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Front Cover Art: “Opposing Forces” by Michael Sanford  
Back Cover Art: “Mother and Child” by Michael Sanford

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Pedagogy in the Humanities
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Editor’s Introduction: Pedagogy and Humanities
Shawn R. Tucker
Elon University

Perhaps teaching has always been chaotic. Even when I fantasize about a medieval instructor at the University of Paris with a group of quiet, focused students, I quickly recall that those same students literally ran wild through the Parisian streets. The tonsured French pupils wore robes like monks, not because of their silent devotion to learning, but because they were under canon law and were not subject to civil authorities. Apparently, the church authorities were not really “hands on.” Given the reputation for how wild those students were, faculty at the University of Paris may have wished that their students were merely distracted with texting or Candy Crush.

Still, our current historical and cultural moment does seem to bring its own pedagogical chaos. While students are generally constrained by the law, they have unfettered access to both knowledge and distractions. Students have a wide variety of places to learn, and that means that Humanities instructors are required to modify instruction for so many different learning settings. Economic pressures to produce students with “practical” degrees seem to have only increased pressure on instructors and on the Humanities. But if this issue of Interdisciplinary Humanities demonstrates anything, it is that while this chaos can seem like a crisis, it can also provide rich and rewarding opportunities for teachers and scholars who are willing to rethink, redesign, and innovate. The authors included here do all of those things in ways that bring new life and energy to Humanities pedagogy.

Vivian Kao’s article “Science, Technology, and the Human: Integrating STEM and the Introductory Humanities Course” demonstrates both contemporary pressures as well as how those pressures can produce insights and innovations. Kao teaches Humanities at a private STEM university, and has not only adapted her course to meet student needs, but has used it to rethink the entire relationship between the Humanities and the STEM disciplines. As she redesigned the course, she created an introductory Humanities class that makes its own argument to students about the value science, technology, engineering, and mathematics students can find in the Humanities. Her three-course units, “monsters,” “machines,” and “clones” give her ways of exploring what it means to be human, what it means to be a
machine, and how those lines might be blurred. The course includes plays, poems, films, novels, the visual arts and also includes guest speakers from across the STEM disciplines. Kao’s discussion of this intriguing course redesign also includes an exploration of contemporary attempts to understand the relationship between the Humanities and the STEM disciplines. With such interesting course content, guest speakers, and assignments, it’s hard to imagine any of those students texting instead of participating.

One area of contemporary interest engaged in Kao’s class is the body. It could be Prometheus or Frankenstein’s body or the bodies of various robots who don’t know that they are not human. Medieval instructors may have wanted their students to look past the body, focusing instead on the intellect, the spiritual, or the afterlife. Avoiding the body is exactly the opposite of Katheryn Wright’s class project. Wright describes a scaffolded assignment where students engage embodiment in the broadest and most interdisciplinary ways. Students formulate a proposal and then conduct the research necessary to understand and carry out their project. They respond along the way with written evaluations and analysis. The project culminates in an artifact and student exhibition of the project. The entire project shows how to move students through an engaging, interdisciplinary examination and creation process, helping students understand and practice various Humanities methods and tools. Wright’s project is for students at a pre-professional university, and this project, like Kao’s class, shows how teachers and scholars can respond to contemporary pedagogy challenges with skill and finesse to create great solutions.

Like Wright’s Body Project, another assignment that specifically moves across disciplines to draw upon their variety and richness is Bernadette McNary-Zak’s assignments related to Charles Darwin. For this assignment students not only closely read Darwin’s fascinating observations, but they explore how Darwin addressed contemporary dilemmas like otherness and diversity. To really get students into Darwin’s approach, the assignment includes a trip to the zoo, where students do what Darwin did, recording their observations and formulating responses. This activity helps students understand the challenges inherent in understanding and in constructing knowledge. McNary-Zak provides a fascinating example of an interdisciplinary assignment that engages students in contemporary issues and in the very tools of knowledge construction. Awareness of these tools helps students use them in a more effective and self-aware manner.

Part of the contemporary environment in Humanities pedagogy is not only how knowledge is constructed, but how students learn. Movements to democratize the classroom invite instructors to help students become independent learners. This effort to make students autonomous learners in a world where teachers still have to teach and evaluate is exemplified by Kristina Meinking’s article, “Between Scylla and Charybdis: Navigating a Course in Self-Paced Learning.” Meinking describes her Latin courses and how they are built on modules that students move through at their own pace. This self-paced
learning empowers students by giving them control of scheduling their learning. Meinking describes her courses, her efforts to “flip” the courses by including online support and materials, and her work in ironing out the kinks in a course that relies upon an approach that is novel for students and faculty. The article describes Meinking’s efforts to balance the structure and scaffolding students need while providing the openness and autonomy that empower them. Striking that balance produces pedagogical insights that can inspire a wide variety of Humanities instructors. The course sounds like it would have been very engaging and popular with even rowdy medieval Parisian students.

The effort to empower students with tools of independent learners is also central to John Kerrigan’s pedagogical approach, especially the way that Kerrigan encourages a skill he calls critical self-reflexivity. This skill includes the idea that students can evaluate their own writing in an insightful and critical manner. Kerrigan’s article, “Using Self-Annotation as a Tool for Promoting Reflexivity in Critical Analysis Writing,” not only describes this skill, but it highlights a particular assignment he developed to foster that skill in students. The assignment requires that students return to their own writing and to annotate it in such a way that they reflect critically upon it. Kerrigan describes this innovative approach, shows how he implemented it, and provides evidence of its success. Kerrigan draws this approach for training literature students from his work with composition students, showing how insights from one area or discipline can be transferred to another.

Articles in this issue demonstrate methods that can be used to develop students who are critically self-reflective, who can work across disciplines, and who have the self-knowledge to set their own schedule for learning. What Brandon Essary adds to these ideas is the insight that deliberately teaching some important elements can complement course content as a whole. Essary’s scholarship examines his Italian language courses, courses which could narrowly focus on language acquisition. Yet Essary’s instructional setting values intercultural competency as well as language proficiency. Essary describes assignments he uses, including a double-entry journal and video project, to engage students in issues and challenges related to cultural awareness and understanding as well as communication. The author explores his efforts, what things worked and what things he will adjust, and shows how his efforts impacted student perceptions of their analytic and/or critical thinking and their intellectual engagement in the course. This essay shows another way that Humanities instructors can redesign courses and assignments to better suit their educational settings while training independent learners.

This issue’s next essay is my conversation with instructor and artist Mike Sanford. Sanford is in his thirtieth year of teaching art at the university level. He describes how he teaches and trains students, and how he also empowers students and encourages their autonomy while giving them the structure and scaffolding that they need to develop as artists. He talks about how he instructs them in the creative process, and then he describes his own creative
process with relation to the artwork included with this issue. Seeing how others work and teach can reaffirm, encourage, and inspire instructors in seemingly unrelated areas in their efforts to rethink, redesign, and innovate.

Finding inspiration from other areas and using those insights in a new way is central to Rebecka Black’s contributions “Community Building as Pedagogy in Art History.” Black describes how she brings insights and approaches from Art & Visual Culture Education into her Art History classes. Some of what she has brought from Arts & Visual Culture Education to Art History includes the benefits of object making, the concept of choice-based art education, discussions as community builders, and museum education. Black describes these elements and how they have been used to improve disciplinary instruction in her “home discipline.” Black also describes the value of community among colleagues, the sense of connection, camaraderie, encouragement, and support that such a community provides. As the editor of this issue, I hope that reading these essays gives other Humanities instructors a similar sense of community, connection, camaraderie, and encouragement.

Last (and least) of the contributions in this issue is my work on training students in my Humanities classes to be independent learners. This essay, like others in the issue, describes how I have redesigned an approach to the class and an assignment so as to empower students to be autonomous learners. I recount that I foreground for students how they can use certain 21st century learning tools. I redesigned an element of each test to encourage students to use those tools by having them use those tools to learn about something on their own. As independent learners, students had to include what they learned on their own in the exam essay. I found this redesign helpful, and perhaps it will inspire others.

The contributions in this special pedagogy issue tacitly acknowledge many of the challenges Humanities instructors encounter today. Instead of dwelling upon or even describing those challenges, this issue provides rich, inspiring insights and examples of how to address them. These essays show how this can be an exciting historical and cultural moment for innovation and flourishing that might make our pedagogical progenitors, faculty members at the medieval University of Paris, proud and even envious.
“Science, Technology, and the Human”: Integrating STEM and the Introductory Humanities Course

Vivian Kao
Lawrence Technological University

In 2016, I worked as a visiting assistant professor in the Liberal Studies department at a private STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) university in the midwestern United States. My primary job consisted of teaching “Introduction to the Humanities,” a required course for all students, regardless of major. The course exposes students to the disciplines that make up “the humanities,” defined by the department as the studies of literature, art, history, philosophy, and cultural studies. This article gives an account of the course as a case study for the benefits and drawbacks of adapting a traditional humanities course to align with the mission and purpose of STEM universities. It suggests that integrating the humanities and STEM, rather than adapting one to the values of the other, may represent a promising direction in curriculum development.

