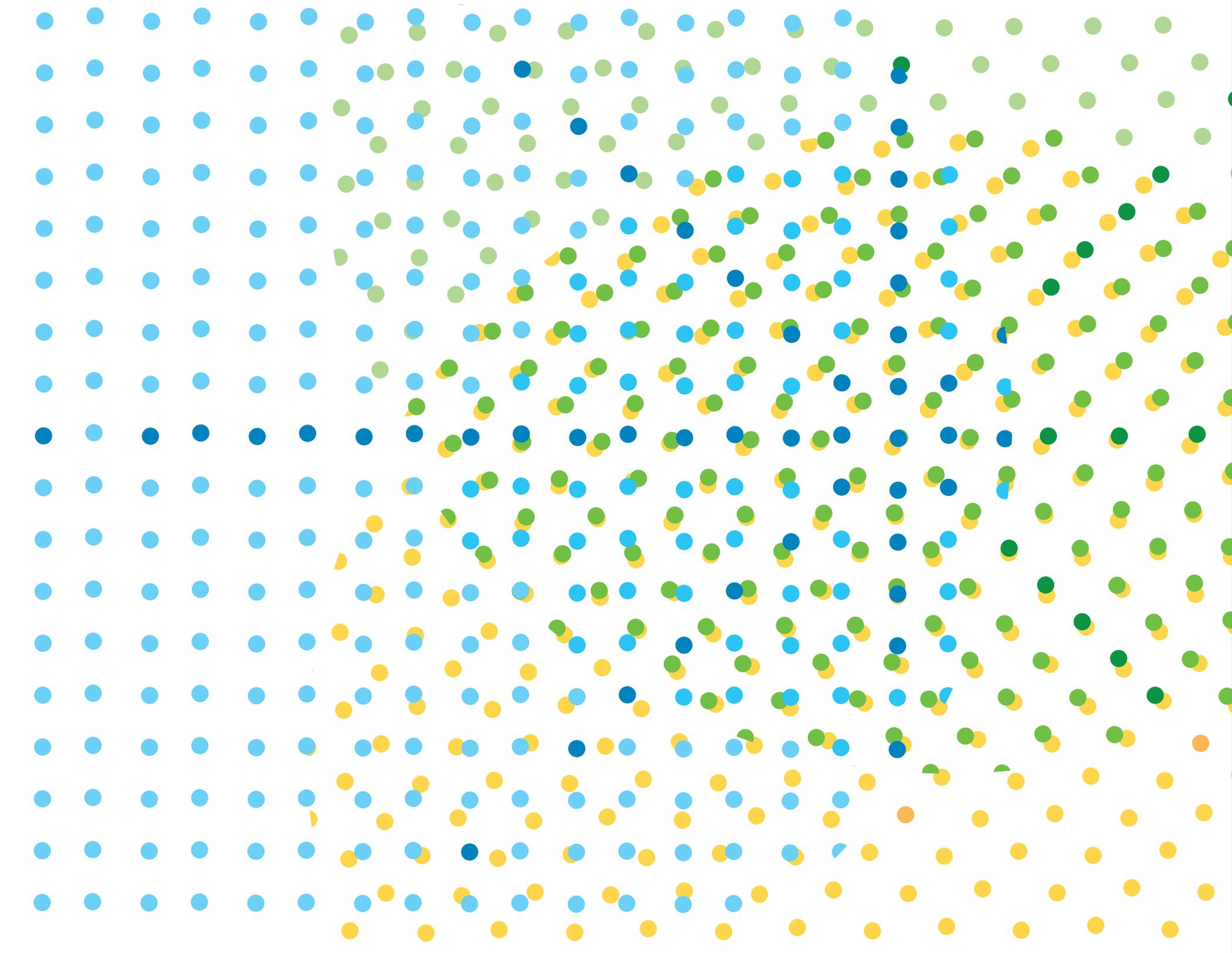


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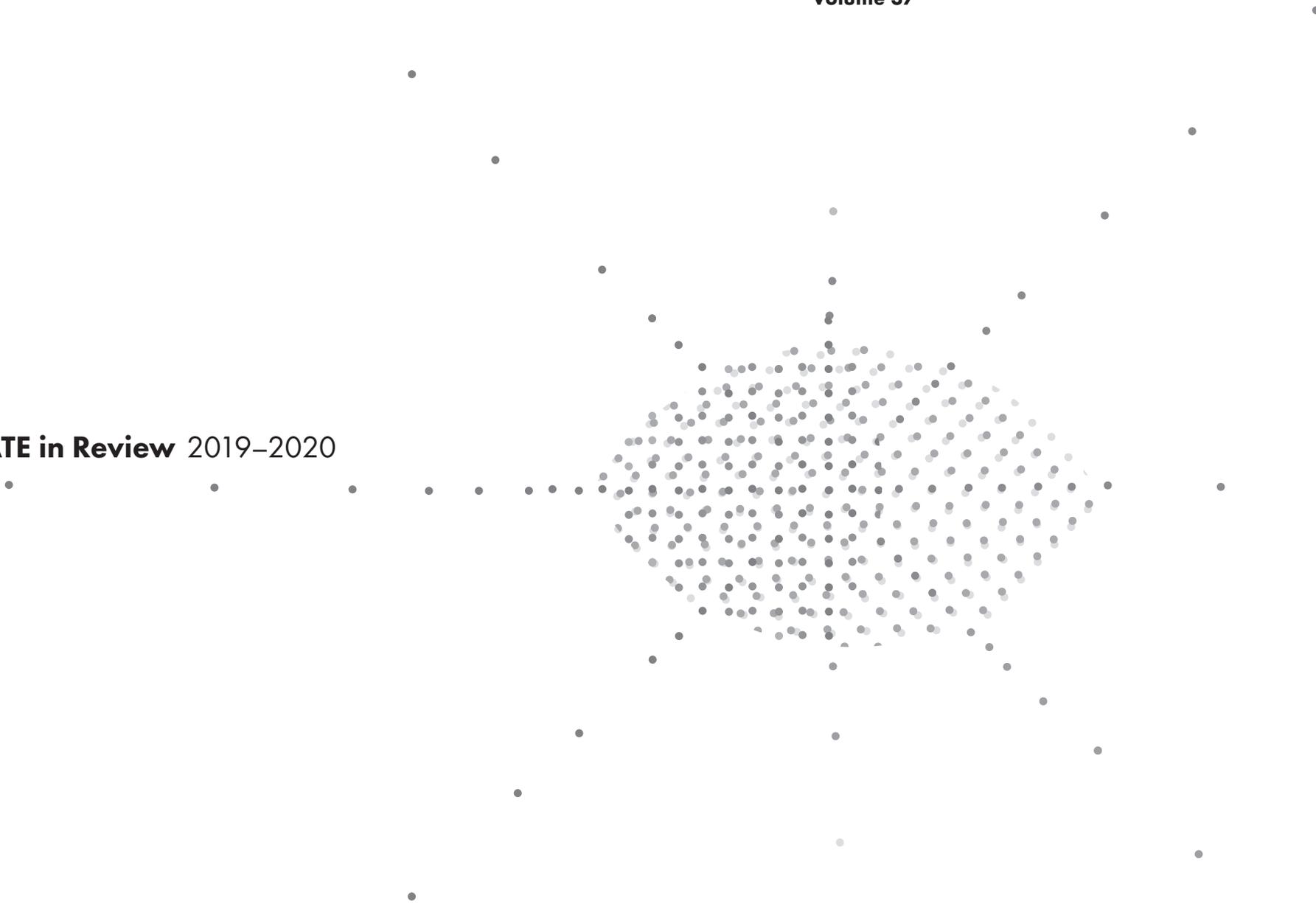
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FATE in Review 2019–2020

Foundations in Art: Theory and Education



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Acknowledgements

The editor of FATE in Review is grateful for the support of The South Carolina School of the Arts at Anderson University, and for the thoughtful work of our Associate Editors, Copy Editor, and readers.

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ISSN: 1090-3372

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Adapting Teaching Research to Art Pedagogy

Introduction

This paper shares the results of a two year research project studying how the Flipped Classroom teaching practice (FC) improved art appreciation classes at community colleges, and how art instruction can be improved by researching students.¹ Contrasting the FC and a more typical lecture and discussion-based approach illustrates many advantages for art studio and art history classes.

Through the FC method, art faculty can use surveys to hear directly from students on their perceptions of the class in order to refine instruction during the semester and respond to student concerns. Data collected from students can be a powerful tool for experimenting with innovation in art courses. Using this data, instructors can identify specific goals and outcomes based on real information rather than occasional feedback or hunches.

Flipping the Art Classroom:

Surveying students during the semester is part of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL), a discipline from the field of education. SOTL differs from typical student feedback in several ways.² Normally, instructors receive feedback on student learning and experiences through classwork and projects, both verbally and non-verbally in class. Instructors also hear students' opinions and thoughts at the end of the semester through college evaluations. In contrast, SOTL asks the instructor what they want to find out about their students' learning, then turn that into a specific research question. This question can range from broad to specific, from the structure of the course to specific assignment guidelines. For example, a design instructor may wish to know if discussing assignment guidelines with a short critique of a successful past assignment improves student performance on the assignment. Or, an

art history instructor may want to find out if scaffolding a research paper results in better-quality student writing.

The next step of SOTL is to develop a tool to find the answer to the research question. Depending on the type of question, the instructor then gathers information from students through either qualitative or quantitative tools. A question asking whether *something works or will work* is quantitative: the tool will need to gather facts with *yes-or-no answers*. In contrast, a question about *how or why something works* leads to a qualitative research tool, which describes the *process* of student learning.³ After deciding on a research question, the instructor formulates an instrument to find out the answers, such as an anonymous survey or interviewing selected students. After the results are in, the instructor compiles the data and looks for trends in the responses; visualizing data through charts or graphs can be particularly helpful in this process. The answers can then lead to another

research question, or experimenting in a future class.

SOTL aligns with many aspects of art instruction already in place, and provides many benefits in an art context. Artists experiment in the studio with concepts and materials, then analyze the results to guide their studio practice. Curators, art historians, and many artists are already familiar with research methods within the field. Art instructors constantly refine their pedagogy to improve student learning. Using SOTL and feedback from students allows an instructor to refine their craft over time, using real data rather than basing decisions on their own past experiences as a college student. SOTL can help confirm that assignments are aligned with course goals, and that feedback comes from *all* students. Furthermore, data on student learning can be used in other aspects of institutional assessment. It can provide evidence that students are learning and utilizing skills both in the fields of art and design, and across disciplines.

The Flipped Classroom Defined

The Flipped Classroom (FC) is a high-impact teaching practice, called “Flipped” teaching because it upends the expectations of a college instructor delivering lectures in class. In the FC, the instructor provides the lecture before class in a video or podcast, along with other online resources. Then during class time, the instructor leads students in an active-learning project based on the class content. Educational psychologist Benjamin Bloom, editor of the *Taxonomy*

of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals (1956), categorized knowledge domains from lower to higher levels. Bloom's *Taxonomy* was expanded in 2001 to include subcategories of verbs to describe how to apply each of the six knowledge domains.⁴ In the FC, students learn basic information in the introductory lecture before class, seen in the lower levels of Bloom's *Taxonomy*, remember, understand, and apply—where emphasis is on remembering facts, understanding basic ideas, and applying concepts. To do this, the instructor can record lectures on video and post them on YouTube, and link to them in the college's learning management software (LMS). The instructor can also post relevant videos such as artist interviews, Art 21 segments, and PBS documentaries. Next, students complete a short quiz online to check their understanding. Then in class, students use that knowledge to analyze, evaluate, and create, the upper levels of Bloom's *Taxonomy*, through short projects requiring engagement with class material. The FC has been used widely in higher education since 2000, yet only a few studies exist describing its application in an art history class or art studio context.⁵

For example, to teach students about Pepón Osorio's installation, *Scene of the Crime (Whose Crime?)*, an Art 21 video and an online interview can introduce them to Osorio's practice. This can then be followed by students taking a brief quiz on the LMS, which they can repeat until achieving a perfect grade. The in-class activity based on this foundational knowledge directs the students to find evidence

...the instructor maximizes the time spent with students using higher order thinking skills. Because of this emphasis on active learning, students take part in a greater segment of class content.

active learning

in the artwork to support Osorio's statements on his practice.

The "evidence" area of Bloom's *Taxonomy* inspired the following activity. First, students read one of Osorio's statements about his work:

*My work is a lot bigger than life; it is like an exaggeration of life. It is such an exaggerated world whether the people who react to it... love or hate it. A lot of people ask me if all this is true... Yes, my work is always based on a reality, on real facts or stories. I create a sense of reality with fantasy, where the story is made to break the sense of reality.*⁶

Students answer questions such as, "What is 'real' in the artwork, *Scene of*

the Crime, and what is 'fantasy'?" This activity requires close looking and interrogation of the objects Osorio includes, and interpreting their significance. The resulting discussions have included issues of race and ethnicity, installation strategies, artistic license, and artistic activism. After discussion, small groups of students collaborate to write a short essay, using the artwork to support their argument. Working in small groups allows all students to participate, since they can hear ideas from their peers during the writing process and in the class discussion.

Eighty-eight percent of students in a Flipped history survey class preferred the Flipped format to a lecture-only format, despite the fact that the FC model requires students to do extra preparation before class, in addition to required readings.⁷ Previous research helps explain this student perception. First, students spend more individual time with instructors and thus can feel more comfortable asking clarifying questions and engaging in discussion. Class time is devoted to active learning in which instructors check on student comprehension.⁸ Thus, the instructor maximizes the time spent with students using higher order thinking skills.⁹ Because of this emphasis on active learning, students take part in a greater segment of class content.¹⁰

Art Appreciation Case Study

The study first sought to find out if the FC improved student learning in art appreciation courses. A quantitative, anonymous survey measured the effects of the FC on learning about artworks. *Doing Research to Improve Teaching and Learn-*

ing by Kimberly M. Williams provided an invaluable guide to developing surveys appropriate to the research question. One art appreciation class section was designated as the "control," non-Flipped Class, and another, "experimental" class section at the same college was Flipped. The classes met in the same lecture hall, had the same number of students, and required the same assignments. The survey was distributed twice in both classes before and after the lesson, to record the base knowledge of this topic at the outset. The survey tested students' recall of basic facts about Frank Lloyd Wright's *Fallingwater* and Buckminster Fuller's *U.S. Pavilion*, covered in one chapter of the art appreciation class. Before the class, the Flipped Class had watched several videos online and taken a quiz. The Flipped Class answered three out of four questions more accurately than the non-Flipped Class. At the end of the semester, final grades reflected this trend [plate 1]. Twenty students in the Flipped Class received A's, while only thirteen in the control class did. The average GPA in the Flipped Class was a full half grade higher than the control class, 3.6 compared to 3.0.

