevance of the subject of our course, but they also seem almost relieved to learn that people may understand and appreciate the past in a variety of ways. The first class concludes with a promise that we will see, in the meetings to follow, that postmodern problems posed by different artists' intentions, viewers' expectations, and scholars' understandings are no less pressing when we move back in time to the pictorial and written sources on Mexican art dating to the decades immediately following the Spanish Conquest. It is always my hope—so far, not in vain—that this lesson ultimately enhances the