The department in which I taught is the picture of interdisciplinarity. Faculty from the humanistic and social scientific disciplines teach introductory and elective courses in the humanities, communications, social sciences, and economics, and work together on the department’s various initiatives. The university tasks the Liberal Studies department not only with teaching the core curriculum, but with safeguarding the moral education of its budding engineers and scientists. Thus, “Introduction to the Humanities” not only trains students to analyze texts within the major genres of humanistic expression (poetry, drama, fiction, and the visual arts), it also leads them to consider the ethical ambiguities and moral paradoxes embedded within these texts.

Most importantly, however, the course asks students to make meaning from the texts they study, to delve into what these works suggest and imply,
and to use their observations to construct original and insightful arguments supported by evidence from the texts themselves. This can be a very difficult task for students at STEM-focused colleges and universities, since many of them consider themselves “not good readers” or “bad at English and stuff like it.” Having taught this course several times over my first two terms, I noticed students exhibiting a great deal of apathy and resistance to the course, usually coupled with a lack of confidence in their abilities to find insightful things to say about literature and art. In speaking with other faculty members about my observations, I found that many of them attributed these negative feelings most notably to lack of interest in the texts themselves, and indeed, the enterprise of the study of the humanities more generally. Students majoring in STEM disciplines often assume that the study of literature and art have nothing to do with them, that such courses as “Introduction to the Humanities” represent a waste of energy and a nuisance, and take away from the time and effort they need to devote to their STEM courses.

This lack of interest and, in some cases, outright hostility toward the humanities frustrated me for many reasons, most significantly because STEM majors are poised for entrance into industries whose purpose is to improve the quality of life for human beings. STEM students possess the potential, and thus the responsibility, to analyze human experience and understand the social and cultural ramifications of their future work. The study of the humanities cultivates the open-mindedness necessary to empathize with human beings different from oneself, as well as the skills necessary to analyze how humans express their needs, desires, and fears. Without a humanistic disposition and the skills of observation, analysis, and creative engagement, our students’ future work in the STEM disciplines might be innovative, but it will likely fail in actually improving our quality of life. Tired of continuously making these arguments to the students in class, I wanted the course to make its own case for why they needed to take it. I wanted the course to show that together, STEM and the liberal arts must instill in students the need to innovate for and with human beings, show them how to understand human needs and desires, and give them the technical knowledge to generate creative solutions to meet those needs and desires.

Fortunately, in winter quarter of 2016, I received a grant to redesign my sections of the course. In rethinking my objectives and pedagogy, I began by asking myself, “If the humanities as a discipline is the study of what it means to be human, then what would it mean to study the humanities at an institution devoted to science and technology?” I decided to construct the course around a single question: “How do scientific and technological advancements impact our understanding of what makes us human?” In other words, how does scientific and technological progress make us reevaluate our humanity? The purpose of the new course became the exploration of how artistic expressions
articulate the consequences of science and technology on our conceptions of what human beings are and what we might become.

I titled the course, “Introduction to the Humanities: Science, Technology, and the Human.” It comprised three separate but interrelated units—“Monsters,” “Machines,” and “Clones.” Each unit explored the anxieties and promises that technology brings to the understanding of what makes us human. The first unit, “Monsters,” comprised Aeschylus’s *Prometheus Bound* (480-430 BCE) and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818). Discussion questions ranged from text-centered (“Why do Prometheus and Victor Frankenstein want to fashion beings in their own image?”; “What qualities separate gods from humans in Aeschylus’s play, and the human characters from the monster in Shelley’s novel?”) to wide-ranging and exploratory (“Is scientific advancement beneficial or harmful to society?”; “Do human beings have the ethical capacity to facilitate scientific progress?”). Each unit culminated in a written assignment or project. For the “Monsters” unit, I asked students to write a reflective paper in which they imagined themselves as Victor Frankenstein. Each student wrote an essay about what breaches of ethical conduct they believe Mary Shelley’s scientist committed and proposed how they would have acted in the same situation. The purpose of this assignment was to get students to focus on the ethics of scientific innovation and the ability to “play god.”

In the second unit, “Machines,” we discussed the poems, manifestos, and visual art of Futurism. I chose the Futurists because of their glorification of the qualities that machines signified: speed, efficiency, modernity, technological achievement, youth, violence. We discussed how the Futurists saw airplanes, automobiles, and industrial spaces as emblems of liberation from the past. We then discussed two visual art series, Diego Rivera’s *Detroit Industry Murals* and Charles Sheeler’s *Power*, both completed in the 1930s. These works celebrate and expose the consequences of machine technology on human labor. We then moved to the major reading for this unit, Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* (1957). In our discussions of Kerouac’s novel, I asked students to consider how the automobile, and in particular, the car, served as the symbol of a generation of young men looking for freedom and a fast-paced, newly-liberated lifestyle. This novel held special importance for me because its themes resonated so closely with the image of the Midwest as the heart of the American auto industry, and with the fact that many of my students would likely be employed by that industry after graduation. We then shifted to a discussion on artificial intelligence (AI) and its differences from human intelligence. We discussed Kyle Dargan’s apocalyptic poem, “The Robots Are Coming” (2015) and watched Alex Garland’s *Ex Machina* (2015). Using these two texts, students discussed the possibilities and problems of rapidly advancing AI and how this technology forces us to confront the question of
human exceptionalism. The writing assignment for this unit asked students to write an essay in response to a question that guided their reflection on the major themes of the unit (the future, industry, power, women and technology, labor, intelligence) and to explore what our fascination with AI suggests about our perceptions of human weakness or strength.

The third and final unit of the course was structured around the theme “Clones.” I proposed to the students that the human clone represents the being that makes us question most intensely the boundaries of the “human.” We read a contemporary novel, Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go* (2005), and a contemporary play, Caryl Churchill’s *A Number* (2002), both of which depict clones who believe they are human until they discover that they are not. We paired these two main texts with non-fiction essays on genetic engineering and the “purposelessness” of biological life. During class discussions, I asked students to talk about how the main texts express the very human emotions that the clones experience and their inability to understand why they cannot be admitted into the category of the human. The culminating project for this unit asked students to design a product, process, improvement, infrastructure, or business/marketing plan that engaged in a significant and meaningful way with the “Clones” unit. I designed this project in this way because students are often asked to do such projects in their upper-level engineering courses, which are often project-based courses in which students work in groups to complete a design challenge. Students were required to submit a visual, audio, or multimedia representation of their project as well as a short essay explaining the rationale behind and significance of the project. The essay had to include specific examples from the main texts to help explain the project and its significance.

In addition to the theme and assignments, a distinctive aspect of the course was my inclusion of guest speakers. As we moved through the units of the course, guest speakers from STEM departments across the University came to give presentations touching upon something we discussed in that given unit. During our first unit, a colleague from the Department of Applied Biology led us in a discussion about what it means to be “alive” and the possibility of imparting life to non-living beings. During our second unit, a colleague from the Department of Mechanical Engineering joined us to speak on the effects of machine technology on human labor, and a colleague from the Department of Computer Science presented on the current state of AI in his discipline. My purpose for including these speakers was to generate interdisciplinary dialogue on the issues that came from our readings and enhance class discussion about the connections between technical expertise and a humanistic disposition. In the course evaluations many students said the guest speakers were their favorite part of the course because they brought a different point of view to the issues we had been discussing.
Results and Reflections

I felt the course succeeded in engaging students in the study of the humanities and familiarizing them with the kinds of questions humanists ask. Class discussions seemed livelier than the discussions I had with students in my previous “Great Books” version of the course. The majority of the students clearly did the readings on the days the readings were due and were happy to share their thoughts. In my earlier version of the course, perhaps five to six students participated in discussion out of a class of 25; but in this version, the majority of the class in both sections willingly participated, and those that did not seemed attentive and engaged in the discussions.

The students’ course evaluations, both quantitative and qualitative, reflected their interest in and active exploration of the course material. At the end of the term, I asked students to evaluate the course based on a list of fourteen course objectives, eight of which are common across all sections of “Introduction to the Humanities” taught at the University, three of which asked for feedback about specific aspects of my redesigned course, and three of which asked for feedback about specific objectives required by my grant funder. These questions were intended to assess students’ interest in the material, whether they believed the course raised important questions for future engineers and scientists, and whether the course material encouraged them to think about the relationship between the humanities and science and technology in deep, broad, and profound ways. The chart below represents a combined tally of the total responses I received from students in both sections of the course. The graphs that follow represent the data contained in the chart’s first eight course objectives statements in a more visually illuminating format.