How do students engage with the Flipped Class online material, and how is the Flipped Class more helpful to student understanding and memory? The next survey asked these qualitative questions. This larger data set consisted of 117 students in six art appreciation classes at two different community colleges with the same instructor. Thirty percent of students self-reported "always" watching the online videos as part of the FC. Yet,

71 percent reported they took quizzes before class, which was counted as part of their grade. Thus, many students took the quizzes without watching the videos first, possibly guessing or using websites to find the correct answer. This did not prepare them for in-class activities. In later semesters, this deficit was addressed by tracking students on the LMS to check if they completed videos and quizzes. Checking in with individual students before and after class made a considerable difference; this personal touch resulted many more

eighty-nine percent of students found the online material such as videos and quizzes helpful, and eighty-five percent found it helped them succeed in class. Specifically, when asked how helpful the online material was for understanding the artworks, 68 percent reported that they were very helpful. A large percentage responded that the online videos and quizzes helped them succeed in class. Sixty-six percent of students responded that they planned to use them to study for the final exam. Nearly 90 percent were somewhat or very confident

percent of students felt confident about the upcoming final exam. One student commented that “the material provided extra information and details that we might not have covered in class.” Another wrote that the online videos are “helpful for studying for tests such as the midterm and final.” Students re-watched parts of the videos to help them take quizzes, thus reinforcing their mastery of the material. Quizzes with no time limit “helped me become more prepared for class. I was able to go at my own pace which made studying and learning easier.” Another student confirmed that “the unlimited attempts to take the quiz made me learn from them more.”

Students also valued in-class activities as an opportunity to learn from their peers. One student wrote that “group work helped me understand more material because I could ask my partners.” Students also commented on active learning as “helpful and fun to interact with others and not just sit and listen to lecture.” Other student comments implied that students found a sense of community and support in the class as a result of collaboration on projects, responding to classmates’ ideas, and expressing their own observations and opinions. One student wrote, “I like the group work and constant ideas thrown out in class by classmates.” The FC creates a framework in which all students can share their thoughts through collaborating, arguing, discussing, and writing.

Implementing the Flipped Classroom

Switching from a lecture-based class to a Flipped Class requires the instructor to take several steps: identify learning priorities, compile online resources, and

assess learning. The following are helpful in Flipping any class.

Step 1: Identify your class objective.

What specific ideas, concepts, or skills are essential for students to know? In this template, the instructor begins the process by setting learning objectives and narrowing the aspect of class material to master [plate 2].

Step 2: Create a class project based on your class objective.

What can students create, analyze, or debate, based on that aspect of the artwork? The following is an example of teaching about International Style, Mies van der Rohe, and the Seagram Building. Students watched short videos about these topics and took a short quiz on the videos before class. Class began with a short review of the material, then an in-class activity. In small groups, students were given the following problem:

You are a real estate developer and would like to recreate the Seagram Building in Chicago. However, you need financial backing. Give at least 5 reasons that a company should fund the building and use it for their world headquarters. Choose which company would be a good fit for this building. Use the features of the International Style for some of your reasons.

As students write a proposal for their chosen company, they are using the “Create and Evaluate” area of knowledge from the upper levels of Bloom’s *Taxonomy*.

Final Grades, Number of Students

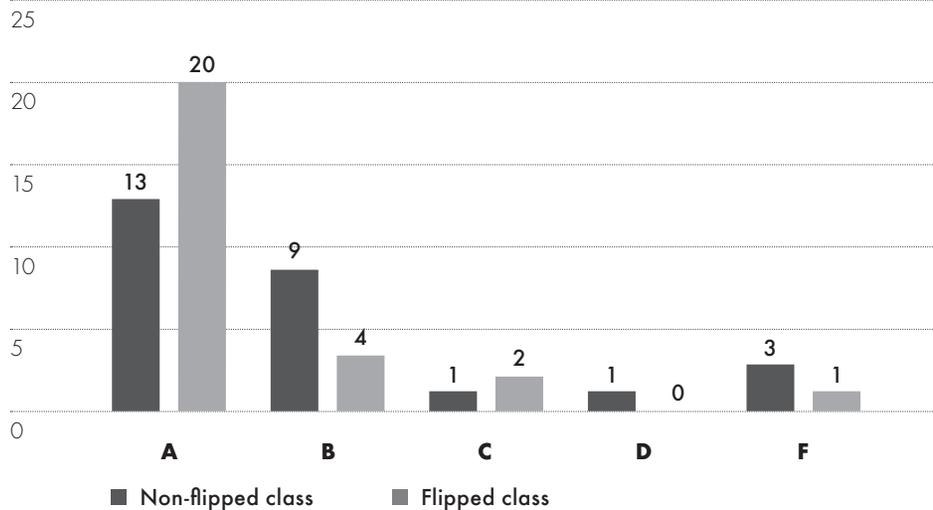


Plate 1 Comparison of final grades from Art Appreciation class, comparing non-Flipped Class (the control) with the Flipped Class (the experiment). Art Appreciation class, 2016, Harper College, Palatine, Illinois

students doing this crucial step of the FC.

The qualitative survey demonstrated that students perceived online materials as assisting them in their learning. In total,

they would do well. Over half used the online material to study for exams, and 89

Lesson Title	
Course	
Date	

Learning Objectives

Student Learning Resources at Home

Student Learning Activities at Home

Classroom Activities

Assessment

Students defend their choice to the class with aspects of the International Style.

Step 3: Create online resources to give students a foundational knowledge of the artwork. What essential information do the students need to know in order to participate in this discussion or project about the artwork? In this example, students watched two short videos on the Seagram Building and International Style, and read the relevant section of the textbook.

Step 4: Check student learning in a low-stakes assessment. In this example, the quiz both assessed their learning and summarized important points. The quizzes also signal to students that this information is important, and instructors can tell students that quiz questions reappear as part of exams. The in-class short essays, projects, and proposals that students produce during the in-class activities can be turned in at the end of class, then returned with comments. This allows the instructor to check understanding of major ideas brought up during class if there were misunderstandings or important points that were not raised, which can be covered in the next class.

Benefits and Drawbacks of the Flipped Classroom

Advantages and disadvantages of the FC for teaching art appreciation include the following: students arrive to class expecting to talk, analyze, write, and think. The FC helps ensure that all students participate in class, and allows the instructor to hear their observations and opinions.

Because of the FC’s two-step process for covering class concepts, students absorb information from different media; including videos, readings, lectures, and quiz questions, to engaging in active learning. Students have a variety of media to draw upon for exams, papers, and class discussions. In the process, students become more comfortable with the LMS as part of their weekly use, and regularly consult online resources during class to gather evidence for arguments in class discussions and essays. In addition, instructors feel more personally and intellectually engaged, because they raise complex issues in art practice and art history into introductory courses.¹¹ A disadvantage of the FC is the time required to set up online resources and quizzes, invent in-class activities, and respond to written assessments, which can take two to three hours per week. Once the initial setup is done, however, the instructor can re-use these in later semesters with few changes.

Conclusion

The FC is well suited to art appreciation, art history, and studio courses for several reasons. A wealth of art-related videos, documentaries, and online resources for teaching art is available through YouTube, museum websites, streaming video services, and library websites. Instructors can record their own lectures through free programs to refine information that students need. In art history or art appreciation courses, students gain visual familiarity with artworks before class, while in studio courses, videos recorded by

Plate 2 Flipped Classroom Lesson Plan Template, Academy for Teaching Excellence, Harper College, Palatine, Illinois

the instructor or others can introduce the processes covered in class. Students have the opportunity to hear directly from artists through video and social media. Class time is then devoted to important topics that engage both the instructor and their students, through which students hear instructors speak with expertise and passion. By participating actively in class, they gain more of an understanding of what art historians and artists actually do, which is especially important for introductory and foundations classes. Students remember more information from art classes while enjoying the learning process. Flipping the art classroom or studio and collecting data on student learning makes teaching more profound, more student-centered, and more fun.

Endnotes

- 1 My research was made possible by a two-year grant from Achieving the Dream and by the Academy of Teaching Excellence at Harper College, and with support from the South Suburban College Foundation.
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**Student Traits, Studio Dynamics, and Faculty Strategies
in Foundations Studies**

The Smartphone and Generation Z:

Introduction

Preparing for an upcoming Foundations semester, faculty tend to focus on what they as educators bring to the pedagogical table. They think about getting the syllabus together, figuring out projects, how to best manage a jam-packed semester, as well as addressing any teaching insecurities they may have.

Will that new project fall flat? Will that demonstration go well? What may get lost in all these pressing teacher-centric concerns is what is on the other side of the teaching equation: the students. Faculty do not always take into consideration what student factors will impact their teaching. Yet, before developing the syllabus, before planning projects, do faculty really know who they are planning for? Do they know who will walk through their studio door? They may think they do.

After all, faculty were once students, and have their own vivid memories of handing in their first paper and having their first critique. But faculty are Millennials,

Generation X, or Baby Boomers, and today's students are iGen, or the more prevailing moniker, Generation Z.¹ This is a cohort who grew up with smart devices and social media, resulting in generational qualities that impact faculty teaching approaches, student interactions, and classroom dynamics. To be effective and informed Foundations educators requires a clear understanding of who Generation Z is, so faculty can best respond to their students' generational qualities and challenges.

Generation Z College Students

The beginning of the fall semester can seem like Groundhog Day: it's another class of 18-year olds, new to college, but not new to their faculty. Salient freshmen struggles and issues are, by and large, universal and predictable. This is an especially vulnerable group of students going through significant life changes.

They've lost the ordered structure of high school, as well as the familiar patterns and comforts of home life. Adjusting to being away from their families, finding their way through a new social environment, struggling with time management, and college grading standards; there

are a lot of challenges and stresses students navigate during their time as freshmen. These kinds of hurdles are perennial, but a current shift is present in a generational change. Freshmen are no longer Millennials, they are Generation Z, a new demographic cohort making up the majority of students in college today.² The emergence of this new generation is linked with the rise of the internet, social media, and the cell phone, with Generation Z students first born in 1995, and first entering college in 2012.³ Making up 24 percent of the American population, it is anticipated that the last class of Generation Z will begin college in 2030.⁴ Of course individuals vary, but as a group they are pragmatic, compassionate, we-centric, and motivated to make a difference in the world.⁵ A generation of digital natives, they spend hours on smartphones, social media, and the internet, and have dramatically higher levels of anxiety and depression compared to previous generations.⁶ It is these latter qualities that can be particularly challenging for Foundations faculty. In their classrooms, faculty don't just have Generation Z students, but also their smartphones and their complicated relationships with these devices. They affect studio social interactions, the studio learning environment, student attention spans, and students' mental health.

Student Interaction, Studio Culture, and the Smartphone

With its addictive and direct pipeline to the internet, the smartphone is a dominant presence in the classroom. When Generation Z freshmen first enter the Foundations studio they often keep to themselves,

closely tethered to their devices, and it is clear most don't know each other's names—even well into the semester. This lack of student interaction occurs after several class readings, discussions, critiques, and work in the studio outside of class time. Why? Every time there is a class break, students focus on their phones; texting, cruising the internet, anything except very minimal interactions with one another. Clearly this lack of face-to-face contact continues when they walk down the hall together, walk back to the dorms together, and come back to do homework in the studios together. Group projects may jumpstart some interaction, but well into the semester many still spend much of their downtime on their phones instead of being completely present with their classmates. Generation Z's relationship with their smartphones may have a lot to do with this behavior. This is the first generation who grew up with smartphones and the internet. Preliminary research suggests the rise of social media, and decline of face-to-face interactions among Generation Z, has resulted in poor social skills.⁷ Consequently, it makes sense that students aren't adept at getting to know one another well until they are put in classroom situations where they have to engage. Through their devices, students have access to a network of family and friends, anytime, anywhere, allowing them to stay virtually connected to a robust social network at all times.⁸ This easy connectivity to pre-established online social networks doesn't encourage students to

...faculty can create classroom situations that facilitate more student interaction, so students might look at their smartphones less and engage with their classmates more.

interactive studio culture

extend their social space from the virtual realm into a new social group in physical space. In fact, it makes sense that when entering a new unfamiliar and stressful environment, like college, students would prefer to rely on, and retreat to, pre-established social connections through their phones. Studio educators recognize how problematic this is for the health and vitality of the studio educational environment, since a significant part of student learning and development involves student interaction. What is taught is greatly enriched when students share with each other, brainstorm together, learn from each other, work through challenges, ideas, and setbacks together, both in and outside of class. This kind of interactive studio culture suffers, and student development suffers, when students turn to their phones instead of their peers.

Attention, Distraction, and the Smartphone

Smartphones are consuming distractions, affecting student engagement and their ability to focus in class. Studies show that high school seniors spend, on average, two and a quarter hours a day texting, two hours on the internet, one and a half hours gaming, and half an hour video chatting, for an average of six hours a day of media leisure time.⁹ This doesn't include other times during the day, like during class, when we know they are sneaking in phone time. Some Generation Z students describe being uncomfortable with their relationship to their smartphone and how they compulsively check it, even in the middle of the night. One student confessed: "I know I shouldn't, but I just cannot help it."¹⁰ Even when they aren't looking at their devices, students describe constantly thinking about them, and fear what they could be missing.¹¹ This fear, so widely experienced, has a specific term for it: FOMO, or "fear of missing out."¹² A recent Pew Research Center survey found the majority of teenagers feel they have to respond to messages as soon as they get them, and 31 percent admit they are distracted in class because they are checking their phones.¹³ Other data suggests Generation Z students are not just distracted by their devices, but their interactions with their devices have fostered short attention spans. One study found more than 75 percent of students' computer windows are open on average for less than a minute.¹⁴ There are clear issues between student short attention spans, and building a successful studio

class and studio practice. Working through ideas, new materials, and projects requires sustained attention. This is necessary in order to wade through tangents, dead ends, false starts, and to allow for exploration, all aspects of a healthy artistic practice. When students are constantly distracted by activity on their phones it is impossible for them to enter a state of creative engagement and absorption, what psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi refers to as "flow."¹⁵ It is challenging to foster this kind of studio work approach with a group of students used to flitting from one thing to another, and who are being constantly interrupted by smartphone notifications.

Mental Health and The Smartphone

Perhaps the most disturbing impact of this generation's relationship with their smartphones is how it negatively affects their mental health. A large percentage of teenagers describe feeling anxious, lonely, and upset when they don't have their cellphones with them.¹⁶ Social media use has been linked to negative feelings, especially among young women, who are twice as likely to be cyber bullied as young men.¹⁷ Happy posts, featuring significant accomplishments, dominate social media, eliciting feelings of inadequacy among some viewers. This can create the false illusion that everyone else's life is free of challenges, struggles, and/or disappointments.¹⁸ Student anxiety is on the rise, as is self-injury and suicide.¹⁹ Between 2011 and 2016 the number of teens who considered suicide rose 60 percent.²⁰ These dramatic mental health shifts suggest they may be indicative of a specific cause with a big impact, like the impact of the smartphone

in teens lives.²¹ Recent studies link the rise in teen anxiety to their unhealthy codependent relationships with their smartphones.²² Data suggests this is a generational trend, with 2016 marking the first time the majority of students entering college described their mental health as below average.²³ Faculty observations align with this data, with a growing number of faculty becoming increasingly concerned about their students' mental health and unsure how to best respond. How can Foundations faculty navigate these student issues, ranging from mental health struggles to short attention spans?