Introduction to the Humanities: “Science, Technology and the Human”
Prof. Vivian Kao, Spring 2016
Assessment Summary – Combined Results (44 total responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Course Objectives Statement</th>
<th>Prior to Start of Course</th>
<th>End of Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>My ability to visualize and articulate the perspectives of others was/is</td>
<td>6 Outstanding</td>
<td>12 Outstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24 Good</td>
<td>30 Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12 Adequate</td>
<td>1 Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Poor</td>
<td>0 Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>My ability to engage in close readings of texts and images was/is</td>
<td>4 Outstanding</td>
<td>8 Outstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20 Good</td>
<td>33 Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17 Adequate</td>
<td>3 Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My ability to contextualize texts and images, by thinking about particular ideas in relation to relevant cultural and historical contexts was/is</td>
<td>3 Poor</td>
<td>0 Poor</td>
</tr>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>5 Outstanding 21 Good 14 Adequate 3 Poor</td>
<td>12 Outstanding 26 Good 5 Adequate 0 Poor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My ability to interpret texts and images through close reading and from multiple perspectives was/is</td>
<td>5 Outstanding 24 Good 14 Adequate 0 Poor</td>
<td>13 Outstanding 28 Good 2 Adequate 0 Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>3 Outstanding 20 Good 16 Adequate 5 Poor</td>
<td>16 Outstanding 23 Good 5 Adequate 0 Poor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My ability to examine the ethical dimensions of texts and images was/is</td>
<td>3 Outstanding 22 Good 14 Adequate 4 Poor</td>
<td>10 Outstanding 28 Good 6 Adequate 0 Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>4 Outstanding 21 Good 15 Adequate 4 Poor</td>
<td>10 Outstanding 27 Good 7 Adequate 0 Poor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My ability to frame questions concerning texts and images was/is</td>
<td>6 Outstanding 17 Good 17 Adequate 4 Poor</td>
<td>15 Outstanding 23 Good 6 Adequate 0 Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>4 Outstanding 21 Good 15 Adequate 4 Poor</td>
<td>10 Outstanding 27 Good 7 Adequate 0 Poor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My ability to construct convincing oral and written arguments in response to such questions was/is</td>
<td>6 Outstanding 17 Good 17 Adequate 4 Poor</td>
<td>15 Outstanding 23 Good 6 Adequate 0 Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Did the structure of the class around the themes of monsters, machines and clones contribute to your learning?</td>
<td>41/44 YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>4 Outstanding 21 Good 15 Adequate 4 Poor</td>
<td>10 Outstanding 27 Good 7 Adequate 0 Poor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did the website contribute to your learning?</td>
<td>32/44 YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Did the three guest speakers discussing the themes of monsters, machines and clones contribute to your learning?</td>
<td>40/44 YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Has this course met the KEEN [my grant funder’s] objective of helping you to develop curiosity about ethical, philosophical, and</td>
<td>42/44 YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
aesthetic aspects of scientific and technological concepts and problems?

13. Has this course met the KEEN objective of helping you to make connections between STEM courses and the humanities and social sciences? 42/44 YES

14. Has this course met the KEEN objective of helping you to develop creative solutions to scientific and technological problems by examining cultural, social, and artistic dimensions? 41/44 YES

Course Objectives Statement 1:
"My ability to visualize and articulate the perspectives of others was/is..."
**Course Objectives Statement 2:**

"My ability to engage in close readings of texts and images was/is..."

![Bar chart showing measurements for different categories before and after the course.](chart1)

**Course Objectives Statement 3:**

"My ability to contextualize texts and images, by thinking about particular ideas in relation to relevant cultural and historical contexts was/is..."

![Bar chart showing measurements for different categories before and after the course.](chart2)
Course Objectives Statement 4:
"My ability to interpret texts and images through close reading and from multiple perspectives was/is..."

Course Objectives Statement 5:
"My ability to examine the ethical dimensions of texts and images was/is..."
Course Objectives Statement 6:
"My ability to frame questions concerning texts and images was/is..."

Course Objectives Statement 7:
"My ability to assess divergent responses to such questions was/is..."
Of the fourteen qualitative comments I received, eleven were generally positive about the course. Most of these positive comments addressed the relevance of the material to the students’ majors and/or future careers in the engineering and scientific fields. Qualitative comments included the following:

“[Prof. Kao] related the material to the engineering demographic well and I greatly appreciated that effort. She made it interesting and explained why we were reading the texts and discussing the material….The liberal arts are important classes and [this class] made that connection well and I think most people are leaving this class with a much deeper appreciation of the liberal arts.”

“None of the work that was assigned ever felt like ‘busy work’ and everything was worthwhile to complete. On class days I even looked forward to the discussions that would be happening later that day.” This student also wrote that this class was a welcome surprise to a course that Kettering students “dread.”

“[Prof. Kao] made the course content interesting for a non-liberal arts major.”

“I enjoyed this course and thought the selected readings applied to other subjects I was studying.”
“I really enjoyed Professor Kao’s new course relating the humanities back to technology. The course structure itself was great because as engineers we typically aren’t too interested in the liberal arts side of life; however, she generated a lot of interest in this because she explained from the very beginning how this relates to our real engineering jobs. We had some fantastic discussions on ethics and technological advancement that definitely relate to things that we would see in the workplace…. She challenged us to think about our role in society as engineers from a different point of view, and that is priceless as we go into the workplace and actually make our mark on society itself.”

(Four of the fourteen written comments also specifically mention the guest speakers as one of the best features of the course.)

My tailoring of the course to a science and technology theme seemed to engage the students effectively, piquing their interest in the humanities and encouraging them to see the relevance of the humanities in their future careers as engineers. However, as the last student comment makes clear, the course did not challenge the primacy of science and technology in their own understanding of what they plan to do in their lives. I wanted the course to make the argument that all intellectual endeavors form a part of “doing the humanities,” in the sense that anyone who studies anything seriously studies the phenomena and improvement of human lives. The students at my university might study the humanities from an engineering perspective, while others may study the humanities from an artistic, health sciences, or philosophical perspective. But we all “do” the humanities. I wanted the class to argue for the primacy of the humanities in all education, STEM being no exception. But, as the last comment articulates, the course read to my students as one that “related the humanities back to technology,” to their future jobs and workplaces, as if the humanities were useful only as part of their vocational preparation. The humanities remained secondary in their minds not only to the scientific and technological disciplines, but to their occupational education as well.

Curious about how my course might fit into larger conversations about the humanities as either helpful job training or the umbrella covering all intellectual investigation, I took a look at some of the articles, opinion pieces, position statements, and editorials that have emerged in the wake of recent political attacks against the humanities in favor of the STEM disciplines. Curiously, the authors of these pieces have taken both positions in arguing for more respect and funding for literature and the arts.

Most articles take a position similar to my students’ and emphasize the usefulness of the humanities in helping students obtain good STEM-related
jobs. The editors of *Scientific American*, for instance, expressed their support for the humanities by making the “link between innovation and the liberal arts”: “the student who graduates after four years of pursuing physics *plus* poetry may, in fact, be just the kind of job candidate sought out by employers.” Deborah Fitzgerald’s *Boston Globe* op-ed also stresses the importance of the humanities in a STEM curriculum for helping students develop skills for innovating new products. Students interviewed for a *USA Today* article said they appreciated that the humanities helped them to develop the communication skills necessary to “attain success in their respective fields”; and Neal Koblitz suggested in his recent *Chronicle* article that instead of arguing for the importance of the humanities in “purely humanistic terms—the importance of educating the whole person, the need for a broadly informed citizenry, and so on,” we should emphasize that “a broad background in the humanities is likely to give them [students] a tremendous advantage in their career.”

There are others, however, many of them scientists, who continue to advocate for a humanities education as an end in itself. John Kaag and David O’Hara suggest that the humanities “should not be judged by the metrics of hard science”—such as productivity, efficiency, the ability to produce results—because part of its reason for existence is to question and critique those very objectives. More radically still, Kira Hamman states that we should not ask the humanities to be directly applicable to anything, much less be obviously linked to economic gain: “It is not true that a liberal arts education decreases a person’s earning potential, but so what if it were? […] Like set theory, singing Handel and writing haiku are ends in themselves because they are integral parts of human culture and we are humans.”

Despite the good intentions of all the authors, both of these positions—the humanities as a means to an end, or the end itself—leave me unsatisfied. We are humans indeed, and we need exposure to the humanities and STEM disciplines to become the best versions of ourselves. Perhaps my course failed to achieve its original objective of arguing for the primacy of the humanities because neither exaltation nor adaptation of the humanities in relation to STEM represent any true integration of “the two cultures.” We might do better to find some middle ground by directing our attention toward the intersections between STEM and the humanities in hopes of bringing them together. Conversations and projects already exist that take this middle path. The National Endowment for the Humanities recently launched a series of Google+ Hangouts that introduce NEH-funded grants with significant STEM components. The broadcasts show how STEM and the humanities work together to accomplish shared goals, such as preserving historical artifacts and teaching students about Galileo. Such initiatives argue neither for the humanities as an end in itself nor as a means to a scientific or technological...
outcome, but as half the training of a whole person, half the make-up of a
whole human mind. We might do well to become generalists again, but in a
way that targets our individual areas of specialization and interest. Julio M.
Ottino and Gary Saul Morson propose that perhaps we need “an educational
system that merges humanities and sciences, creating whole-brain engineers
and scientifically inspired humanists.” Ottino and Morson suggest developing
curricula that require graduate students in the sciences to take courses on
literature and philosophy, and vice versa. Such curricula would equip graduate
students in all disciplines to bring the full gamut of intellectual history and
thinking practices to bear in developing projects specific to their area of
specialization. Eric Hayot argues that undergraduate courses, too, could take
up a single question, or even a single word—“poverty,” for instance—and
draw upon texts from the humanistic, social scientific, and hard scientific
disciplines to investigate it.

Reforming our curricula to accommodate such capacious pathways of
exploration would require major shifts in the way we think about what we do
in the classroom. My “Introduction to the Humanities: Science, Technology,
and the Human” might do well to become “Seminar I: Progress.” Such a shift
in pedagogy and methodology would require creativity and willingness to
reform long-standing assumptions about college curricula. More importantly, it
would require faculty to retrain ourselves, co-teach courses, and collaborate in
significant ways. Such curricula would both downplay and emphasize the
notion of “expertise”—we would find ourselves both humbled and validated
in our collective pursuit of knowledge. Questions of scale, skill, and
assessment are inevitable but not insurmountable. Curricula that fully
integrates the scientific and humanistic disciplines may provide new
possibilities not only for teaching and learning, but for scholarship and
research as well. Such curricula might prove the best argument for the primacy
and adaptability of STEM and the humanities, and make a case for policy that
reflects their equal value.

Notes

1 There have been many recent attacks on the humanities in favor of STEM. Those
that made the headlines include remarks made by Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin,
who suggested in January 2016 that students majoring in French literature should not
receive public funds to pursue their education; the decrying of gender studies by the
Governor of North Carolina, Patrick McCrory, and his insistence that a college
education end in a job, Florida Senator Marco Rubio’s remarks on desiring “more
welders and fewer philosophers,” and Florida Governor Rick Scott’s denunciation of
anthropologists. Patricia Cohen, “A Rising Call to Promote STEM Education and Cut
Liberal Arts Funding,” The New York Times, February 21, 2016,

3 Deborah K. Fitzgerald, “At MIT, the humanities are just as important as STEM,” The Boston Globe, April 30, 2014, https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2014/04/30/mit-humanities-are-just-important-stem/ZOArg1PqEFy2wm4pue56I/story.html.


8 The phrase “the two cultures” was coined by C. P. Snow in his 1959 Rede Lecture to signify the chasm between the scientific, mathematical, and engineering disciplines and the humanities. C. P. Snow, The Two Cultures (1959), Cambridge University Press, 1998.


The Body Project
Katheryn Wright
Champlain College

The Core Division offers an interdisciplinary, scaffolded general education curriculum in liberal learning to complement the professionally-focused majors at Champlain College. The first year of the Core focuses on the self and community, the second year on critical approaches to the Western tradition, and the third on global studies. First year students are required to take “Concepts of the Self” and “Rhetoric of Self” in the fall and “Concepts of Community” and “Rhetoric of Community” in the spring. Students take these courses in cohorts, meaning the same set of students are enrolled in “Concepts” and “Rhetoric” courses at the same time, share the same instructor, and have activities designed to intentionally bridge these subject areas.1

During the second year, students have more choice. They pick two out of four courses each semester. One of the fall-semester courses is called “Bodies,” an interdisciplinary course I proposed and developed as part of the design team in the 2012-2013 academic year. For a brief introduction, here is the description in Champlain College’s course catalogue:

From Neolithic fertility goddesses to contemporary piercings and tattoos, human cultures are inextricably entangled with ideas about the body. Perceptions and experiences of the body influence ethical debates about media representation, healthcare, and biotechnology. This course explores “embodiment” in the Western tradition: How do we know ourselves through our physical bodies? How are different types of bodies represented in our arts and media? And, how does the body influence the way we think about the world?2
The body is the central focus of this course, exploring the nature of perception, the historical formations of cultural difference, and the impact of social norms across disciplinary perspectives including sociology, philosophy, history, and communications. Different sections have focused on a broad range of topics including body image, aging bodies, dance, haptics, the posthuman, the concept of beauty, incarcerated bodies, and bodies in transition. The Body Project is a key aspect of this course across all sections, an assignment that involves several components including a cumulative exhibition of student work complete with a selfie post that acts as a creative form of self-assessment. This article overviews the different components of the Body Project, an assignment that asks students to engage in important questions about the meaning of embodiment through a combination of experiential learning, qualitative research design, and contextual analysis. While this project was developed specifically for the “Bodies” curriculum at Champlain, the scaffolded format and emphasis on collaboration can be applied in a broad range of humanities-based, interdisciplinary courses.

Every course at Champlain College including “Bodies” has a few shared components: a set of outcomes shared across all of the sections of a given course, a shared digital repository and introductory reader called Bodies: A Digital Companion developed using Scalar, and what we call the common assignment. Over the past ten years of the Core Division’s evolution, the common assignment has morphed into a project designed to engage students in integrative, interdisciplinary approaches to the humanities and liberal arts framed through the lens of their particular section/course. The Body Project is the common assignment for “Bodies,” meaning that it is implemented across up to ten different sections of the same course every fall. The assignment is designed in part to assess our shared course outcomes, which are as follows:

- Articulate conceptions of “embodiment” and the role they play in the construction of knowledge
- Analyze socio-cultural expectations about physical difference in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, age, and ability using a variety of media and genres
- Situate cultural representations and practices related to the body in the multiple contexts of the Western tradition
- Research and analyze ethical debates about the modification and manipulation of bodies

Recognizing every instructor designs their own version of the course based on different themes or topics, each of us has the opportunity to craft their own version of the assignment based on the general description available in Bodies: A Digital Companion. My summary of the Body Project refers primarily to the general description, recognizing that the project design is a collaborative
endeavor on behalf of many instructors who have participated in its implementation for several iterations of the course.\(^5\)

The Body Project is loosely designed around the theory and methodologies of phenomenological research. I say loosely because the goal is not for students to replicate the research design of a phenomenological scholar. Students come to learn how “phenomena,” or the multiple dimensions of lived experience, is something that can be studied using different techniques.\(^6\) For many of our undergraduates, the idea that one can critically learn about and examine what we call an “embodied experience” is relatively new within their educational framework. Ostensibly, all experience is embodied. However, we have come to differentiate an embodied experience as one that problematizes, highlights, or draws attention to the body and embodiment. The Body Project’s design offers a pedagogical twist on experiential learning, making the embodied experience itself into the object of study in addition to using a student’s own hands-on experience to learn through reflective practice.\(^7\) The assignment asks students to define, identify, isolate, examine, describe, summarize, and critically reflect on an embodied experience rather than use experience to facilitate learning about a particular subject or practicing a specific skill.

**The Proposal**

Perhaps the most difficult part of the Body Project is determining the parameters of what the embodied experience should be, and helping each student figure out the techniques/strategies they plan to use in order to study that experience. The proposal offers the opportunity for students to do three things. First, every student must choose the embodied experience they hope to study. An embodied experience may be as simple as walking to campus instead of driving for a week, using a non-dominant hand, or getting a tattoo. The may also be more complex, such as the study of facial recognition technology or mapping the accessibility routes on campus. After figuring out their embodied experience, every student must learn about and decide on what technique(s) they could use to study that embodied experience. Some of the techniques we outline include conducting one-on-one interviews, focus groups, participant observation, collecting information using surveys, the analysis of a text featuring their particular embodied experience, role-playing, and/or performance art. In the case of the student who studied facial recognition technology, they combined different methodological approaches by conducting a survey about the social acceptability of facial recognition technology on campus or wearing a faceless chrome mask for a day as an experiment in anonymity. A student interested in studying body art might not necessarily get a tattoo, but instead conduct a series of in-depth interviews with tattoo artists. In the course of the sixteen-week semester, most sections allot
two or three weeks for the implementation phase for a student to study their particular embodiment. Because of this abbreviated time frame, a consideration of scope is also important for many of the proposed projects.

As one might imagine, the biggest hurdle comes from students who want to use role-playing as their primary technique in order to study a particular experience. There are students who want to shift their diets, start an exercise regime, get a tattoo, implant a microchip in their hand, and use a wheelchair. Each one of these ideas carries with it a number of ethical considerations from the possibility of personal harm to the political consequences of appropriating an identity. Aligning with these concerns, the third thing the proposal asks students to do is engage with the ethics of their own attempt at a phenomenological research design. We, as a class, work to determine what the shared set of standards should be for the individual projects. The same process happens across the different sections of “Bodies,” with instructors forming an informal version of an internal review board. Thinking through the ethical implications of their proposal is the first time many of our second-year students have considered how principles and standards inform their own actions as researchers. Rather than shy away from embodied experiences that may seem controversial, instructors have come to use these proposals as opportunities to unearth and critically examine the range of ethical debates about the modification and manipulation of different bodies.