Addressing Smartphone Distraction in The Studio Classroom

This is a smartphone distracted generation whose device use has trained them to have short attention spans and underdeveloped social skills, ill-preparing them for focused, interactive college studio classes. Consequently, it isn't surprising when students are easily distracted, and struggle to concentrate for extended periods of time, not readily interacting with their classmates. What pedagogical countermeasures can be taken? Knowing these issues are closely linked to student smartphones, how do faculty address device usage in their classrooms? A complete phone ban is likely a losing battle. As previously mentioned, device separation is not only anxiety provoking for many students, but they are just as distracted thinking about their phones away from them as when they are in front of them. Some faculty create a cell phone parking lot, or phone box, for students to put their devices in at the beginning of class. What complicates this

approach is parents may own students' phones. Recently there have been several legal battles involving teachers who have restricted student access to phones owned by parents. Therefore, faculty should be cautious about mandating students surrender their phones during class. A class wide agreement to put devices away for set periods of time would avoid this potential legal tangle. Perhaps the best approach is to develop class strategies that take student conditioned behaviors into consideration, and establish clear class smartphone use protocol. Discuss when it is appropriate to use the devices and in which circumstances. For example, is it okay to listen to music during extended work periods, but not to watch videos? The former might help students focus better and the latter will likely completely take their attention off their work. Do they need to have one earbud out so they can hear announcements and be able to jump into conversations that arise? Should texting, responding to emails, and phone calls be restricted to scheduled breaks? Establish comprehensive and specific smartphone etiquette when faculty and others are talking, during critiques, work periods, and breaktime. Smartphone use policies should be clear from the outset, included in the syllabus, discussed with the class, and consistently executed as a participation component of grading. What will likely deeply resonate with students is a discussion addressing the importance of resisting the temptation to turn to the phone as a form of procrastination and escapism from project challenges. The majority of Generation Z recognize they spend too much time on their phones and are already trying to cut back.²⁴

Clearly defined smartphone protocol can help with device distraction. How a course is structured can help address students' short attention spans, and their tendency to not readily interact with one another. Some of these pedagogical approaches include: building in scheduled breaks students can anticipate, creating mini-deadlines that parse larger projects into smaller units, building up to extended projects, breaking up long class sessions with different activities, and front-loading group projects. Generation Z typically prefer to be independent learners, but also recognize the value in working with, and alongside others.²⁵ With this in mind faculty can create classroom situations that facilitate more student interaction, so students might look at their smartphones less and engage with their classmates more. Healthy interactive studio relationships between students can be encouraged by activities like group, student-led, project critiques early in the semester and small, interactive reading discussion groups. When small groups of students are charged to offer each other in-process feedback, discuss project hurdles, and offer brainstorming suggestions, student interaction, and an interest in one another's work is sparked. This does necessitate some initial faculty guidance, in order to focus student discussions and feedback to align with project requirements. Instead of discussing readings as a whole class, break students into small groups charged with identifying the main takeaways from different sections of a reading. These groups discuss and decide on the salient points of their sections before regrouping with members from the other reading sections.

This is a compassionate, hard working group of students whose smart devices are fully integrated in their lives, affecting their behaviors, and how they interact with the world.

supportive educators

Here they share their original group's findings with a new group. In both of these classroom examples students are placed in situations where they get to know each other by developing, learning, and sharing knowledge with their classmates. Finally, consider incorporating smartphones into projects. This could be as simple as taking photographs to compare different compositional options for in-progress pieces, using the calculator, looking up artists or designers, or researching potential project materials. On the other end of the spectrum, projects could be developed around the smartphone, featuring apps, freeware, and websites, such as *Thingiverse* or *Artivive*.

Faculty Support and Generation Z Student Mental Health

For most faculty, addressing how smart-phone use has affected student classroom dynamics is far less daunting than determining how to respond, and aid, a generation of students who are suffering from record high mental health struggles. Due to the nature of studio classes, Foundations faculty probably have some of the closest and familiar relationships with students. Consequently, students are more likely to share their troubles, disclosing if they feel anxious, depressed or suicidal. Additionally, with Foundations studies small class sizes and one-on-one interactions with students, faculty are in a position to readily notice student behavior changes and other red flags. Faculty immediately spot the student who is having trouble starting or finishing a project, not participating, or missing class. It could be they are struggling with classwork; though it may also be a symptom of anxiety or other mental health issue. With suicide the number two cause of death among college students today, it is vital that faculty check-in with these students as soon as issues are noticed.²⁶ Most faculty do this already. What may be relatively new, however, is the number of students who identify the cause of their struggles as anxiety, depression, and/or suicidal ideation. How do faculty best respond? Many schools have policies requiring that faculty report student concerns and disclosures as soon as they are shared or witnessed. Yet, faculty often feel apprehensive and conflicted about reporting their observations. Usually this is because they aren't sure if what they are noticing is indicative of something serious,

or in the case of student disclosures, they are concerned about betraying trust. This is a dangerous mindset to have. It is key for faculty to recognize the importance of what they observe, as well as their ethical responsibility to connect students with resources. Faculty can help avoid a tragedy, and be a bridge to getting students the support they need. They can do this by learning institutional reporting processes. Having that information handy when situations arise—because they will—and provide institutional resources for students in crisis or potential crisis. Institutional specialists are best equipped to make comprehensive threat assessments to determine the best course of action for students. There are a myriad of support structures and people faculty can connect with for guidance and help, including, their department head, student accessibility services, the counseling center, advisors, dean and/or provost of students, and their campus Title IV Office, to name a few. If there is an immediate concern in class, campus counseling services likely take emergency walk-ins, and have after hours counselors on call. Walking students in acute distress over to counseling services, or calling the school's crisis helpline, is a good immediate step before filling out an institutional report form and reaching out for further guidance. A national faculty training program about student suicidal ideation, *Campus Connect*, may be available through campus counseling services. This is an extraordinarily helpful interactive three-hour faculty training program, providing eye opening statistics, and proven strategies on how to engage students with

suicidal thoughts. Some of the facts shared in the training may be surprising. For example, asking someone directly if they are having suicidal thoughts will not make them more likely to commit suicide, and in fact, may reduce suicidal ideation.²⁷ Knowing facts like these, as well as proven best approaches to interact with students who may be in crisis, is vital for the Generation Z educator. Not knowing what to do, or how to respond to students suffering from mental health issues, is stressful for faculty and doesn't best serve students. In the face of rising student mental health issues, insti-

tutions need to focus on creating relevant training and increasing faculty support. This assists faculty in knowing how to best engage, educate, and help students suffering from these struggles.

We can expect to have Generation Z students in Foundations classrooms until approximately 2030. This is a compassionate, hard working group of students whose smart devices are fully integrated in their lives, affecting their behaviors, and how they interact with the world. Understanding this generation's salient characteristics,

including their complicated relationships with smartphones, puts faculty in a prime position to determine how they might be more supportive and effective educators. With this knowledge, faculty can informatively prepare, plan, and anticipate student generational issues, including when to seek assistance for their students, and for themselves. Developing Generation Z specific pedagogical strategies allows faculty to best connect, educate, and support their students so they will be more effective Foundations educators and partners in student success.

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**Creating Leaders through Community, Empathy,
and Empowerment**

Introduction

At a time when first year college students face challenges and barriers to college readiness, how can a sense of belonging to, empathy for, and an awareness of the diversity of lived experiences be created within an art and design school at the collegiate level? This paper examines the development, implementation, and structure of a single peer-mentoring program that may serve as a model for others to interpret and implement. The program is one that provides a specific education and entrusts upper-level students to build a school based on the following ethos: to ensure students feel welcomed and engaged in academic life, regardless of race, class, gender, creed, sexual orientation, ability, immigration status, or pre-college access to the arts.

Peer Mentoring:

Background

Located just outside of New York City, Purchase College, SUNY is a public college with a highly diverse student body that reflects the demographics of the city and surrounding areas. The college has between four and five thousand students. The 2018-19 Art and Design incoming class alone had over 150 first-year students with roughly 35 transfer students. Approximately 60 percent of students are women, 50 percent are students of color, and many are queer, trans, non-binary, or gender-non-conforming. There is a growing population of students on the autism spectrum as well. The students come from a wide range of financial backgrounds, and from the large array of urban, suburban, and rural communities within New York state.¹ With all of these differences in mind, the Foundations program was designed with inclusion at the forefront.

While some issues students face may be unique to Purchase College, most are problems that are likely common across schools and demographics. Many students struggle with executive functioning skills or do not have the privilege of grasping the bureaucracy of higher education. While this is not true of all, we see many students that do not know how to compose a professional email, check their inbox regularly, or maintain a planner or schedule. Some of them have been told that art school is the easy route—they believe an art major will be a free expression of their emotions, not a rigorous and professional program. Many of them do not know how to self-advocate or ask for help when struggling. They might not see college as somewhere they belong and may simply disengage if they do not see the relevance of the curricular content to their own lives.

The outdated expectation for students to overcome obstacles solely with willpower and a “just get through it” mindset is

irresponsible and ineffective. Aside from academic issues, students have personal and emotional needs that need to be addressed and interwoven to their academic practice. Students today do not respond and thrive without strong interpersonal relationships and the bonds of community.²

Structural changes were made to the Foundations curriculum to aid in the desire to build community and support students. Most faculty members that teach within Foundations, whether they are full-time or adjunct, also teach middle or upper-level courses at the school. Students will see many of the same faculty members repeated once or twice during their four years. This helps them feel that the faculty are committed to them from the beginning. As all of our faculty are also working artists or designers, students know that they are immediately entering into a community of professionals. Our students are placed into tracks of 16-student cohorts, taking their three Foundations studio courses with the same small community of students in the fall semester.

The assigned summer reading for all incoming students was changed from Ernest Hemingway’s *A Moveable Feast*³ to Zadie Smith’s *On Beauty*⁴. This change has allowed students to more intimately relate with a contemporary text that deals with issues of race, gender, class, and higher education in a direct way. Specific projects have been implemented within studio classes that ask students to engage directly with identity. Students are exposed to work made by a diverse group of artists and designers, and consistently have faculty and

visitors on campus who are immersed in social justice and inclusive practices.

Developing Peer Mentoring

Despite these larger curricular efforts, there was still a need for our students to be given more one-on-one support through smaller learning groups, and to see the value in being part of a greater community. Prior to a Foundations curricular redesign that took place in 2012, there was an informal peer mentorship program in place. For over a decade, senior or junior student volunteers would be assigned to a small group of students; it was up to them to meet a few times a semester to answer questions or occasionally help with homework. As the Foundations program became more formalized and rigorous with the 2012 curricular overhaul, and as the school grew, these Peer Mentors came back to faculty wanting support. They didn’t know what to do during the reportedly awkward meetings and were afraid to discuss emotions, stress, or anxiety with the first years. While they were being asked to be supportive to the newest students, the Peer Mentors themselves had no guidance.

I agreed to develop and teach a leadership class for artists and designers to buttress the peer mentoring program. Like most other studio art faculty members, my background as an artist had given me the skills to teach studio courses, but there was uncertainty at the prospect of teaching leadership. Like many MFA programs, my graduate degree contained no pedagogical education. Everything found during the initial research on leadership was geared primarily towards MBA (business) students, and seemed out of place in an art

collaborating and sharing

...it is always a revelation to observe Peer Mentors learn what it's like to lead from the side: to support and not dictate, to inspire and not direct, and to treat their mentees as collaborators, not subordinates.

school context which was filled with deeply sentient, emotionally intelligent, and socially engaged students.

The work of David Laude at UT Austin⁵ was deeply inspiring in terms of creating a sense of belonging and tracking student success. In response to statistics that show that the single highest predictor of a student's collegiate success is their parents' income, he developed the University Leadership Network (ULN). "ULN includes a comprehensive four-year plan that involves leadership training, experiential learning opportunities, and university service... All ULN students also participate in an academic learning community."⁶

Regular listening to Pod Save the People⁷, a weekly social activism podcast

with several cohorts who hail from K-12 and academia was beneficial in keeping justice at the forefront. Reading more about equity, justice, and community building by looking at bell hooks⁸ and adrienne maree brown⁹ was helpful, as were the exercises and techniques (designed to bring about radical change) employed by Augusta Boal's Theater of the Oppressed¹⁰. From there, a new course and corresponding program were written.

Peer Mentoring Program

After a period of research, the mentorship program was formalized. Two classes that work in tandem were created:

visiting artists, go on field trips, converse with a panel of recent alumni, participate in Theater of the Oppressed⁸ games and activities, and have an end-of-semester exhibition, among other things. The class is the first-year equivalent of a professional practice class. These first-year students are not ready to apply for grants or residencies like upper-level students, but they do need an introduction to what the life of an artist or designer might look like. For their grade in that class, 60 percent is based on attendance and participation in ComX class (and online response-based assignments to in-class lectures), and 40

Class 1

ComX/Community Experience

large (100+) first-year lecture/seminar
2 credits

Class Grading:

60% ComX attendance and assignments
40% Attendance with Peer Mentor

Class 2

Peer Mentoring

20-student upper-level seminar class
3 credits

Class Grading:

50% Peer Mentoring class
50% Work with their groups

ComX Course

In addition to a series of studio classes, a class that was previously called First-Year Seminar was turned into a new class called Community Experience, or ComX for short. This class takes place in the fall semester, for one semester only. It meets once a week and is a large lecture-style class with all Art and Design first years meeting together, typically between 100-150 students. They hear from

percent is based on attendance and participation with their small groups lead by their Peer Mentor.

Peer Mentoring Course

The second class is aptly called Peer Mentoring, lasting one semester and offered only in the fall. Before they can enroll in Peer Mentoring, students must be nominated by faculty and previous

Peer Mentors. In order to be nominated, these students must have demonstrated responsibility, the potential for leadership, and a capacity for empathy. Peer Mentors earn three credits of Visual Arts credit, which can be applied to their major. Peer Mentors are evaluated on both their in-class participation (50%) and their work within their groups (50%). Progress and effectiveness within their group is determined through a semester-long journal/notebook that each peer mentor keeps and submits for final assessment, regular communication with the faculty member, and both midterm and final evaluations from their mentees.

The Peer Mentoring program is described as such: it's like having a Resident Assistant (RA), but on the academic side. Peer Mentors are, at the very core, role models for academic excellence. They are high-achieving upper-level students who are at the top of their own classes. They are entrusted with a small group (usually four to seven students) of first years to mentor during the fall semester. The Peer Mentors meet weekly for two and a half hours in Peer Mentoring class and for two hours with their mentees.

These two classes, ComX and Peer Mentoring, work in tandem. The homework for students in each course is to meet with one another. ComX is required for all first years and the Peer Mentors are carefully selected. At the beginning of the semester, Peer Mentors take a simple online personality test¹¹ and identify their strengths, weaknesses, and the challenges they will likely face when placed in front of a group of wide-eyed, nervous first years. Different methods of leading small

groups are conceptualized, and ways that even introverts can lead are explored. We continually workshop practical solutions throughout the semester, such as the physical arrangement of a table and chairs or how to engage shy or quiet students.

Leadership should be cultivated and the skills should be shared, just like any other technical or conceptual practice. In my opinion, we have a global leadership crisis at all levels, and a conflation of leadership and power. Therefore, it is always a revelation to observe Peer Mentors learn what it's like to lead from the side: to support and not dictate, to inspire and not direct, and to treat their mentees as collaborators, not subordinates. Students learn differences between the Command & Control Leader versus the Innovative Leader¹². Leadership can also be expressed through collaborating and sharing some of the knowledge that we have, as educators/professors, with them. As they work through their group's challenges, it's not uncommon for the Peer Mentors to say, "I had no idea how hard teaching was!" or "Now I know how much work my professors do!"

Two gallery exhibitions are coordinated and curated via Peer Mentoring class. The first is a group show that features the work of the Peer Mentors. They collaborate and develop a different concept each year. First years are required to attend the opening and speak with their Peer Mentors about the process of collaborating and organizing a show. The second show that is organized via the Peer Mentoring course is an end-of-semester show of first-year/

ComX work. The Peer Mentors come up with a name, create the advertisements, emails, and posters, and hang and install the show. It's the final event of the semester; it lays bare the growth made during the first semester of art school and fills the first years with pride.

Peer Mentors relieve the intimidation factor for incoming students. Throughout the fall semester, our Peer Mentors take the first years through all the shops, labs, and studios in the Visual Arts Building, and most importantly, organize studio visits to many upper-level students. By the end of their first semester, all of our first years have visited multiple upper-level students for studio visits with their groups, making friends along the way, and gaining motivation for their artistic future.

The Peer Mentors also aid with academic advising. As the academic advisor for all first years, the Foundations Chair ensures the first years are staying on track to graduate and meets with each of them individually for advising appointments. Through ComX, first years are taught by faculty how to check their grades, keep an audit of their course requirements, and how to examine various majors and minors, but the Peer Mentors are quite skilled in giving logistical advice regarding the technicalities of the online registration system and help the first years pick out classes for the following semester.

Benefits to students

The program's benefits to the first-year students are immense and obvious: students gain a mentor who helps them with assignments and models how to navigate

the new language and bureaucracy of higher education. They take them to galleries, museums, and the art supply store. They help them use a planner or calendar app to get organized and show them how to study for Art History exams. After midterms, they might take them on a hike to relax, imparting the importance of self-care. They treat them with kindness, yet challenge them to succeed in all aspects of their academic lives. In course evaluations, first years consistently express their gratitude for the program.

The Peer Mentors are the first years' first-line advocate, notifying me of any concerns they might have, academic or otherwise. It's not uncommon for a Peer Mentor to call or email me with concerns that one of their advisees seems depressed, is worried about money, or is falling behind in class. Some of these issues are ones that a first year might not know where to go for support. If a Peer Mentor reports a concern, we can get the first year the necessary support, be that the counseling center, financial aid, a tutor, or another campus resource. Through weekly check-ins regarding their mentees' progress, regular discussions as to the scope of their responsibility, and keeping the lines of communication open between the mentors and faculty member, the Peer Mentors are never tasked with providing support beyond their training.

The program is clearly beneficial to the first years but due to ethical concerns, this needed to also be a powerful and meaningful educational experience for the upper-level Peer Mentors. The program

was built upon concepts of learning leadership skills through the lens of an artist or designer, and with ideas of empathy and inclusion at the forefront. In Peer Mentoring class, much time is spent discussing the experience as a form of community service and a chance for them to take on a leadership role with a group of people—a group of people who are individually very different, but share a common goal: success in art school.

Various discussions, exercises, and assignments were designed for students to become better mentors, but also grow as community members and global citizens. On the very first day of Peer Mentoring, mentors are introduced to the word *sonder*¹³, a word invented online by The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows, meaning “the realization that each random passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own.” This is the guiding light throughout the semester. At-length discussions are held regarding how each mentee has a full and complete existence, and is much more than a name on a long list of bodies rotating through each year. To aid in this growth, Peer Mentors spend time thinking about their own memories of their first year of college: they were worried about what they were wearing, where their classroom was, how to approach a professor with a question, or when to speak up in critique. While Peer Mentors are not held responsible for their mentees’ grades, they are expected to welcome them to the Visual Arts program and to help facilitate that transition.

Peer Mentors have given very positive feedback regarding the program. Below

are some comments from recent Peer Mentors, provided via course evaluations:

“The class was valuable in the sense that it taught through experience. Connecting with the advisees was rewarding, and so was watching them grow. I learned a lot about who I am as a leader, and the challenges of guiding others.”
(fall 2017 Peer Mentor)

“I feel like I’ve grown as a leader and this made me feel much more inclined to pursue education.”
(fall 2018 Peer Mentor)

“I loved this experience because it not only gave me the confidence in myself as a leader but also gave me the unique chance to make a difference in the experiences of future art and design students!”
(fall 2017 Peer Mentor)

Diversity, Inclusion, Access, and Empathy

While the benefits for both the mentors and mentees are clear, educating and training the Peer Mentors requires cultivating their leadership abilities as well as their capacity to be vulnerable and empathic. A few weeks during the semester are spent directly engaging in questions about diversity, inclusion, and access. We begin by defining the difference between equality, equity, and justice by looking at well-known attempts at visual definitions of these three words.¹⁴ Equality—or treating all students exactly the same—does not work for all students. Students learn and express themselves differently. Equity—or giving

everyone the individualized help they need—is a solid step. However, the aim should be for justice, so that we are addressing and removing the barriers that cause inequity in the first place. Peer Mentors are able to apply different approaches to individual mentees. Discussing issues of social and educational justice within this course is necessary for all students to thrive.

One class session is spent asking the Peer Mentors a series of progressively intense questions about their lives, and then asking them to share how this shaped their own first year experience, if they are willing. What assumptions were made about them? They are asked:

“Was your first year of college the first time you lived away from your family?”

“Are any of you first-generation college students?”

“Did anyone deal with depression or anxiety their first year?”

“Were you ever consumed with worries from back home?”

“Have any of you ever been the only person of your race in a classroom?”

As the faculty member, I also answer the questions. I share because the idea of community does not work if I’m unwilling to be part of the community myself. This session of Peer Mentoring class is always a turning point, a moment when they open up and trust one another. They are vulnerable and listen with intent. In turn, they become better listeners with the first years

and are more in tune with the different lived experiences a human can have. From there, we speak about how an awareness of the variety of issues facing their fellow students shouldn't lead to assumptions. They should listen without judging or assuming. They learn that empathic listening is an active act, not a passive one.

The difference between sympathy and empathy is examined, and how sometimes one cannot and should not try to solve every problem. Sometimes one just needs to say, "I hear you." Empathy is connecting and relating, not comparing or competing. Advice is not always the answer. Students are shown a beautifully simple animation of Brené Brown's description of empathy¹⁵, which always connects deeply with the students.

In 2017, I invented a card game entitled *I am a Story* (Plate 1). The game was inspired by recent research from scientists suggesting that storytelling and sharing of personal experiences are the most effective ways of instilling empathy and changing world views.^{16,17} Entities such as The Moth Radio Hour¹⁸ have given platforms for ordinary citizens to document, preserve, and share their lives through oral tradition. I was deeply moved by StoryCorps¹⁹, an organization and audio program, and their mission, which is "to preserve and share humanity's stories in order to build connections between people and create a more just and compassionate world."

I am a Story is played in small groups (3-5 players). The cards prompt players to answer questions in the form of brief (1-4 minute) stories about their own lives. Even quiet people tend to enjoy talking about themselves, so even the shyest of students



Plate 1 / *Am a Story* Game created by the author

participate. Some stories are hilarious. Some are heartbreaking. They are all eye-opening. A key aspect of the game is active listening, and careful attention to others' lived experience. The game is

first played amongst Peer Mentors, and then they play with their mentees. Students have enjoyed it so much that there are always requests for extra copies of the game for them to play with friends in their dorms or with family. The game facilitates

students to connect on more than a surface level, and allows each person a moment of uninterrupted attention and value.

Transfer Students

In addition to traditional first-year students that are well-supported through the mentoring program, transfer students arriving from other art schools or community colleges make up the student body. They comprise a smaller cohort of students, but also enter with shaky legs and a need for community and belonging at their new school. A higher percentage of transfer students tend to be commuters, which can prove challenging for them in terms of the in-person social bonding that takes place in dormitories, dining halls, and late nights and weekends on campus.

During the first year after the Foundations curricular redesign and initiation of the Peer Mentoring program, transfer students were placed into Peer Mentoring groups. However, they did not recognize the benefit as much as the first years did, as many of them were older and had more credits than some of the peer mentors. A version of ComX for transfer students called Key Class was then developed. The one-credit course is required for transfer students in their first semester. Key Class overlaps with ComX for certain class sessions (visiting lectures, alumni panel, and field trips), but they have a separate faculty member for the course and work in small groups without a peer mentor. Since the inception of Key Class, there is

a stronger sense of collegiality and kinship amongst the transfer student body, and the students are much more oriented and adjusted into the school.

Conclusion

The appeal of a mentorship program is clear, yet barriers such as tight credit counts within degree plans and faculty buy-in may be causes for concern for many programs wishing to provide equivalent support. It can be challenging to carve out credits into an already packed curriculum. At Purchase College, SUNY, we convinced colleagues that taking this action within the first semester was well worth the credits. When they work in tandem, Peer Mentoring and ComX address college readiness issues that faculty would otherwise be forced to deal with in sophomore-level courses, taking time and resources away and distracting from those course learning objectives. This early intervention helps support students within their first year, but the benefits are carried with them throughout their four years.

The Peer Mentoring program offers a living approach to welcoming first years into a learning environment. Just as a Resident Assistant (RA) aims for a dormitory to feel like a safe home, the Peer Mentors allow the first years to feel more at home in the Visual Arts Building. Since the implementation of the program, the school feels less territorial and more open to all students.

The Peer Mentors feel a sense of pride and accomplishment. Anecdotally, colleagues have observed that students who have gone through the Peer Mentoring class are much stronger Teaching

Assistants in other studio or seminar classes. For nearly a decade, there was a dearth of Art and Design involvement in the campus-wide Purchase Student Government Association (PSGA). However, in spring 2019, four of the seven elected campus officers came from Art and Design, with all of them either having completed or set to participate in the Peer Mentoring class. Many of our previous Peer Mentors have gone on to work professionally in the community or in education, for campaigns or in other social justice endeavors, and are more comfortable with positions that involve leadership, such as art directing, teaching, managing artist studios, and participating in artist-run galleries.

The maturation of a first-year student during the first semester of college is well observed, but the Peer Mentors also grow immensely over that semester, emboldened and empowered by the responsibility of nurturing academic success. Peer Mentors do not only assist with the curricula of the Foundations Program; they are empowered to build the very school from which they wish to graduate, and providing their first-year students a home for the next four years.

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**A First-Year Seminar Case Study on Diversity, Inclusion,
and Open Dialogue**

Respectful Engagement:

Introduction

In fall 2017, I invited students in a first-year seminar to push the limits of their comfort zones and take the art world to task for systemic barriers to making art. The class, titled “No Great Women/Black/Queer Artists?! Diversity, Inclusion, and Bias in the Art World,”¹ serves as a case study for how to create a space for all students to share experiences, ask questions, and analyze difficult art in the hope that others can learn from the achievements and challenges encountered.²

The study applies current diversity and inclusion scholarship to strategies used in the seminar.³ It begins with techniques for building community. Next, it considers the effectiveness of classroom activities to encourage open discussions. Lastly, it evaluates data from beginning-, mid-, and end-of-semester surveys to determine why certain aspects succeeded while others did not.

First-year seminars spur critical thinking, reflection, and personal growth within an intimate class setting. To that end, this first-year seminar was designed based on studies about promoting diversity and divergent thinking in college classrooms. The literature reveals thinking broadly about diversity to include gender, race, and sexuality, as well as ability, occupation, and social class, allows students to express a range of viewpoints.⁴ To this end, the course invited students to recognize their own multifaceted identities and encouraged them to see that in others, too.⁵ Students also engaged in reflective writing as a part of this practice. Reflective writing, particularly when it involves personal narratives through journaling or storytelling, can facilitate student exploration of identities and others' experiences.⁶ By combining best practices outlined in the literature with student feedback, the syllabus responsively

adapted during the semester to integrate students' interests in order to catalyze an analysis of diversity in the art world that stimulated divergent thinking.

The First Weeks: Creating a Respectful and Open Environment

When courses cover potentially sensitive topics, establishing community early is essential. Professor and therapy scholar Erika E. Hartwell, among others, notes a sense of community promotes deeper and more considerate conversations.⁷ Therefore, on the first day of the first-year seminar, students contemplated the atmosphere they wanted the class to have. After talking for a few minutes in small groups, they shared their thoughts on a white board, and the class discussed them. Students wanted to have a respectful and open class environment. To achieve this,

they suggested recognizing each other's differences, remaining open-minded, and listening. Their responses coincided with interpersonal skills that Hartwell et al. and Jack Mezirow found necessary for promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion.⁸ The discussion formed the basis of the class contract, which everyone could access on the course website, a password-protected course management system by Canvas. The class contract guided all behavior to create the students' desired class climate.

A class contract has many benefits for any class in which instructors expect student participation. First, it gives students a sense of agency in the class because they decided how they would like to engage with each other. They wrote the contract and freely agreed to it rather than having the terms dictated by an outside source, such as the instructor.⁹ As a result, they may feel more invested in it and more likely to participate. Second, it creates a common goal for students and lays the foundation to achieve it. Lastly, it can generate a sense of responsibility in students. If they break the contract, they not only fail to measure up to the standards they agreed upon, but they also let their classmates down.

After establishing the class contract, students addressed how they would like to handle tense situations. Following a discussion in which each table shares its ideas, students decided to have check-ins and a safe word. The check-in would occur when emotions started to rise. At which point, students would be asked to hold up one, two, or three fingers to indicate their agitation from none at all (one) to extreme (three). In the event someone needed

the conversation to stop, they could say, "Panda bear!" and the class would immediately break and change the subject when it reconvened. Thankfully, no student required the safe word, and conversations remained calm so the check-in system also lay dormant. Establishing a class contract and contingency plans for what to do if the discussions became too heated helped maintain an inviting and courteous learning environment.¹⁰

The next step in creating a respectful and engaged classroom was to gather information to make students active participants in shaping the course content. Students answered questions about their personal goals for the course and what excited and worried them about it in a beginning-of-semester survey on the course website. Asking students to consider their personal course goals can help them form a deeper connection to the class. Students' goals included:

- I hope to expand the range of art knowledge that I have and maybe even become more comfortable with my place in the art world as a LGBT female minority in the art world.
- Becoming better at participating in class discussions.
- With this course, I hope I broaden my personal horizons. I want to see and experience art pieces that I never would have on my own.¹¹

The students' responses revealed a variety of motivations and a level of thoughtfulness that they may not have

...small group discussions contributed to building community, which can be essential to creating an environment for students to have challenging conversations and understand others' perspectives.

articulated to themselves without prompting. Using this question in particular has proven helpful in generating student buy-in to the first-year seminar, studios, and online courses.¹² Results were not anonymized so individual students could be supported if needed. Students had one week to complete the survey and automatically received participation points for responding.

At the end of the week, student survey results were compared to the syllabus to ensure the course addressed the topics that most intrigued students.¹³ Doing this opened the possibility of generating a transformative learning experience.¹⁴ Most students wanted to learn more about artists from diverse backgrounds, particularly

LBGTQIA artists. They also expressed anxiety about having difficult discussions in class. When the survey closed, results were synthesized in class for students to highlight overlapping concerns and interests to make them feel more comfortable sharing in class and help them find common ground with each other.