**Research Notes and Discussion Essay**

After the proposal, each instructor must guide their sections through the process of collecting information about a particular embodied experience. The process of collecting research notes is very difficult, especially for students who have never had the opportunity to collect and analyze data in a research methods course. Because of their lack of experience, we work through strategies on how to implement the different techniques students proposed. For instance, we discuss how one might go about interviewing a classmate about a topic that may be uncomfortable to talk about in a large group setting. The class examines what it means to be a participant observer, or what happens when your expectations about what you will learn through role-playing isn’t what you thought. These conversations offer insight into what research looks like in the interdisciplinary humanities apart from textual analysis, especially when they learn about the history, assumptions, and biases that are a part of the specific methods they chose to use. It also works to demonstrate the utility of this work to an audience of students who are more job oriented, recognizing they will more than likely need to use qualitative research methodologies at some point in their careers.

The discussion essay asks students to examine their research notes and draw connections to concepts covered in class. The specific prompts for the
discussion essay vary across sections, but most ask students to consider a combination of the following questions: What are assumptions you made about your embodied experience before you began your research? What were some of the surprises/difficulties you had while collecting information? Did any new ethical issues arise you hadn’t previously considered? What did you discover about your embodied experience? What did you learn about yourself? What questions do you have after you completed your research? These questions help students dig into their research notes and interrogate their own observations through the critical lenses offered by their coursework. In addition, students are asked to use in-class concepts (e.g. embodiment, stigma, gender performativity, mind-body dualism, identity, cultural difference, social norm) to interrogate their embodied experience. The prompts in the discussion essay aligns with the first two outcomes of the “Bodies” course, first by asking students to articulate different conceptions of “embodiment” through the identification and analysis of a particular embodied experience. Second, the discussion essay invites students to examine socio-cultural expectations about different bodies by applying the concepts and arguments they have learned in the course.

**Contextual Analysis**

The next part of the Body Project is asking each student to re-examine their embodied perspective by placing it in a historical and cultural context. Depending on the instructor, this part of the Body Project takes different forms. Some instructors wrap the contextual analysis as a required component of the discussion essay. Others require a separate paper or presentation. Still others require the contextual analysis to be completed as part of or in addition to the proposal before a student goes into the field for their phenomenological research.

After they complete their discussion essays, I ask students to compile an annotated bibliography of sources that examine their embodied experience from both historical and cross-cultural perspectives. For example, if a student focused their embodied experience on aging, they need to find information about the perception of aging at different time periods and in different places. Or, if they chose to examine yoga as an embodied experience, they need to research where the practice originated and how it was appropriated by the U.S. fitness industry. I find separating out contextual analysis from the more reflective work of the discussion essay highlights for students the different modes of thinking and research that are required to do interdisciplinary research. I want them to recognize that conducting a series of online surveys about vegetarianism, for instance, offers a different—and partial—perspective on their topic as opposed to examining its historical and cultural contexts.
Using the annotated bibliography, my students create a PechaKucha presentation focused on outlining the multiple contexts that inform their embodied experience. A PechaKucha slideshow typically consists of a presentation that consists of twenty slides, with the discussion of each slide lasting no more than twenty seconds per slide. I find this specific format useful for students because of its emphasis on image over text. Along with the format, designing a slideshow to engage the audience coupled with the time constraint helps them conceptualize the presentation as an active performance rather than a passive display of their research. The goal of the slideshow is to review research from the discussion essay and provide relevant contextual information about the student’s embodied experience to the class, echoing the third outcome for the course regarding the ability to situate cultural representations and practices related to the body within multiple contexts. Students include slides about their phenomenological research/discussion, the multiple contexts informing their embodied experience that they researched for their annotated bibliographies, and conclude by addressing the following question: How does learning about the historical and cultural contexts add to, reinforce, or change the conclusions you made about the embodied experience in the discussion essay? This question asks students to examine their own findings, again, in relation to additional information they have learned about their embodied experience throughout the course of the semester.

Production of a Cultural Artifact

After each individual student completes their phenomenological research, discussion essay, and contextual analysis, they join together to form teams in order to produce what we call a cultural artifact. In my own class, the PechaKucha presentations offer students the opportunity to learn about and take notes about individual projects. Afterwards, we examine common themes and shared elements they identified. These shared themes/elements are what we use to form teams for this next step in the Body Project. In a group of four or five students, they work to create a cultural artifact that makes meaningful connections between each of their individual projects. Examples of cultural artifacts range from short performances and public artworks to grant proposals, manifestos, computer games, social media campaigns, digital maps, and documentary videos. Instructors ask students to integrate the different contexts, keywords, themes, theoretical frameworks, and ethical considerations that inform their embodied experiences through the cultural artifact. The group is asked to create something that speaks to their deeper understanding of bodies and embodiment they’ve developed throughout the course of the semester. The cultural artifact needs to make a substantive observation about embodiment, and be engaging for its intended audience.
In addition to working in small groups, some instructors choose to undertake a single project for the entire class of approximately twenty-four students. One colleague worked with her students to make a documentary about beauty standards, for example. Others ask students to focus their cultural artifacts on a common theme such as health practices, which aligns with topics explored within a given section. Instructors also have different strategies on how to form teams. Some choose to group students together according to their embodied experiences while others randomize the process, grouping students together whose projects may or may not have any obvious connections to one another. I find the latter strategy more effective as students can easily get hung up on the more obvious relationships (“All of our projects are about food!”) instead of examining deeper connections (“Our projects all seem to be about the presentation of self, but from different perspectives.”)

As students figure out what they want to create for their cultural artifact, they rehearse for their classmates their methodological approaches, research questions, outcomes, conclusions, historical examples, and cross-cultural differences about each embodied experience. Once they find a common theme, they must play together to translate that commonality into something tangible for a specific audience. This collaborative process allows students to recognize how their liberal learning has the potential to inform the creation of video games, marketing campaigns, etc. This recognition is important for us at Champlain College, where our students are all in professionally-focused majors that tend to take center stage and can sometimes obscure the role of the humanities in addressing complex problems in their specific fields.

For a specific example of this collaborative process in practice, one semester I worked with one of my colleagues at Champlain in Interaction Design. Al Larsen was teaching a studio course in the field of interaction design, an advanced course for majors in creative media. Part of his class involved learning how to work with clients, a critical skill for media makers and digital artists. The different groups in my “Bodies” class became his student's clients. For their cultural artifact, each group wrote a proposal for a large-scale interactive digital artwork. In order to help students brainstorm, the design class created an introductory video explaining what they could do and provided examples of different large-scale interactive artworks. My students submitted working drafts for the design students who in turn offered written feedback. Once the bodies class turned in their final proposals, the design students again offered feedback and picked one proposal to implement. The final piece was a large screen display with a visual feedback mechanism almost like a digital mirror. When someone approached the screen, they saw a shadow outline of their body. Replacing their own reflection was symbolic imagery relating to a combination of food and gender norms, reflecting the connections the group focused on for their discussion essays and contextual analyses. This collaboration helped the design students learn how to work with
clients unfamiliar with technological constraints and allowed my students to envision a cultural artifact beyond their own technical capabilities. At the same time, the collaboration between our classes unearthed important questions about the relationship between bodies and screen technologies alongside the nature of interactivity.

Exhibition of Student Work

The final component of the Body Project is the Bodies Exhibition, a public exhibition of student work at the end of the semester where students display their cultural artifacts. Recognizing that the Body Project is being implemented across multiple sections of the same course but in distinctive ways, the goal of the Bodies Exhibition is to bring our sections together to juxtapose the similarities and differences of each unique approach to the Body Project. The exhibition includes all of the cultural artifacts from every section of “Bodies.” It is open to our community so students enrolled in other classes in addition to faculty, staff, and administrators can attend. The exhibition offers students the opportunity to pitch their work, describing the connections they found and how they translated those connections into a cultural artifact. For instructors, it offers the opportunity for students to examine each other’s artifacts on public display. Instructors can measure student learning through experiential learning, where everyone is performing or explaining their cultural artifact to a real audience of their peers and professors. This type of project design experiments with a dynamic, interactive format to assess achievement of course outcomes. Students are asked by each other (rather than designing a project solely for their instructor) to analyze different embodiments and, at the same time, interrogate with each other different methodological approaches and contexts informing a multitude of embodied experiences.

The Bodies Exhibition is organized like a gallery opening or poster session, where students set up their cultural artifact so instructors and students can walk through the exhibit to look at the displays. Because of this approach, all students are required to have some type of title card and a one-page statement of purpose (or artist’s statement) on display alongside their cultural artifact. The statement explains what their cultural artifact is, and why they chose to make it. They also are prompted to draw connections between their cultural artifacts and concepts from the class. Here, students are asked to examine the cultural artifact as something apart from but inspired by their individual projects. In addition, the statement addresses ethical considerations that underpin their cultural artifact’s creation.

At the Bodies Exhibition, all of the instructors have developed a low-stakes means to develop reflective practice. While at the exhibition, students need to take a selfie snapshot of themselves with a project made by somebody not in their specific section and post it to a discussion forum. Accompanying
their selfie, students need to write a paragraph about what drew them to that particular project and how it connects to something they did in their own class. In my sections, the selfie becomes the starting-point for our final class discussion.

The Body Project is a signature component not only of the course within which it is embedded, “Bodies,” but of the Core Division’s approach to general education. While the curricular organization of the Core Division at Champlain College plays a role in the implementation of this project, there are two important aspects that can be applied to humanities teaching as a whole. First, collaboration between instructors is critical in its design, where instructors offer feedback to each other at early stages that leads to the collective organizing of a large-scale event. The collaborative process is, in truth, more important for us as instructors than the actual production of a cultural artifact. The collaboration required for instructors and students to make the Body Project work creates unique opportunities for us to learn from each other. It is a small albeit successful attempt at helping to defuse some of the boundaries between instructors, students in our separate sections, and different programs at Champlain College.

Second, the Body Project’s success comes from how it is scaffolded from a relatively small, individual assignment that asks students to examine an embodied experience to an exhibition that involves more than two-hundred students. In each step, students have the opportunity to examine concepts from multiple perspectives and participate in the creation of original research using several research methodologies. This framework can be transferred into many different types of humanities-based courses. The project begins with identifying an experience tied to the course. Then, students are asked to choose different methods to study that experience. Contextual analysis plays a critical role in this process, where students need to situate the experience not only in specific times and places, but across different disciplinary perspectives and approaches. Finally, they identify connections and build bridges across different experiences through the collaborative creation of a cultural artifact.

Interdisciplinary humanities, broadly speaking, asks us—no, demands us—to examine culture and society from different viewpoints. For students being introduced to interdisciplinary research methods, this work can be overwhelming. The collaborative and scaffolded design of the Body Project begins with a specific experience to anchor this research, but then asks students to examine that experience using a variety of methodological tools and theoretical approaches. The cultural artifact and exhibition invite students to hold onto and acknowledge those differences rather than collapse them into a single argument or thesis. In so doing, the Body Project moves more towards a rhizomatic approach to project design. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* explains how the rhizome “is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and
An experience is isolated, or detached, but is then connected and modified through each step. That experience transforms again through collaboration. The Bodies Exhibition provides yet another entryway and, in part because it’s situated at the conclusion of the semester, an exit point. The established structure of the proposal, research notes, discussion essay, and contextual analysis that leads to the cultural artifact and public exhibition allows for a degree of flexibility and openness where students can experiment with interdisciplinarity without getting lost along the way.

Notes

5 The initial design of “Bodies” was developed on a collaborative team that included Dr. Rowshan Nemazee and Dr. Steve Wehmeyer. Instructors for “Bodies” that have shaped the evolution of the Body Project include Dr. Kristin Novotny, Erik Shonstrom, Dr. Betsy Allen-Pennebaker, Kelly Thomas, Dr. Patricia DeRocher, Dr. Brian Murphy, Faith Yacubian, Dr. Adele Holoch, and Maggie Hunter.
Arousing the Eyes: Charles Darwin
Bernadette McNary-Zak
Rhodes College

Introduction

At the age of 22, Charles Darwin (1809-1882) was an aspiring naturalist embarking on what would prove to be the study abroad opportunity of a lifetime. His five-year voyage on the Beagle supplied a formative introduction to areas of study that would sustain his vigorous imagination over the course of his entire career. Exposure to geological formations, to biodiversity, and to cultural distinctiveness stretched his intellectual and empathetic capacities. The habits formed and the humanistic concerns weighed during this period indelibly shaped his worldview, and carried into his production of what remain some of the most profound ideas not only of the nineteenth century but to this day.

Darwin was a widely read and fiercely self-reflective human being. A critic of dogmatism and a prolific letter writer, he engaged ideas productively, he sought knowledge voraciously from a wide range of sources, and he employed multi-disciplinary perspectives to many lines of inquiry. Moreover, he observed the world, and its human and non-human inhabitants, with an aroused eye, enamored by the beauty and the horror, by the integrity and the adaptation, by the minuitae and the enormous. Observation was simultaneously a means and an end for Darwin: it was both a way of knowing and an object of knowledge.

Our undergraduate humanities students have varying degrees of familiarity with the life and work of Darwin. While they typically know a fair bit about his ideas, they are often less familiar with the biographical contours of his life. Rarely have they read any of Darwin’s works in depth. In order to add to their knowledge about Darwin and his ideas, and to introduce the significant role of observation in Darwin’s thought, I designed a three-class-period teaching
module around these learning objectives centered on mirroring, to some extent, his own process of reading observing, and writing.

Reading, Observing, Writing (Repeat)

For the first class session, students read selections from one of Darwin’s earliest publications, the *Journal of Researches (Voyage of the Beagle).* Spending more time on land than on sea, Darwin’s writings offer an engrossing read for our students. Filled with detailed descriptions of land and rock formations, of bird, plant and animal life, and of human characteristics and behaviors, students are frequently caught unaware by their level of interest in Darwin’s musings, comparisons, and anecdotes. His writing is permeated by elements of surprise and wonder; describing a day in Brazil, he writes: “The day has passed delightfully. Delight itself, however, is a weak term to express the feelings of a naturalist who, for the first time, has been wandering by himself in a Brazilian forest.” Later, at the top of a peak in Rio, he recollects, “At this elevation the landscape has attained its most brilliant tint; and every form, every shade, so completely surpasses in magnificence all that the European has ever beheld in his own country, that he knows not how to express his feelings.” Consistently engaged in an internal dialogue with others like Charles Lyell and Alexander von Humboldt whose work informs his own, Darwin interrogates prevailing ideas and conclusions through his own observations and experiences, occasionally testing and advancing his own contributions. This applies, as well, when he turns his attentions to the slaves he encounters. Situating Darwin’s reflections in the contexts of British imperialism, conquest, and abolitionist efforts stresses pressing ethical, political, and economic debates. Here, too, Darwin is no mere bystander. Writing as a form of thinking, of identifying a problem and parsing its features, demonstrates how Darwin worked. His entries attest to the gradual development of his own naturalist and humanist ideas; changes in the caliber of his observation increasingly influence the quality and style of his writing.

Our discussion of selections in the first half of the *Voyage of the Beagle* in the first class session is then followed by an observation exercise at the local zoo in the second class session. Students undertake this exercise with some appreciation for the ways in which Darwin valued close, careful observation as a way of making meaning. The zoo observation exercise is designed to create a forum for students to regard Darwin’s emphasis by considering another—and our own—species from an alternative perspective. The exercise takes approximately an hour, and it consists of two components that are completed on-site: the observation and the written reflection [see Appendix One]. The observation entails the silent, solitary, uninterrupted watching of one of the primate species for a thirty-minute period; students are instructed to focus their attention on the primate species, on fellow visitors, and on the...
surrounding environment in a comfortable manner. They are asked to consider the behaviors and interactions between members of the primate species, as well behaviors and interactions between human beings and members of the primate species. Students take written notes on a series of guided questions after the observation period; these questions are generative and direct descriptive, comparative, and explanatory responses. The students then compose a one-paragraph “journal entry” about the observation in the spirit of the entries we have read from the *Voyage of the Beagle*. They are encouraged to frame their “journal entry” in the manner and style employed by Darwin. Students know that their paragraphs will be circulated and discussed in the following class session; upon completion, they submit their paragraphs which are then typed up in a handout that preserves anonymity.

For the third class session, we return to the classroom. In preparation, students read selections from the second half of the *Voyage of the Beagle* as well as very brief selections from some of Darwin’s later works. We begin the class session by undertaking a structured review of the previous session’s zoo observation exercise; our initial discussion centers on the act of observation, on the role of observer, and on the object of observation. Shifting to the students’ “journal entries,” we look closely at elements of style, content and voice in each piece as an autonomous work and in relation to entries from the *Voyages of the Beagle*. Applying student insights, we pursue those previously identified issues and themes as they appear in selections from the second half of the *Voyages of the Beagle*, and in the assigned selections from Darwin’s later works, giving notice to growth and development.

**Outcomes and Assessment**

This teaching module provides a venue for recognizing Charles Darwin’s advancement of naturalist and humanist ideas by focusing on his, and the students’, powers of observation and written reflection. The module adds to the students’ knowledge about Darwin and introduces the significant role of observation in Darwin’s thought; these outcomes are connected to the broader learning objectives of the course. In the first class period of the module, attention to close reading skills and exegesis of selected passages stretches interpretive and imaginative capacities, and raises questions about how Darwin confronts and negotiates uncertainty, otherness, and curiosity; by association, the students are challenged to ask similar questions of themselves.