The Day-to-Day: Activities

The seminar met once a week for fifty minutes during the sixteen-week semester. The daily class schedule followed a predictable pattern for students: an introduction to the topic, an activity, a student presentation, and journaling. Of the activities, two stood out: a debate and small group discussions. The debate elicited strong reactions from students, although not during the debate itself. The small group discussions were the liveliest activities. As a counterpoint, journaling gave students time to reflect on artists and issues covered.

The debate occurred in the third week of the semester and focused on the Feminist Art Program (FAP), an all-female art program founded by Judy Chicago at Fresno State University in 1970. From 1971 to 1976, the program resided at the California Institute of the Arts under the guidance of Chicago, Miriam Schapiro, and others. Before class, students read two contrasting essays about *Womanhouse* (1972),¹⁵ an installation project by FAP members in a dilapidated Victorian house, about which they submitted a response paper with critical questions before class started. For the debate, the class was divided down the middle of the room into groups for and against programs like the FAP. Students' facial expressions conveyed

worry, anxiety, and surprise when the activity was announced, but their tensions visibly eased after they got in their groups. During the debate, they deliberated who defines feminism; expressions of gender and sexuality; race; and institutional barriers to women and minorities in art school and beyond.

While most students relaxed during the debate, many identified it as their least favorite activity in mid- and end-of-semester surveys. They thought it felt forced. They also noted that they all had the same opinion, a claim that the debate and response papers did not support. Although students expressed their unique perspectives more in the response papers than in the debate, some did point out flaws, such as the hetero-centrism and cisgender overtones of the FAP during the debate. The misconception that all students held the same opinion could have stemmed from issues that Marcus M. Stewart, Marcy Crary, and Beth K. Humberd identified in their study of "exclusionary inclusion."¹⁶ They found class discussions can give the impression of consensus when students fear appearing prejudiced or offending the professor.¹⁷ Therefore, one strategy for encouraging inclusive conversations about the FAP in the future could be to assign articles written from different perspectives about sexism, racism, and heterosexism in America in the 1970s to prepare students to discuss the historical context of the program rather than focusing on only the program itself.

Even with its flaws, the debate encouraged students to examine the

shortcomings of a program that most of them endorsed. In this way, they confronted their assumptions and practiced divergent thinking, which prepared them for future class discussions.¹⁸ Specifically, the FAP presented emergent attributes, or those that go against stereotypical categories. Emergent attributes are necessary to produce changes in the ways people typically view individuals and groups.¹⁹ Female faculty and students disrupted dominant narratives of femininity with *Womanhouse* when they renovated and rewired the house. The groups' installations further explored and questioned the female experience in works such as *Eggs to Breasts* by Vicki Hodgetts and *Menstruation Bathroom* by Judy Chicago. Therefore, exploring the FAP in the debate could encourage open-mindedness and decrease stereotypes' influence.²⁰

Unlike the debate, students enjoyed small group discussions and gave them positive feedback in the surveys. In the first half of the semester, groups changed regularly; in the second half, students chose their own groups. By switching group members, students had the opportunity to talk to all of their classmates in a more intimate setting.²¹ Not only did they hear different points of view, but they also got to know each person in class. In this way, small group discussions contributed to building community, which can be essential to creating an environment for students to have challenging conversations and understand others' perspectives.²²

Once in their groups, roles were assigned based on students' answers to questions such as whose birthday was the soonest or who had the latest class of the

day. The roles included leader, facilitator, and skeptic.²³ The leader kept the group on task, while the facilitator guaranteed everyone had a chance to speak. The skeptic played the devil's advocate, especially when the group quickly formed a consensus.²⁴ The roles helped students solve problems collaboratively. Students listened to and respected each other; remained curious about their experiences; suspended their impulse to react defensively; and honestly voiced their thoughts.²⁵ Additionally, the small groups generated lively conversations. Students stayed engaged and often searched online on their phones and laptops for information to bolster their analysis.²⁶ After ten minutes, the class came together to share and everyone contributed to the discussions.

The final activity of each class, journaling, allowed students to process information and their feelings. Sachi Ando notes, "Self-reflection becomes an important part of learning about diversity issues."²⁷ Furthermore, reflection can reveal how diverse components relate to each other and open new connections for students.²⁸ Consequently, journaling provided space for students to consider issues that they may not have explored in depth previously, thereby presenting the possibility of learning something new about themselves and the world around them.

Journaling functioned as the last step in an analytic process that began before class started.²⁹ Prior to class, students wrote a brief response to a specific assigned reading for the week. The response included a one-paragraph summary and three critical questions about the article.

The questions could address oversights, assumptions, or points that needed clarification. The exercise facilitated students' engagement with the text, which prepared them for class discussions and activities. Indeed, students drew upon their response papers, noting their questions and points of agreement and disagreement with the author, during the small group and class discussions.³⁰ In this way, one could consider the assignment a form of reflective journaling since writing the critical questions required students to contemplate the reading and link it to broader conversations rather than simply summarizing it.³¹ The response papers had the added benefit of giving students the opportunity to ask questions that they may not have felt comfortable posing during class.

Students submitted response papers to the course website before class.³² They usually asked questions that indicated a critical reading of the text. For example, they wondered how gender identity, race, and sexual orientation affect viewers' experience of artworks. Occasionally, they inquired about confusing or tangential parts of the text. Less frequently, their questions had readily available answers. The comments section of the online grading system provided an opportunity to steer students away from the latter type of questions and toward those that dug deeper into grey areas of the artwork's creation and reception. Asking questions without clear-cut answers is a crucial part of the exercise. Ambiguity allows reflective thinking and growth to occur.³³ More immediately, by embracing uncertainty, students practiced critical reflection and prepared to journal at the end of the class period.³⁴

The majority of students journaled every class, although participation dipped at the end of the semester. Students did not submit their journals for grading to encourage them to record their authentic responses. The class discussion centered on topics that had the potential to ignite strong reactions in students. Therefore, students needed a private space to examine their feelings. The process of reflection could stimulate questions about why they held the beliefs they did and why others may have come to different conclusions. It could also aid students during future class activities by giving them a place to forge new connections with course material and explore new positions.³⁵

Every class period but one ended with journaling. On the day the class discussed Dana Schutz's controversial painting *Open Casket* (2016) of Emmett Till exhibited at the 2017 Whitney Biennial, students journaled at the beginning of class because the topic had the potential to spark a heated discussion. Hartwell et al. found evidence that journaling before discussing a divisive topic can help students "process their discomfort."³⁶ Starting class with journaling had additional advantages over concluding class with it: more students wrote something, they were not rushed, they could reassess their response papers instead of read from them, and they could share their journal entries with each other if they desired.³⁷ The journal responses provided an entry point to small group discussions. The opportunity to hear classmates' careful consideration of issues surrounding the painting opened the possibility for deeper connections among students and a closer analysis of the work.

How it Went: Assessments

To determine if the class contract, contingency plan, and activities encouraged an open class environment, students completed a mid-semester anonymous survey in week six of the sixteen-week course. They automatically received participation points for replying during the two weeks it was available on the course website. Ten out of fourteen students completed it; the following summarizes key points from the completed surveys. All students affirmed that people voiced diverse opinions in class. When asked what helped create an environment to express diverse opinions, they noted many chances to share ideas, openminded attitudes, kindness, and lack of judgment:

- Everyone is just very open to every one and it makes the class super nice and fun.
- The people in class are all very accepting and nice, I think we all understand other people's boundaries and except [sic] that not everyone is the same and we won't all have the same ideas.
- In this class it's not like there's an exact right answer, and it's really up to our interpretation and sometimes they're different, and nobody judges you for it.³⁸

To the question, "Do you feel comfortable sharing your thoughts in class?" half answered, "yes," and half answered, "sometimes." Aspects that made them comfortable included feeling at ease with classmates, the quickness with which the class cleared up misunderstandings, and the class contract and contingency plans. Those who felt comfortable sharing

"sometimes" pointed to general anxiety and the fear that others had a better understanding of the material than they did. They had these reservations in spite of feeling like the class environment was "friendly." As far as course material and activities, students requested a wider diversity of artists, more LGBTQIA artists, fewer readings, and a greater variety of in-class activities. After the survey closed, the results were summarized in class and some aspects of the course were altered based on the feedback. For example, in response to students' desire for more diverse topics and artists, students had the option to change one of the scheduled class topics. Additionally, some assigned readings switched to videos; a day of art making was added; and students helped design the final project parameters.

On the last day of class, students completed an end-of-semester anonymous survey on paper. Out of thirteen students, ten responded.³⁹ All of them answered that they felt they had accomplished their personal goals for the course. When asked what helped them reach their goals, they mentioned the variety of artists, topics, readings, and the three museum visits:

- What helped me reach my goals was the broad range of artists we covered weekly. The weekly writing assignments also provided exposure and strengthened my writing/summary ability.
- Honestly, just having to engage with so many topics I didn't even know about broadened my horizons.
- Museum days to see the art in person and also talking about the art in class.⁴⁰

All students replied that the class embraced a variety of viewpoints and artists in the course. One student wrote, “I feel like the class was so nice and everyone was comfortable to say what they needed to.” When asked what aspects of the class fostered diversity, students remarked on the range of artists and subjects, as well as an open and understanding atmosphere. Despite the positive responses, students also identified aspects that hindered the exploration of diversity. These included the homogenous appearance of the class (anyone looking into the room would have seen a group in which the majority of the people appeared to be white and female) and a desire to explore diversity beyond race and gender. Lastly, when asked what they would change about the course, students wrote they would include more LGBTQIA artists, a more even distribution of artists from different cultures, and more opportunities to make art. Students cited small group discussions, hands-on activities (such as analyzing children’s books), and the class contract and contingency plans as the most effective facets of the class.

Discussion and Conclusion

Although the results summarized here are specific to one, first-year seminar, the lessons I learned can guide other instructors to invite diverse opinions and encourage an inclusive class environment. The most effective strategies gave students a sense of ownership over the course, encouraged personal responsibility, and built community. Early and frequent discussions about the desired class atmosphere focused students’ attention on their role in shaping the class climate. Likewise,

beginning-, mid-, and end-of-semester surveys provided students opportunities to influence the activities, readings, and topics. Reflecting on the results on the surveys with students confirmed to students that their voices were heard, gave the instructor a chance to respond to their comments, and allowed for everyone ask follow-up questions. Reflection played a key role in students’ development in the course too. Through response papers and journaling, they critically examined artwork and readings and considered ambiguities.

Fostering an engaged and respectful classroom takes planning and a willingness to alter those plans. Instructors seeking to create inclusive classrooms should consider including student-generated class contracts; incorporating regular opportunities for students to provide feedback; assigning students activities that encourage evaluating different points of view; and creating space for reflection in journals and other assignments. These strategies can benefit instructors regardless of the topic of the course. Inviting student feedback, building community, creating learning activities, and encouraging reflective practices can increase students’ personal investment in the course, boost participation, and enhance empathy. In the first-year seminar, they promoted inclusion and formed the basis of the course material and the structure. Furthermore, they facilitated student learning and gave students tools to expand their thinking about sexism, racism, and homophobia. In our current national climate, this is no small feat.

Endnotes

- 1 Linda Nochlin’s “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” inspired the title of the course. Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” *ArtNews* 69, no. 9 (January 1971), 22-39 and 67-71, available online at <http://www.artnews.com/2015/05/30/why-have-there-been-no-great-women-artists/>.
- 2 bell hooks emphasizes a “safe space” may not seem safe to everyone; minority, LGBTQIA, and lower income students may still feel out of place and undervalued. She suggests an environment where students openly share their experiences and mutual respect and curiosity between students and the professor prevail. bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 39-41.
- 3 See Sachi Ando, “Teaching Note: Inclusion of Diversity Content in MSW Curriculum Using a Diversity Event,” *Journal of Social Work Education* 53, no. 1 (2017): 72-78; Demerris R. Brooks-Immel and Susan B. Murray, “Color-Blind Contradictions and Black/White Binaries: White Academics Upholding Whiteness,” *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, no. 39 (2017): 315-333, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/90007887>; Richard J. Crisp and Rhiannon N. Turner, “Cognitive Adaptation to the Experience of Social and Cultural Diversity,” *Psychological Bulletin* 137, no. 2 (2011): 242-266; Erica E. Hartwell et al., “Breaking Down Silos: Teaching for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Across Disciplines,” *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, no. 39 (2017): 140-162, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/90007877>; hooks; Emily K. Martinez et al., “Raising Awareness of Campus Diversity and Inclusion: Transformationally Teaching Diversity through Narratives of Campus Experiences and Simulated Problem Solving,” *Communication Teacher* 32, no. 1 (2018): 19-24; Christine Morley, “Critical Reflection in Social Work: A Response to Globalisation?” *International Journal of Social Welfare* 13, no. 4 (October 2004): 297-303; Charlan Jeanne Nemeth, “Differential Contributions of Majority and Minority Influence,” *Psychological Review* 93, no. 1 (January 1986): 23-32; Charlan Jeanne Nemeth et al., “Improving Decision Making by Means of Dissent,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 31, no. 1 (January 2001): 48-58; Marcus M. Stewart, Marcy Crary, and Beth K. Humberd, “Teaching Value in Diversity: On the Folly of Espousing Inclusion, While Practicing Exclusion,” *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 7, no. 3 (2008): 374-386.
- 4 Crisp and Turner, 246; and Stewart, Crary, and Humberd, 376.
- 5 Roberta G. Sands, “The Elusiveness of Identity in Social Work Practice with Women: A Postmodern Feminist Perspective,” *Clinical Social Work Journal* 24, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 174.
- 6 Amy Bernstein Colton and Georgea M. Sparks-Langer, “A Conceptual Framework to Guide the Development of Teacher Reflection and Decision Making,” *Journal of Teacher Education* 44, no. 1 (January-February 1993): 45-54; Cheryl A. Cisero, “Does Reflective Journal Writing Improve Course Performance,” *College Teaching* 54, no. 2 (2006): 231-236; Carol L. Flinchbaugh et al., “Student Well-Being Interventions: The Effects of Stress Management Techniques and Gratitude Journaling in the Management Education Classroom,” *Journal of Management Education* 36, no. 2 (2012): 191-219; Hartwell et al.; Mingun Lee and Anne E. Fortune, “Do We Need More