These broader issues then ground and structure the second class period of the module where the student learning outcomes are located in the zoo observation exercise. The act of observation requires students to disengage from routine; even those familiar with the zoo tend to experience it differently through the exercise. This reaction is due, in large part, to the students’ welcome exposure to observation as interpretation. When students undertake
the written portion of the exercise, they are given space to reflect on the objects of observation (primate and human), and the impact of observation on self-understanding. Specifically, by applying an interpretation of Darwin’s entries to the structure and content of their own one-paragraph written reflection on their observation, students demonstrate cognitive learning; the application requires prior close engagement with the *Voyage of the Beagle* and competency rests on previous analysis of the text. The students’ heightened awareness of their own attitudes and behaviors necessitates consideration of values and perceptions, operating assumptions, and unfounded conclusions, thereby demonstrating an affective impact on student learning.

As we review their “journal entries” together at the opening of the third class period of the module, we unpack the challenges students addressed as they tried to record their own observations in Darwin’s structural framework. Then we turn to content and ask, how is this paragraph in the spirit of Darwin’s observations? Constructive and formative responses then form the basis for a discussion of each paragraph. Our review typically calls us to think further about how Darwin’s writings in the *Voyage of the Beagle* were a means of processing his observations, and how these observations then continued to inform the development of ideas in his later writings. Students frequently recognize how observation and writing influenced a continuous cycle, as a life-long learning process, in Darwin.

**Conclusion**

Teaching and learning in the humanities frequently requires a capacity to labor, like Charles Darwin, across disciplinary boundaries. The teaching module presented here seeks to recognize and to model Darwin’s example in a way that resonates with all students regardless of prior knowledge, level of interest, or learning style. Study of the life and writings of Darwin offers an opportunity for our students to read closely, to evaluate thoughtfully, to observe intentionally, and to write reflectively. In this way, students are engaged in a learning process intended to supplement their knowledge and to deepen their understanding of Darwin and the development of his thought.⁸

**Notes**

¹ This module can be modified easily to suit an instructor’s particular context and course by adjusting the number of class days as well as the length and number of reading assignments. Consideration should be given to timing and placement in the context of the course. Furthermore, student misconceptions and/or apprehensions are often about the implications of Darwin’s ideas; rather than begin with these, this module suggests that Darwin’s ideas are fruitfully approached by situating them in the
context of his life and work. In other words, in this module how Darwin thought is as important as what he thought.


The first class session reading assignment includes the introduction, preface, and chapters I-II. In various iterations, I have also included Jerry Adler, “Charles Darwin: Evolution of a Scientist,” *Newsweek*, November 28, 2005, 50-58 and David Quammen, “Darwin’s First Clues,” *National Geographic* (February 2009), 34-55.

3 Darwin, *Voyage of the Beagle*, 50.

4 Ibid., 69.

5 See, for example, his account of a ferry crossing in *Voyage of the Beagle*, 62-63 (April 14, 1832).

6 On occasion, it is not possible for our entire class to attend the city zoo together either during the class session or at another scheduled time; the city zoo is within walking distance of our campus and offers both a discount rate and a free entry period for local students and residents ([http://www.memphiszoo.org/planyourvisit](http://www.memphiszoo.org/planyourvisit)). Primates at the Memphis Zoo are housed separately by species; over the years represented species have included macaques, gibbons, siamang, orangutans, colobus monkeys, lowland gorillas, bonobos, and baboons.


The third class session reading assignment includes chapter XXIII. Later works may include brief selections from *On the Origin of Species*, *The Descent of Man*, and the autobiography.

8 I am grateful to those students over the years with whom I have read and thought about the works of Charles Darwin. I am also grateful to my colleague, Prof. Michael Collins, in the Department of Biology at Rhodes College for our conversations around the activity described in this essay.

9 Special thanks to Professor Michael Collins (Rhodes College) for his generosity and for sharing his expertise in helping me to think about the construction of this assignment.

Appendix One

Name_______________________________________________

Memphis Zoo Observation

Over the past few weeks, our readings have given us the opportunity to think about various forms of individual and collective human thought and behavior. We’ve considered operating assumptions about human nature, the use of reason and the limits of knowledge. We’ve asked what people have valued and why. Our work has centered on three basic modes of inquiry: reading, writing and discussion. Our study of selections from the writings of Charles Darwin provides an additional opportunity to extend and expand our thinking on these topics, and to introduce observation as
another mode of inquiry. Darwin valued close, careful observation as a way of making meaning. Today, we'll try to get a small glimpse at how observation can serve this purpose and maybe see another—or our own-species from another perspective.

**Observation** [ob·ser·va·tion], noun

1. the act of observing or the state of being observed
2. a comment or remark
3. detailed examination of phenomena prior to analysis, diagnosis, or interpretation: *the patient was under observation*
4. the facts learned from observing
5. an obsolete word for **observance**
6. **nautical**
   a. a sight taken with an instrument to determine the position of an observer relative to that of a given heavenly body
   b. the data so taken

World English Dictionary

**DIRECTIONS:**
Select one primate species to observe (bonobos, gorillas, orangutans, chimpanzees, howlers). Go to that section of the zoo and observe that species uninterrupted for no less than thirty minutes. Make sure that you are comfortable. While you observe, consider the interactions between members of this species, as well as interactions between human beings and this species.

At the end of the observation period make a list of noteworthy features (descriptive and/or analytic) about the species behaviors during this period. To what extent do the primate behaviors compare to human behaviors? How do you account for the way(s) human beings interact with the primate species observed? Record your responses on the reverse side of this handout. Then, compose a one paragraph “journal entry” about your observations in the spirit of those we have read from the *Voyages of the Beagle*. This paragraph will be circulated and discussed in class; anonymity will be preserved.

**Keep in mind:** Observation is done individually. You should try to select a primate species that is not being observed by another student (this may not be possible). No cell phone or laptop use is permitted.
Introduction

In this essay, I highlight some defining features of a two-course university-level Elementary Latin sequence and examine the impetus for its redesign. The innovation itself came about in response to three observations: first, that on the whole, students are not keenly aware that they should take ownership of their academic lives; second, that there remain yet more ways in which our courses can actively and intentionally encourage students to take responsibility for their learning; and third, that crafting a course with an eye toward these goals equips students with skills that go beyond the walls of the classroom. Despite a seemingly narrow focus, the approaches used and the lessons that emerged here apply to a wide range of courses and disciplines. This exploration should be particularly helpful for those instructors in the humanities who have contemplated the introduction of “flipped” instruction (e.g. introducing students to new content via lecture, podcast, or video as homework and using class time for hands-on application of that content) or blended approaches to their courses, an area in which courses and disciplines within STEM remain the predominant examples. In the pages that follow, I provide some contextual background for the courses by highlighting their self-paced, competency-based, and inductive elements. I then focus on the central innovation of this study, namely the introduction of carefully designed pre-class assignments, termed “tasks.” I close by reflecting on the effects of those assignments on student progress through the courses, noting especially how students themselves articulated their own sense of their agency in the learning
process as well as that the introduction of the tasks resulted in swifter course completion rates, one important indicator of deeper learning in these courses.

**Course Context**

Both of the courses discussed here met three times a week for seventy minutes each, with one section of Elementary Latin I offered each fall and Elementary Latin II offered each spring, each enrolling anywhere from twelve to twenty-eight students. By the first iteration of Elementary Latin II in Spring 2011, I had already begun to experiment with self-paced, collaborative, and competency-based pedagogies as well as with replacing the final exam with a Latin composition project. After four years and three textbooks, I adopted an inductive text that compelled students to identify and piece together grammatical forms, concepts, and paradigms rather than having them laid out in ready-made tables and charts. A few more details about each of these course components will be useful.

The courses are self-paced in that students can move through the material as they understand it, granting them both time and flexibility in completing their work. Some traditional parameters exist in that a set number of chapters must be covered in each course, ensuring that students are prepared for the next level of study. In the iterations of the courses prior to those discussed here, students read and worked through the chapter and spent time in class working with one another (the collaborative element) to translate, decipher vocabulary, and clarify their understanding of the chapter’s grammar. These discussions, usually in small groups of three to six students, were facilitated and supplemented by the instructor as well as, from 2014-2017, by a peer mentor, an advanced student who supports and encourages students as they learn.