Endnotes *continued*

- 'Doing' Activities or 'Thinking' Activities in the Field Practicum," *Journal of Social Work Education* 49 (2013): 646-660; Martinez et al; Christine Lynn Norton et al., "Reflective Teaching in Social Work Education: Findings from a Participatory Action Research Study," *Social Work Education* 30, no. 4 (June 2011): 392-407; Greg L. Pugh, "The Experiential Learning Cycle in Undergraduate Diversity and Social Justice Education," *Journal of Teaching in Social Work* 34, no. 3 (2014): 302-315; and Sands, 167-186.
- 7 Hartwell et al., 145.
- 8 "Interpersonal skills necessary for EDI [equity, diversity, and inclusion] work include: (1) being able to collaborate within and across difference, (2) demonstrating empathy, and (3) managing discomfort." Hartwell et al., 153. Students' responses also connected to discourse, a process that "involves finding agreement, welcoming difference, 'trying on' other points of view, identifying the common in the contradictory, tolerating the anxiety implicit in paradox, searching for synthesis, and reframing." Jack Mezirow, *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 12-13.
- 9 One could also frame this exercise as creating a "code of conduct," as Pugh describes. Although my students' class contract and Pugh's code of conduct strove to shape behavior to encourage an open and comfortable learning environment, contracts and codes have different connotations: participants willingly enter a contract; an authority enforces a code. Indeed, Pugh notes that students held their classmates and himself accountable for deviating from the code. I presented the agreement as a contract to my students to emphasize personal responsibility. Pugh, 306.
- 10 One student wrote, "I think our discussion of how to handle hard topics has prepared people for the conversations, and they keep in mind what we talked about," to the mid-semester survey question, "[W]hat has helped you feel comfortable sharing?"
- 11 Beginning of semester survey results. First year seminar, fall 2017.
- 12 I began asking students this question during my second year of teaching a studio art education course that was required of all elementary education majors. While some students did say they enrolled in the class because they had to, many identified personal goals that ranged from wanting to improve their artmaking skills to thinking more interdisciplinarily in their future classrooms. The exercise seemed to help them succeed and enjoy the class more than students the previous year did. As a result, I have continued to pose this question to students in every class I have taught for the last four years.
- 13 John Dewey argues instructors need to know their students to help them learn and think reflectively. John Dewey, *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process* (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1933), 36.
- 14 Transformative learning examines how and why we hold the opinions we do, the social ramifications of those opinions, and alternatives. Mezirow, 31. It shares many qualities with reflective thinking, which Dewey defines as "[a]ctive, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends." Dewey, 9.
- 15 Extensive photographs and videos from the project can be found at Womanhouse, <http://www.womanhouse.net>. Suzy Spence and Leslie Brack created the site in 2009 in conjunction with exhibition *The Mood Back Home, an Exhibition inspired by Womanhouse* at Momenta Art, Brooklyn.
- 16 Stewart, Crary, Humberd, 374-386.
- 17 Stewart, Crary, Humberd, 377-379.
- 18 Crisp and Turner, 242-266.
- 19 Crisp and Turner, 249-250.
- 20 Crisp and Turner, 242.
- 21 For classes with higher enrollment, keeping students in the same group all semester may be preferable. See Pugh, 306.
- 22 Hartwell et al., 145.
- 23 The roles are based loosely off of Williams Isaacs's four-player model of dialogue. William Isaacs, "Dialogic Leadership," *The System Thinker* 10, no. 1 (February 1999): 1-5, accessed September 18, 2018, http://dialogos.com/files/7313/4825/5466/dialogic_leadership.pdf. For its application in an art museum, see Rika Burnham and Elliott Kai-Kee, "Conversation, Discussion, and Dialogue," in *Teaching in the Art Museum: Interpretation as Experience* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011), 79-111; and Kimberly Datchuk, "Taking Cues from Online Learning Offline in the Visual Classroom," *Art History Pedagogy & Practice* 2, no. 2 (2017), accessed January 2, 2019, <https://academicworks.cuny.edu/ahpp/vol2/iss2/4>.
- 24 Although a skeptic in the roles, researchers have questioned the efficacy of such a role. When skeptics do not express authentic dissent, they tend to reinforce the consensus. Furthermore, a naysayer can negatively impact in the group dynamic. In contrast, those expressing authentic dissent have a greater chance of sparking novel thinking among all group members. When individuals share personal experiences in small group exercises, it can inspire diverse points of view and promote flexible thinking. See Nemeth, 25-26; Nemeth et al; and Deborah Tannen, *The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue* (New York: Random House, 1998). For the benefits of sharing different points of view, see Uschi Bay and Selma Macfarlane, "Teaching Critical Reflection: A Tool for Transformative Learning in Social Work?" *Social Work Education* 30, no. 7 (2011): 748. For the effects of a person from a minority group expressing a dissenting opinion, see Gabriel Mugny in collaboration with Stamos Papastamou, "A Psychological Theory of Minority Influence," in *The Power of Minorities*, trans. Carol Sherrard (New York: Academic Press, 1982), 27-51.
- 25 See William Isaacs, "Part II: Building Capacity for New Behavior," in *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together* (New York: Currency, 1999), 79-176.
- 26 I walked through the classroom and checked in at the tables as students worked. Amazingly, no student veered off-task during their online searches.
- 27 Ando, 73.

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- 28 For example, elementary students who did nature journaling became more aware of the natural world and how humans, animals, and plants rely on and affect each other. Janita Cormell and Toni Ivey, "Nature Journaling: Enhancing Students' Connections to the Environment Through Writing," *Science Scope* 35, no. 5 (January 2012): 38-43.
- 29 Linnea Dietrich and Diane Smith-Hurd, "Feminist Approaches to the Survey," *Art Journal* 54, no. 3 (Autumn 1995): 44-47. Christine Lynn Norton and her collaborators note the connection between reflective activities such as journaling and feminist approaches to teaching. Christine Lynn Norton et al., 393.
- 30 Students' contributions to class discussions increase when they use reading reflections in class. Their learning and engagement also benefit. Melanie Sage and Patti Sele, "Reflective Journaling as a Flipped Classroom Technique to Increase Reading and Participation with Social Work Students," *Journal of Social Work Education* 51, no. 4 (2015): 668-681.
- 31 Allowing for varied responses can increase students' engagement. Roxanne Mills, "'It's Just a Nuisance': Improving College Student Reflective Journal Writing," *College Student Journal* 42, no. 2 (June 2008): 684-690.
- 32 After grading the first response paper, I shared successful features of anonymous student reflections. Elizabeth Spalding and Angene Wilson found using class time to examine "definitions, discussions, and models" can positively impact on the quality of students' reflections. See Elizabeth Spalding and Angene Wilson, "Demystifying Reflection: A Study of Pedagogical Strategies that Encourage Reflective Journal Writing," *Teachers College Record* 104, no. 7 (2002): 1393-1421.
- 33 Amy Bernstein Colton and Georgea M. Sparks-Langer, "A Conceptual Framework to Guide the Development of Teacher Reflection and Decision Making," *Journal of Teacher Education* 44, no. 1 (January-February 1993): 45-54.
- 34 For the importance of ambiguity for student growth, see Frances S. Bolin, "Helping Student Teachers Think about Teaching," *Journal of Teacher Education* 39, no. 2 (March-April 1988): 48-54.
- 35 Critical reflection can help students connect concepts in new ways, deepening their understanding and ability to put their knowledge into practice. Lee and Fortune, 646-660.
- 36 Hartwell et al., 154.
- 37 hooks notes that she asks students to journal and read a paragraph from an entry at least once a semester regardless of class size "as an exercise in recognition" of each student's unique and valuable experiences and thoughts on an issue. hooks, 40-41, 84, 186.
- 38 Mid semester survey results. First year seminar, fall 2017.
- 39 One student withdrew from the course between week six and sixteen.
- 40 End of semester survey results. First year seminar, fall 2017.

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Popular Culture in the Diverse Foundations Classroom

Transcending Fan Art:

Introduction

Foundations students are almost always in the very beginning of their college careers. Young and lacking an individualized visual language, most students have had little experience with the arts prior to walking into our classroom. Before developing a personal investment in making, their work is often a specifically assigned means-to-an-end. So, how do we usher students towards self-direction? How do we help them find inspiration? How do we bring them closer to transforming individual interests into personally meaningful artistic processes, projects, or bodies of work? An approach that has been successful in our Foundations-level classroom is to guide students through the process of mining their own culture to address personal identity. Our project does this through the reworking of popular

imagery of their choosing. The goal is to meet them where they are, honor their interests, contextualize their efforts, and introduce criticality and social relevance along the way.

The Learner-Centered Classroom

This project is best supported through a learner-centered methodology. Maryellen Weimer summarizes the shift in authority necessary to facilitate a learner-centered classroom:

When faculty control learning processes... (their) authoritarian, directive actions diminish student motivation and ultimately result in dependent learners, unwilling and unable to assume responsibility for their own learning... The responsibility for learning changes when the environment is learner-centered...

(These) environments are not rule-bound, token economies but places where learners understand and accept the responsibilities that belong to them. They come to class not because an attendance policy requires them, but because they see the activities and events of class time as making important contributions to their learning.¹

This teaching strategy directly supports the process of self-exploration and results in creating a dynamic and effective learning environment, one that

is somewhat akin to an art or design studio environment. A learner-centered approach embraces the different styles and cultures of diverse student bodies and addresses a broad range of individual student preparedness. It is collaborative because the students have equally crucial roles to play in guiding course content and discourse. In other words, the students are self-directed and working on individualized projects with subjects of their own choosing, which allows them the exciting experience of affecting the trajectory of the class. In this way, the learning process feels personalized or customizable, and students respond with heightened motivation and ownership. By adopting a learner-centered approach to a studio course, we can respond to the specific needs and desires of our students while deepening student engagement in their own educational journey. By embracing the contributions of each student, our courses represent and welcome the same diversity as our student population.

This transfer of ownership sounds great in theory, but what does it look like in practice? Although there are many ways to strike this collaborative balance with students, our focus here is to give students the opportunity to choose their own imagery and subject matter, and eventually manipulate this image with the medium(s) of their choice. This may sound incredibly obvious. Certainly, an instructor would not only allow—but also encourage—a student to find her or his own subject. But what about that one-millionth Batman drawing, painting of a Disney princess, or anime collage? With good reason, we often see these iterations as fan art that

have no place in the academic studio. From community colleges to prestigious universities, many seasoned professors of introductory-level courses have prohibited comic, animation, and video game characters as subject matter to push the students toward more personalized and original works. In some cases, entire Foundations departments ban this imagery altogether. This ban, however, often underestimates the level of complexity and nuance that students are able to bring to otherwise trite subject matter.

We are equally invested in helping our students develop criticality towards their subject matter as we are in allowing them to choose it. We know that Generation Z has easier access to information than any previous generation. Like the rest of us, they are over-saturated, constantly receiving and scanning new material, with each new discovery or bit of information creating the desire for more novelty. The difference for our students is that this saturated but surface level relationship to content is the *only* one they have known. A close-read into a subject for analysis is generally abandoned for the hunt of something new. Today's students need help to develop criticality towards their desired subject matter. We have found it easier to support critical dexterity while working with the very imagery that instructors are often tempted to ban. Building this evaluative, analytical muscle is hard work. Starting with imagery that students feel invested in makes this process more accessible. This process is a way of respecting their cultural identity as well as their developmental stage as students. It forces

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analytical muscle

instructors to be aware of our own biases as we open up to the possibility of a student doing something unexpectedly interesting with an image we might see as ubiquitous and banal.

Introducing the Pop Art Movement

For many of our students, the celebration of popular culture through color and imagery is the main draw of the Pop Art movement. Essentially, they view Pop Art as the fan art of the 1960s, and they often desire to work in a similar way by reproducing images of what they love. Thus, an exploration of Pop can be an entry-point—a backdoor into criticality. By aiding students in viewing the movement—and related subsequent artworks—as one that often takes a critical position



Figure 1 Evelyn Axell, *Ice Cream*, 1964. Photo via Philadelphia Museum of Art. © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

to its subject and the society in which it was produced, we can guide students through a similar arc with their own chosen subjects. This approach moves students from creating work that is pure celebration to more complex investigations.

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For example, many students arrive to the Foundations studio familiar with some of Roy Lichtenstein's artwork. They intuitively understand the change in context—from the small, mass-produced comic book to the large-scale, one-of-a-kind painting—as one that adds significance and status to the subject. Lichtenstein's *Drowning Girl* is an example that students can quickly access and begin to explore in depth. Made in 1963, the painting goes beyond a celebratory read made through appropriation of image and style. The painting plays into the stereotype of hysteria among women in the 1960s. She would rather die than ask Brad for help. Highlighting this blatant and pervasive sexist stereotype, notably by a male artist, can be read as reinforcing societal beliefs about women or as a form of critique about those beliefs. In Lichtenstein's 1994 work, *Nude with Abstract Painting*, we see a nude in a passive position, slightly more sexualized than a classic art historical nude might be. By presenting representations of the female figure, a Mondrian painting, and a Picasso in hand-painted Benday Dots—mimicking the language of commercially printed imagery—they are put on the same hierarchical level as comic book prints and advertising produced for mass public consumption, creating a potentially satirical read on the painting.

Conversely, in Evelyne Axell's 1964 painting *Ice Cream*, the figure is highly sexualized but not objectified (see figure 1). Axell made this painting of a woman confidently in control of her sexual power, in pursuit of her own satisfaction, at a time when it was not culturally supported or endorsed. These ideas are shockingly still

controversial today, as was highlighted recently when the promotional image posted by the Philadelphia Museum of Art was removed by Facebook due to its, “suggestive and offensive content.”² In these examples, the power given to or stripped from the sexual woman is hinged upon whether she is created from the perspective of a man or woman.

Including Contemporary Examples

Other forms of cultural critique are only accessible through interventions with popular imagery, as seen in artworks that complicate representations of race. Betye's Saar's *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* is emblematic in its ability to recast the commercialized racism of the iconic pancake brand by tracing it back to its derivation from the passive, servile mammy figure by offering a more liberated vision of black womanhood.

Similarly, Ellen Gallagher utilizes commercial imagery, but from advertisements intended for a black audience. Print ads for wigs, hair creams, and other cosmetic products—sourced from magazines such as *Ebony*—form the basis of her collages utilizing unconventional materials. Her interventions demand the viewer reconsider the racialized body-idyll promoted by the beauty industry.

The power of the object itself, of course, is a major theme emanating out of Pop Art. In 1961, Claus Oldenburg, having been in the United States for only five years, created his own version of a store in Manhattan's Lower East Side with *The Store*, 1961. With a hyper-focus on commerce, capitalism, and the notion



Figure 2 Olga Koumoundouros: “Demand Management” (2009), installation view, REDCAT, Los Angeles. Photo: Scott Groller

that bigger is better, Oldenburg sculpted rough, drippy, larger-than-life sculptures of common objects—ice cream, cigarettes, lingerie and such—using plaster and paint. He sold them out of his ‘store’ for two months, circumventing the need for a gallery. The sculptures are at once strange and familiar, and the overall effect is hallucinatory. While the scale of the sculptures might feel festive, their abject aesthetic calls commercialization into question. The act of selling his own art out of the retail space equates the role of the gallery to a glorified market.

In order to explore the relevance of Pop-inspired strategies utilized today, we look to contemporary art and design that continues the conversation in timely manifestations. Los Angeles-based contemporary artist Olga Koumoundouros, for example, also contemplates our relationship to everyday objects in her installation *Demand Management*, 2009 (see figure 2, page 33). Within the gallery she built a circular room, with a thin

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wedge for a wall. If seen from above, the configuration becomes a pie chart—the wedge representing the one percent of the population who own more wealth than the bottom 90 percent. The ring of objects, including a toilet, kitchen table, bed, and a laptop, are all papier-mâché made from discount newsprint ads. The complete ring is reminiscent of the “hamster wheel” that the majority Americans find themselves trapped in—working hard to pay for the objects needed to effectively work hard, all while contributing towards the profit-margins of the wealthiest few. Again, we are drawn in by the familiarity of the objects, but through further investigation of Koumoundouros' formal and material decisions, we land on a critique of wealth inequity. This trajectory of thinking is one

that our students can follow and apply to their own explorations.

Our experience with students of varying socio-economic and cultural backgrounds also has revealed that an insistence on restricting a Foundations course to formal abstraction through projects and exercises can reinforce structures of class privilege. Although we devote the first several weeks of the term to studying pure nonobjective form as one method for building students' perceptual skills, strict adherence to this approach can sometimes disregard the sentimentalities and even passions for visual culture that often lead today's students toward their educational pursuits in the first place. Foundations courses generally prepare students for a wide range of majors, from fashion design to architecture, to game art. At Otis College of Art and Design, the department of Digital Media consistently enrolls the highest number of majors, and 2 out of every 3 creative industry workers in Los Angeles is rooted in this discipline.³ We need to embrace the fact that a Foundations classroom today is populated with future animators, graphic designers, and game developers in addition to painters and sculptors. Students who have had less exposure to what is typically considered “high” art—museum shows, avant-garde architecture, etc.—usually have had more exposure to narrative and commercially-oriented art forms—animated films, video games, product packaging, and so forth. Through education, we hope to broaden students' exposure to ideas and influences, and to introduce them to an accepted art historical canon, but prohibiting explorations of popular or even clichéd images can

negate their life experience and identity.

Such an experience is chronicled in the 2015 documentary, “Jeremy Scott: The People's Designer.” Scott, a Kansas City native who was recently featured in LACMA's “Reigning Men” exhibition and the MET show, “Camp: Notes on Fashion,” is the current creative director at Moschino. In the film, he recounts his process of applying to multiple art schools and being consistently rejected for his “lack of originality.”⁴ The fashion establishment, which tends to revere more recognizable forms of luxury, still regularly criticizes Scott's work for being tasteless in its embrace of kitsch and visual puns. Still, his ability to use the conventional language of fashion and enmesh its history with that of reviled, yet ubiquitous contemporary brands (synonymous with low quality, mass-market appeal) is itself an extraordinarily unique endeavor. In his debut collection for Moschino, he incorporates the goofiness of Sponge Bob and the banality of food packaging. Rejection by fashion critics has not diminished his ability to call into question the legitimacy of the tastemakers.

The Project

The project we have developed for Design Fundamentals is intended to complicate the students' relationship to their beloved images, but they do not realize it until later on in the process. Part one consists of a value study. We instruct the students to begin with a found image—either a photograph or fully-rendered illustration will do. The process of reconstituting the image in pen and ink using stippling and



Figure 3 Project by Jessica Blau, student of Stephanie Sabo. Pen and ink on Bristol paper. 15 x 16 in.

cross-hatching teaches careful observation of value relationships. Additionally, students must enlarge the image in a series of three steps, continuously zooming in to their previous square. The reframing of the image through carefully chosen enlargements allows for consideration of compositional principles such as movement, proportion, and emphasis. By the third square, the enlargement has become nonrepresentational, and the subject

matter gives way to pure form. The fourth square replicates the composition from this abstract square, but inverts the value relationships to elicit an awareness of figure and ground.

The second part of the project is where significant transformations take place, as students are led through an analysis of content. Often, this step is the



Figure 4 Project by Jessica Blau, student of Stephanie Sabo. Pattern paper, shells, florist's moss, sand and adhesive on Bristol paper. 15 x 16 in.

first time students have questioned their adoration of their favorite characters or products, the significance they hold for the wider culture, and the societal values these narratives reinforce. Working together in small groups, students are assisted by their classmates in generating an associative mind map, followed by another mind map of opposing concepts. Qualities typically associated with a character or product get scratched off the list, and the

subject matter must be considered from an alternate interpretative lens. Students are tasked with reimagining their image, creating a semiotic shift via color and materials choices.

The recontextualization of materials in order to shift in their meaning is a key strategy in Foundations pedagogy, with roots stretching back to the Bauhaus. Although Joseph Albers is most commonly known for his study of and teaching about color perception, his *matière* studies, which he brought to Black Mountain College, are remembered as “the defining exercise of Albers’s pedagogy... (that) permeated the college’s collective consciousness.”²⁵ When students must observe the inherent characteristics of a material’s textural-visual qualities and tap into their communicative potential, their abilities as designers to shape the viewer’s perception of the work dramatically increases. Our students have experimented with reindeer moss to represent graphic tattoos, sandpaper to stand in for hamburger buns, and cut sheet metal to depict animated characters.

Reinterpreting the iconic image of the Marlboro Man was the choice of one student. Recognizing that the power of the image to sell ‘cancer sticks’ lay in its ability to reinvigorate a myth of masculine independence, stoicism, and invulnerability, she re-envisioned her man ostentatiously feminized and a person of color.

Also considering the construction of gender identity, another student began with an image from a 1950s monster movie, which, typical of the time period, presents the female character as a passive beauty in need of rescue. Her



Figure 5 Project by Holly Sudduth, student of Stephanie Sabo. Foam, sandpaper, fake fur, onion skins, felt, dried lettuce leaf, processed cheese slices, french fries, and dog treats on Bristol paper. 15 x 16 x 3 in.

transformed image, however, presents the same character—this time as an empowered robo-fem-fatale luxuriating in repose on her bed of fluff—and opens a conversation about Donna Haraway’s *Cyborg Manifesto*, problematizing common notions about femininity.

Because students do not yet know about part two of the project when they begin part one, they sometimes begin with an image that is already a somewhat transformed version of a well-known image, such as a “chola” version of the famous Rosie the Riveter poster. With gauges in her ears and a snarl on her lips, she has



Figure 6 Project by student of Jill Newman. Pen and ink on Bristol paper & acrylic and ink on digital print. Diptych, 15 x 15 in. each.

more attitude than the WWII original, and knuckle tattoos rather than a cartoon bubble command us to “Do it” (see figure 3, page 35). To transform the image that was already transformed, the student took it in a new direction entirely, bringing

the image into dialogue with another seemingly insurmountable task, halting global warming and ocean acidification (see figure 4, page 35).

In another project, subject matter that readily comes to mind when discussing popular culture—the quintessential American meal—is reinterpreted to reveal

its detrimental health effects. Referring to inhumane factory farming processes, and incorporating real “food” items that somehow never decompose, the national obsession with the fast food hamburger is called into question. The material choices

serve as an exploration of the relationship between content and form, while exposing the underbelly of commercial appeal (see figure 5).

With a run of over ten seasons and layered humor, SpongeBob is a draw to audiences of many ages, yet the look and personality of the character is decidedly immature. With a nod to Jeremy Scott, a student chose this icon and began with an expectedly clean, bright, and jolly SpongeBob. She reworked the image in oil and chalk pastel to create loose blending and aggressively gestural scribbles, lending expressive grit and emotional burnout to the otherwise child-like image. Through charged and rough mark making, she made the character differently relatable, as if he had grown from childhood to his experimental late teens, dropping his optimism and naiveté for angst and boredom.

In this last example, the student worked with the ubiquitous Starbucks logo (see figure 6, page 37). In the transformed color image, he mapped the tropes of Basquiat onto the Starbucks logo by painting over imagery in a graffiti-inspired manner, crossing out text, and generally defacing the original image. The student's aim was to literally map Basquiat's own conflicted and detrimental relationship to his financial success and fame onto this corporate logo. The effect encourages us to consider the devastating ramifications of corporate billionaires' successes at this time of profound economic inequities.

Conclusion

As students enjoy the freedom to devote attention to a favorite pop-culture image or character, we observe their stronger connection with the course subject matter. Students are more attuned to detail, careful in the craftsmanship of the work, and intentional about their choices. Additionally, we see students able to handle the material of popular culture—a significant portion of the future careers of many design students—with more awareness and nuance.

The project we have developed, using the historical Pop Art movement as a way of introducing critical analysis of contemporary popular culture images, has yielded observable intellectual and creative growth in our students. At the same time, we are able to foster inclusivity with students of varied socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. As they utilize characters or advertising based on their interests, the students' permission to engage with this subject matter transforms their relationship to it. They reimagine the colors, textures, and materials within their project, and they also reimagine the meanings circulated by the images, developing a complex, critical lens enabled by this learner-centered strategy.

Endnotes

- 1 Maryellen Weimer, *Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), xvii-xix.
- 2 Jack Shepherd, "Facebook removes image of Evelyne Axell's 'Ice Cream' because it is 'suggestive content,'" *Independent* (11 February 2016).
- 3 Thornberg & Kleinhenz, *The 2019 Ofis Report on the Creative Economy*, Beacon Economics (Spring 2019).
- 4 Vlad Yudin, *Jeremy Scott: the People's Designer*, The Vadar Company (September 2015).
- 5 Michael Beggs, "Joseph Albers: Photographs of Matières," *Leap Before you Look: Black Mountain College 1933-1957*, (New Haven and London, Yale University Press in association with Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, 2015), 86.

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Gateways to Drawing: A Complete Guide

By Stephen Gardner

Gateways to Drawing: A Complete Guide begins with two statements. The first is the direct and accurate assertion that everyone can draw. We start drawing when we are young, and through work and practice, a student of drawing can and will improve. The second is a contextualization by author Stephen Gardner, Associate Chair of Foundations Studies at SCAD, who explains that as an administrator he has had the opportunity to observe many drawing instructors. He states that each bring their own approach to drawing, but the best share three common traits: they are inspirational, informative, and hands-on. Gardner has approached this text with the intention of reflecting those

three traits, and has done so successfully. *Gateways to Drawing* is certainly informative, covering the numerous elements of drawing while buttressing this information with extensive notes about artists, their methods, and the various paths to which drawing can lead. The most exciting aspect of the text is how hands on it is—there are numerous features in *Gateways to Drawing* that encourage drawing students to put the information shared in the text to practical use.

Gardner covers all of the drawing topics any sensible textbook on the subject should. There are chapters detailing the use of line, shape, form, value, space, texture, and color. Each of these chapters is well articulated with ample and excellent examples of both professional and student work. Vocabulary appropriate to each

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subject is used several times in headings and the body of the text with full explanations and in margin notes with concise definitions. This repetition of vocabulary reiterates the importance of the common language needed to discuss the practice of drawing.

The chapters covering drawing elements follow basics of drawing practice from composition to mark-making. There is also a chapter dedicated to various drawing media and the marks they make. The media and substrates covered are not limited to traditional medias of pencil, charcoal, and ink on paper, but expand to include contemporary media such as markers and digital applications as well as mixed media. Gardner emphasizes the importance of choosing the right media for any given artwork and illustrates that with numerous examples.

In the “What to Draw” section of the book, Gardner explores four areas of drawing subject matter. One, the figure, is well covered territory, but there is an additional chapter expanding on the general topic of figure drawing that focuses on portraiture. The other two subjects covered are still-life and landscape, sometimes underrepresented in other drawing texts but well covered here.

One of the most interesting chapters is devoted to critical thinking and the critique of drawings.

In this concise but important chapter, the vocabulary of critique is explored. The author discusses various means of evaluating a drawing, and by extension any work

of art. The text encourages the reader to move beyond isolationist tendencies, to accept and use critiques for improvement. The end of chapter assignments are replaced in this chapter with writing assignments, complete with rubrics for self-critique and external critique of both fellow students and masters.

There are several features that distinguish *Gateways to Drawing* from other drawing textbooks. There are periodic interludes in the text called “The Work of Art,” “Drawings at Work” and “Gateways to Drawing.” The “Work of Art” section focuses on an artist, their drawings, and methodologies. These artists are sensibly chosen and include a broad range of time periods, cultures, processes, and approaches to drawing. “The Drawings at Work” sections are intended to show the various ways drawing can be used to communicate. These sections are devoted to the use of drawings in a multitude of professional fields beyond the fine arts. These range from historical examples such as Matthias Grunewald’s use of drawings in preparation for the *Iseheim Altarpiece* to Yves Saint Laurent’s use of drawing in clothing design. The “Gateways to Drawing” sections reference three drawings that are revisited several times throughout the text. For example, José Clemente Orozco’s drawing, *Man Struggling with Centuar*, is visited three times, once as a discussion piece for mark-making, a second time for his use of line, and a third as an example of implied texture.

The *Gateways to Drawing* set also includes a sketchbook, full of drawing prompts, encouraging a practical application of the information in each chapter of the main book. There are also sketchbook prompts throughout the textbook intended to reiterate. The sketchbook is itself a reiteration of the sketchbook chapter of the textbook. This chapter and the sketchbook are manifestations of the concept echoed throughout the book that regular and ongoing drawing is the best way to improve one’s work.

Activities that can be used by both students and professors are outlined at the end of chapters in sophisticated assignments that go above and beyond those designated for the sketchbook. Falling at the end of each chapter, each “In the Studio Project” is further broken into three

assignments: a Fundamental Project, an Observational Project, and (depending on the chapter topic) a Research Project or a Non-Observational Drawing Assignment. The Fundamental projects function as more developed sketchbook assignments that develop basic research skills. The Observational Projects are assignments involving observational drawing of one form or another. These assignments are more traditional still life set ups, each specific to the chapter in which they appear. The Non-Observational Drawings encourage a variety of material and substrate use and action based on the chapter’s topic. These assignments are wide ranging and include disassembling previous drawings and recombining them into something new, to non-drawing activities such as exploring an object through note taking. All deviate from traditional still life—a needed addition to many drawing textbooks.

The use of student work examples, the ample and short but instructive drawing prompts, and thoughtful discussion of all topics related to drawing make *Gateways to Drawing* an accessible text for any drawing student. *Gateways to Drawing* is available in paperback with the optional sketchbook. It is also available as a PDF eBook with additional, online resources for both educator and student. In any format, it’s a tantalizing book full of useful and well-presented information, backed by a broad range of well-chosen and beautifully reproduced artwork from students and professionals.

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Crits: A Student Manual

by Terry Barrett

Most art and design projects involve critiques, and many students' perception of their success hinges upon these discussions. While best practices emphasize a safe, democratic, and constructive dialogue, the conversations can often be shallow, intimidating, or one-sided. Moreover, students express dread about these experiences, fearing judgment, embarrassment, or a lack of productive feedback.

In *Crits: A Student Manual*, Terry Barrett illuminates the generative and transformative potential of studio critiques. Drawing on his five decades of teaching in higher education, museum, and classroom settings, *Crits* examines the primary elements of studio critiques, providing contextual information, termin-

ology, and practical suggestions to improve the ways we communicate about art. Moreover, firsthand observations from students, instructors, artists, and industry professionals give the impression that readers are learning from a field rather than a single author. *Crits* is not simply a "how to" guide, but more importantly, a dynamic text that addresses readers' self-perception, asserting that "to change oneself is to change society".

Barrett's tone is straight-forward, clear, and candid, while also nuanced and personal. At times, it feels as if he is speaking to each reader individually, starting suggestions with "You could." The design and organization are useful and practical, while the layers of content make it an enduring resource. Barrett's ideas are brought to life throughout the book through reflections, quotes, and anecdotes from students, instructors, artists, art critics, and

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industry professionals. As such, the book is appropriate for any studio Foundations course, as well as upper-division or graduate level classes.

Crits is broken into seven chapters: Definitions and Stories, Good Crits/Bad Crits, Skills and Attitudes, Descriptions, Interpretation, Judgment, and Artistic Statements and Biographies. Each introduces a component of the critique process with concise definitions and differentiations of often confused or conflated terms. The first chapter, Definitions and Stories, introduces common purposes and formats of critiques. Barrett explains why some critiques are more successful than others, and underlines the importance of defining intentions and ground rules in advance. Constructive and damaging situations are described, illuminating the myriad and deeply personal, lasting impact of these experiences. The chapter is full of first-hand feedback from students and instructors with detailed practical examples that will be familiar to many readers.

Chapters two and three empower students to recognize their critical role in the critique and provide specific techniques for improving communication skills. While chapter one acknowledges how challenging, and at times, painful critiques can be, chapter two invites readers to realize the long-term value of thoughtful feedback to the artistic process. Barrett provides lists of constructive questions and responses, as well as important suggestions for creating a generative atmosphere, acknowledging that time, space, and attitude can impact a critique as much as the language used. Like the rest of the book, the suggestions in these chapters will benefit group discussions in any context.

Many students have only experienced studio critiques in an educational context. They associate the experiences with testing or other forms of assessment. The generous time and focus given to their work is underappreciated because the feedback is identified with closure rather than potential. The second half of chapter two attempts to counter that perception, providing quotes from artists about the lifelong significance of studio critiques, highlighting the value of thoughtful feedback, even when

critical. One artist explains, “What I realized is that after graduating, I no longer have any feedback. No feedback at all, good or bad” (p. 39). Through other artists’ reflections, the chapter invites students to value the care and attention that critiques can engender.

The next three chapters, Descriptions, Interpretation, and Judgment, differentiate primary purposes for studio critiques, highlighting distinctions between their use and execution. Barrett explains that, “To describe is to identify with words what you see in the work, to interpret is to infer meaning about what you see, and to judge is to assign value to what you see” (p. 71). Highlighting the different uses and executions of critiques is particularly enlightening because, in practice, critiques often blend and conflate discussions of form, meaning, and quality. Barrett describes challenges with eliciting descriptions from students that are separate from interpretation. Many viewers assume that basic observations are universal, making the identification of visual elements seem obvious. But in reality, visual descriptions illuminate differences in perception. Barrett explains that stating what we see without interpretation can reveal varying and culturally-determined perspectives.

Chapter five introduces ways that quality interpretations can say more about the artwork than the interpreter. Creating interpretations solely on individual knowledge or experience often ignores important aspects of an artwork’s cultural or material context. This is not to suggest that personal interpretations are useless, nor that meaning is only valid if it aligns with cultural specificity or artistic intention. Rather, quality interpretations consider a range of material and contextual elements to develop coherent and convincing arguments. Barrett provides a useful formula for developing quality interpretations that can also improve students’ written and verbal analyses: SUBJECT MATTER + MEDIUM + FORM + CONTEXT = MEANING. The formula guides viewers and writers to expand their interpretive scope, examining the complexity of an artwork from a range of contexts. Together, the exercises provided in chapters four and five can produce rich observations and discussions that address intention, culture, and emotional response.

Judgments are often both the primary purpose of critiques and the element that can make them most dangerous. Many artists have taken part in critiques dominated by “I like” statements with little or no formal or contextual explanation to support opinions. In chapter six, Barrett provides useful criteria for categorizing and valuing art, referring to differences between broad historical theories. Selecting criteria for judgment in advance provides more objective and informative feedback, allowing artists to evaluate and internalize responses on terms other than viewers’ personal preference or vague notions of “good” or “bad.”

Crits concludes with a chapter on artist statements and biographies. This chapter exemplifies, again, how *Crits* is more than a “how to” guide. Barrett explains that, “occasions to write about yourself as an artist and why you make art provide you with opportunities to better know yourself and your art, and to be better able to articulate what you are about as a contributing member of society”. Creating an artist statement is a common and challenging exercise for students and many professional artists. The chapter articulates differences in the context and purpose of artist statements, as well as reasons to choose between specific content, such as life narrative versus artistic process. Brief examples from a range of artists are provided with detailed analysis of strengths, as well as useful tips with feedback from university administrators and arts organizations. The chapter provides a collection of practical resources and instructions that faculty typically have to cobble together through websites and handouts.

The range of suggestions and examples presented throughout *Crits* invigorates and inspires. Critiques are personal and meaningful conversations that should be nurtured. They have the potential to expand our capacity for empathy and attentiveness in all areas of life. Learning to ask better questions, judge thoughtfully, and consciously reflect on the opinions of others are critical skills in a world that is deeply polarized at this moment. Maybe critiques are a place to begin to talk, listen, and think together again.

State of FATE

Message from the Board

FATE's 17th Biennial Conference theme in 2019, *Foundations in Flux*, could not have anticipated the state that higher education would be in when this volume of *Fate in Review* reached our hands. As prescient as that conference theme proved to be, we continue to find ourselves in uncharted territory, with continuing challenges across our respective student populations, institutions, pedagogical approaches, and artistic practices. Written before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, several articles in this year's publication are relevant in ways we could not have foreseen, while others have taken on new meaning. Fostering community and transformational learning experiences in the new constructs of social distancing may not resonate in the same way it once did, but it proves to be an ongoing and prominent pedagogical concern. In particular, the flipped classroom has taken on a new urgency this academic season. The state of higher education is indeed, *in flux*, and our creative capacities as artist-educators and problem-solvers is being pushed into new realms. Fittingly, it is also a time for

members to be aware of the many ways FATE can support its members, not only as we navigate the challenges of a pandemic and social unrest, but also institutional change and pedagogical priorities. As an organization, we are aware of this new era among our members and our role as an ally, and how these shifts are vital in how we plan, predict, and implement the future of foundational learning in higher ed.

While acknowledging this shifting landscape in Foundations within higher education, it's worth-while to reflect on several of FATE's recent achievements and new developments in the organization:

National Conference

Our 17th Biennial Conference, Foundations in Flux, brought together over 440 educators, artists, and designers at Columbus College of Art and Design (CCAD) in April 2019. Many thanks to the CCAD team, FATE board, awards committee, session chairs, and presenters for all of the research and thoughtful planning that made the conference such a success.

The FATE Board and the UNCC Conference Planning Committee are working hard to organize the 18th Biennial Conference: *Infrastructure*, originally planned to be held in Charlotte, North Carolina but now planned as a virtual event in mid-April, 2021. As with previous iterations of our conference, this Virtual Event provides a unique opportunity to reflect on who we are as Foundations educators, as well as our pedagogical framework. Thoughtfully considering the state of our

infrastructure involves asking challenging questions, being able to listen to a variety of voices, and potentially realigning as we strive to focus on the root of Foundations pedagogy. Our virtual platform will include a member juried exhibition; our juror is Dr. Jennifer Sudul Edwards, Chief Curator and Curator of Contemporary Art at the Mint Museum in Charlotte, North Carolina. We are eager and excited to share this new and innovative approach to the FATE Biennial conference with you.

Regional Activities

Various FATE events occur all over the country, inviting artists, educators, historians, and designers to gather together and share their insights, goals, and challenges of making Foundations more meaningful in their communities. Recent FATE events have been hosted in Maryland, New York, Texas and Florida, and have included two-day symposium events, Roundtables, Forums and Workshops. If you're curious about or interested in hosting a FATE regional event, virtual or otherwise, please contact Jessica Burke,

Vice President of Regional Programming (j.burke@uncc.edu). She is eager to share her enthusiasm and offer support to run a creative and dynamic event. Recall that in addition to FATE's regional events, throughout the year we offer affiliate sessions at CAA and SECAC conferences. We hope to connect with other FATE members during these events and to keep the discussion of Foundations as a vital part of the conversation in higher ed.

Financial and Organizational

FATE's board is working tirelessly to keep costs low for membership, and to serve as excellent stewards of managing our assets. The board has taken on these new financial challenges and looked at this as an opportunity to add board insurance, as well as address issues in our by-laws that have risen from our growing board and membership. For our last conference, we had a number of incredible corporate sponsors that have made our conference possible. Our 40 institutional sponsors have come from

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community and support

schools worldwide, and we are happy these institutions provide membership to one faculty member as the lead educator for their respective institution. This ongoing support brings FATE to many educators who may not be able to afford membership. As an organization, we offer reduced registration for adjuncts and graduate students to support the next generation of educators and to make these learning environments and support networks more accessible.

Membership and Community

The membership of FATE has continued its robust support through social media project shares and online networking. With the shift for many to online or hybrid

curricula, we have drastically changed our pedagogical approaches, content delivery methods, and course modalities. Community and support networks are now more important than ever within higher ed and our respective disciplines. We are grateful for the outpouring of support through this organization and its membership. By being an active member, whether through sharing or listening, you support the communities that FATE is proud to represent. Through these communities, members have shared an impressive array of online resources, including project handouts, strategies for teaching, navigating institutional pitfalls, rubrics, and much more. Our organization's network is impressive; at 400 individual members with an average of 20 institutional memberships a year, it also includes 500 followers on Instagram and over 3500 members on our public Facebook group. We have seen a consistent renewal of memberships this year, and we are thankful to all who are supporting FATE during this time. It is our hope these online networks not only continue to expand, but also encourage a broader and more inclusive conversation around pedagogy and Foundations. If you're not already a part of our social media networks on Instagram (@artfoundations) and Facebook (FATE), we encourage you to join and become a part of these exciting conversations.

FATE Voice

There continue to be other ways for members to be involved with FATE, including our podcast and academic journal. Members can submit ideas for FATE's podcast, *Positive Space*, through our website, where content is based on member feedback.

Our academic journal, *FATE in Review*, continues with this volume as our organization's peer-reviewed journal, and leading publication within Foundations teaching in higher education. Submissions are accepted year-round on a variety of topics, including articles relating to all areas of Foundations education, expanding the practicum, flexing the core, and re-visioning visual culture. Conference papers and/or presentations, as well as papers written solely for publication, are also welcomed. The editorial staff are actively seeking content for the next volume, so reach out to the editor if you're interested in submitting or have additional questions.

Foundations Guidelines & Inclusion

In an ongoing effort to broaden the foundations conversation, community, and representation within our organization, the board has created two task forces; one to assess Guidelines for Foundations programs, and another, to address diversity, equity and inclusion.

The latter initiative on diversity, equity and inclusion, which began in 2019, is now complete and on our website. The task-force has been composed of many individuals from the FATE community, creating a comprehensive document for

the organization's standards and goals for inclusion in our board and among our members. Since its inception, this taskforce has been striving to support our membership and create an action plan. We are keenly aware of the importance of inclusive spaces that reflect a diversity of people and viewpoints. An inclusive environment is one that encourages and actively seeks out participation from diverse voices, especially those who have been historically marginalized. As an organization we stand against racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, ableism and all other efforts to exclude individuals based on identity, socio-economic status, political views, veteran status or national origin. FATE acknowledges that the concept of inclusivity is not limited to one definition or set of constructs but exists in many forms and contexts. We know it is important to articulate our position of inclusivity in relation to our mission as an organization, and our full statement on diversity, equity and inclusion can be found on our website.

The Foundations Guidelines task force has conducted in-depth listening sessions for members. Sixteen individuals representing a variety of roles and institutions have attended these opening sessions, with more expected to follow. This session's goal was to give our members a voice to aid in the rewriting of the guidelines. These guidelines are intended to offer support and clarity, and cover a variety of topics such as curriculum, pedagogy, coordinating, administrative tasks, and professional development.

Your voices are imperative in our mission to update these initiatives with an emphasis on advocacy. It is the mission of FATE to support members in critical times of change. As we pivot to online and hybrid learning and a shifting landscape in higher ed, finding ways to maintain community and advocacy in our classrooms through these discussions benefit us all.

Join the Conversation

This year we hope to add a new board position which will focus on social media and outreach. Given the growth we've seen as an organization through our online communities, this individual will assist FATE in retrieving and disseminating information to our members through social media platforms. Additionally, we envision this position as a liaison within these virtual academic communities, and an individual who will assist and promote the organization's mission through outreach. Be on the lookout for this exciting opportunity and more information on these outreach initiatives. While our E-blasts bring important information to your email, we invite you to connect with us via our social media platforms, and to connect new people to the important work that FATE does.

We simply wouldn't be able to deliver on our mission without your support and hard work. Whether you submit an article to this journal, attend a regional event, share a project via our Facebook group, or attend a national conference, these activities represent the commitment you've made to Foundations in higher education.

We are thankful for your work and are incredibly proud to be a part of this organization and community. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

The FATE Board:

Casey McGuire
Interim President & VP of Finance

Colleen Merrill
Co-VP of Membership

Heidi Hogden
Co-VP of Membership

Libby McFalls
VP of Communication

Guen Montgomery
VP of Development

Jessica (JB) Burke
*2021 Conference Host
Regional Event Coordinator*

Kariann Fuqua
MACAA Representative

Lauren Kalman
CAA Representative

Katie Hargrave
SECAC Representative

Michael Marks
FATE in Review Editor

About FATE

Foundations in Art: Theory and Education, FATE, is a national, non-profit 501(C)(3) organization dedicated to the promotion of excellence in the development and teaching of college-level foundations courses in both studio and art history. Founded in 1977 as an affiliate society of the College Art Association (CAA), members include approximately 400 studio and art history faculty and administrators, and over 30 sponsoring institutions. The organization sponsors a national conference bi-annually, regional conferences in interim years, panel sessions at CAA and regional associations, and publishes a professional journal (FATE in Review) and a newsletter. For more information, please see the website at <https://www.foundationsart.org>.



FATE logo

Philip B. Meggs (1942-2002)

FATE Officers 2019–2020

Interim President & Vice President of Finance

Casey McGuire, University of West Georgia

Co-Vice President of Membership

Colleen Merrill, Bluegrass Community & Technical College

Co-Vice President of Membership

Heidi Hogden, Arizona State University

Vice President for Communication

Libby McFalls, Columbus State University

Vice President for Development

Guen Montgomery, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

2021 Conference Host

Regional Event Coordinator

Jessica (J.B.) Burke, University of North Carolina-Charlotte

MACAA Representative

Kariann Fuqua, University of Mississippi

CAA Representative

Lauren Kalman, Wayne State University

SECAC Representative

Katie Hargrave, University of Tennessee Chattanooga

FATE in Review Editor

Michael Marks, Anderson University

FATE Membership Information

Individual:

Tenured/Tenure Track faculty dues
\$65.00 for 2 years.

Non-Tenure Track faculty dues
\$50.00 for 2 years.

Retiree faculty dues
\$45.00 for 2 years.

Graduate student dues
\$35.00 for 2 years.

Institutional:

Regular sponsorships
\$150.00 for 2 years.

Membership information can
be found online at
<https://www.foundationsart.org>

Institutional Members

Anderson University
Arcadia University
Arizona State University
Art Department, Oregon State University
Baylor University Department of Art
Berea College
Bluegrass Community & Technical College
Brigham Young University
Brookhaven College
California State University Long Beach
Chemeketa Community College
Cypress College
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Art & Design
Jefferson Community & Technical College
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Purchase College
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