In order to demonstrate their understanding of the material, students take an assessment, dubbed a “challenge,” that consists of translation, grammar identification, English-to-Latin writing, and a brief essay on cultural material related to the chapter. Students who score an 86% or above move on to the next chapter while students who do not retake problematic portions of their challenge (the competency-based element). A chapter challenge can be taken three times without negative consequences on students’ scores. Importantly, the challenge offers a diagnostic tool that demands students’ competency not just in a chapter’s content taken as a whole, but also in each of its constituent parts: a student cannot move on to the next chapter without scoring at least an 86% on the challenge, and they cannot pass the challenge without performing at a similar level on all of its components (translation, grammar, composition, and essay). Upon completion of all chapter challenges, students turn their attention to a multi-part composition due at the end of the term.
Elements of this approach before the intervention discussed below were highly successful. Freed from the pressure of having to progress at an externally imposed rate, students had space to linger or advance as they felt and proved themselves ready. Students also perceived a shift in course ethos that made it distinct from conventional courses; in the words of one, “the focus was on learning the material rather than the grades” (emphasis in original). Yet other of its characteristics proved problematic for students and for the instructor: with no deadlines and no accountability on a daily basis, about half of the students would move too slowly and could sometimes underestimate the amount of time and work needed to complete the course. This exceptionally hands-off approach also left the instructor with limited means by which to assess student preparation and thus insufficient opportunity to diagnose individual strengths and weaknesses both before class meetings and outside of their work on the challenges. On the one hand, then, the self-paced, collaborative nature of the course created a student- and learning-centered course and classroom environment, both of which were worth preserving, as were the skills in time management, planning, note-taking, and organization that the course fostered. On the other hand, the minimalist approach to homework and low-stakes assessment left some students stranded and made for an exceptionally stressful end to the term, as students hustled to work through material, take challenges, and complete the course with barely enough time remaining.

Those students whose semester-long progress made for a rushed end of the course provided the strongest impetus for change: even though these students passed the courses and, in some cases, did well insofar as their final grades were a mark of success, they were missing out on some of the intended benefits of the system. Specifically, they were cramming so much into the end of term that their situations suggested that students required more structural support than I had thus far provided. Clearly, a compromise between the traditional and the non-traditional structures was sorely needed. Despite the hurdles of the self-paced, collaborative approach, comprehension and engagement were higher relative to when I had taught the course in a more traditional fashion. Furthermore, the self-reported experiences of students in those courses and their performance both in the courses and in later classes indicated that there was much worth developing. The question thus became how to create a degree of structure in which students retained relative autonomy but were also formally, and frequently, assessed and required to engage with the material in specific, intentional ways.
Taken to Task: Introducing Pre-Class Assignments

I endeavored to strike a balance between allowing students the freedom of the self-made model and helping them to stay on track while increasing learning outcomes by crafting a series of pre-class assignments. Additionally, I wanted to create assignments that would best support students’ preparation and mastery of that material. The result was the “tasks,” which I shall discuss in more detail below, and which are divided as follows (a sample chapter appears in Figure I):

- Task One - careful reading
- Task Two - reading journal (graded)
- Task Three - grammar podcasts
- Task Four - concept check
- Task Five - cultural complement
- Task Six - synthesis (graded)

The tasks are ordered with an eye toward both spaced and interleaved practice, to underscore the inductive method of the Latin book and the course, and to nudge students into forming connections between the various activities and types of content in any given chapter. Each chapter has a Moodle folder within which these tasks are stored and each task’s instructions are identical for each chapter, allowing students to focus on the new material rather than on decoding a new assignment. Once the first task is completed, the second becomes accessible via an automated script, and so on through all six. All tasks must be completed by 5:00am on the day on which the student wishes to discuss that chapter with their peers and the instructor, to allow sufficient time for the instructor to prepare and to organize the day’s work. A typical day’s organization and planning is provided in Figure II.

Task One instructs students to read and re-read the chapter and links closely to Task Two, the reading journal. In this second task, students respond to the reading and reflect on their perceived comprehension of the chapter’s new content, ask questions, and are prodded to share reactions and reflections; students also write a brief (fifty to seventy-five words) summary of the chapter’s content in Latin, using only the grammar and vocabulary they have acquired at any given point (early chapters’ summaries were by nature quite basic, e.g. ‘Roma in Italia est’). Both individually and collectively, Tasks One and Two focus students’ attention on reading and the process thereof as one that demands them to be active, engaged, and intentional. An emphasis on observation and reflection likewise promotes an environment in which they feel comfortable making errors and trusting their judgment; over time, it also trains them to become more astute and careful readers, as they have to
distinguish the new from the known and familiar. Students’ questions and mistakes in these Tasks also provided the material for small-group work with the instructor in class; examples of this include working through and correcting sentences students composed in Latin and taking a student’s observation about a chapter as a discussion point for the group. The combination of in-class group feedback with the actual corrections and individually-based feedback I provided students in their tasks (after class) served to clear up any remaining confusion as well as to bridge together their pre-class work, their in-class work, and their pre-challenge studying.

For their third task, students listen to a set of podcasts which briefly introduce the principles of the chapter’s grammar. In an attempt to make the podcasts distinct from the instructor and the instructor’s voice, the peer mentor for the 2015-16 course recorded the audio based on scripts written by the instructor. As the clearest example of the partially “flipped” nature of the course, the podcasts are the most direct means by which students receive formal instruction in these classes. As a complement to the first two tasks, the podcasts provide the students names and terms by which to make sense of the material that they have encountered and, often, correctly recognized as new. In almost every podcast, we suggest that they return to the chapter and find the Latin examples of the concept introduced; space in the final task is provided for students to share their findings. Task Four, the “concept check,” requires students to take a brief (five to ten-question) ungraded multiple-choice quiz that relates specifically to the material from the podcasts. This opportunity to evaluate their own understanding further focuses students’ work in the chapter and helps to determine the nature of our in-class work; its role as a formative assessment tool allows students to check their own comprehension without fear of penalty as well as gives them an opportunity to review that information.

As noted above, Task Five acts as a formal cultural complement to the chapter’s content; although culture is woven throughout their reading and our in-class discussions, by explicitly flagging moments such as these, students can recognize that they are engaged in work that is “cultural” rather than “ purely linguistic.” Titled “Culture in Context,” this task presents students with two or three items from or about the ancient world or the way in which an ancient practice, belief, model, etc. shaped or is still used in the present day. Often these tasks include links to other websites, videos, maps, and media; they aim to address both the immediate, chapter- and course-specific content goals as well as to spark students’ interest in the ancient world by offering them opportunities to learn more about general topics (e.g. the Roman family) and less-often covered material (e.g. the domestication and naming of dogs in antiquity). This task’s inclusion supports connections between language and culture as they develop over the term so that by the end, as one student remarked in their final course reflection, they see these two elements as closely
interwoven: “I always thought of learning culture as being separate from understanding the storyline, as if the fact that because the story is fiction, actual cultural facts could not be related to the capitulums [sic].”

Finally, in Task Six (“Synthesis,” Figure III), students respond to what they have learned in Tasks Three through Five, then think and reflect again on the questions they considered in Task Two. As the only other graded task, the prompts here ask students to integrate their previous impressions and observations with the knowledge that they have acquired in the podcasts and the culture-in-context tasks. Much like in the second task, the reflective, metacognitive component to students’ responses is of paramount importance. As a series, the prompts cue students to be cognizant of and attentive to their inner voice as they read and work while also asking them to discuss that material in a nuanced way. With one exception, each bullet point asks students to articulate their own perceptions of their competency, to reveal strengths and insecurities, and to weave together their work in the chapter. The final three questions help to open and establish a dialogue between the student and the instructor; the last one especially invites students to take ownership of and responsibility for their upcoming, in-class learning with the instructor and their peers; an example of the in-task student-instructor interaction, with reference to material discussed in class, can be found in Figure IV. Here too we see the strongest and clearest articulations of student responsibility for learning insofar as many students frankly state what work they need (or think they need) to do before the class meeting and the eventual challenge.13

Progress and Potential: Reflections and Next Steps

I anticipated that the addition of the tasks would help to increase student productivity, preparedness, and performance in the courses. Although speed of progress through the chapters is not the end goal of the classes or of this study, the competency-based nature of the courses suggests that the amount of time that a student took (and the number of challenge attempts they took) is correlated with their knowledge of chapter content. In early iterations of these Latin classes there were a handful of students who completed the course early, a large group of students who completed the course on time, and then a few who barely finished the course by the last possible deadline. As noted above, many students would frequently leave too much coursework for the end of the term; this created a bottleneck of work at the end of the semester, often leading to poor performance on the composition project.14 Figure V illustrates the completion rates for each course in both the no-task and the task versions; the y-axis shows the percentage of course challenges remaining two weeks before the end of the semester. As indicated by the graph, higher percentages equate to a greater bottleneck.
Though this design is not a true randomized experiment, the comparison of task and no-task groups can be thought akin to a control and treatment group, where the task group is the treatment and the no-task group is the control.

Bottleneck differences between task and no-task versions of the courses were profound. In the no-task version of the first semester course, half of the students had 40% or more of the challenges remaining with two weeks left in the term. In the tasks version, however, only one student had 40% remaining at this juncture. Similarly, in the no-task version of the second semester course, 76% of students had half or more than half of the challenges remaining with two weeks left in the term; in the tasks version only one student had half of the work remaining. Independent sample t-tests reveal these differences are not just random noise. The results in Elementary Latin II were even more dramatic. The no tasks version of Elementary Latin II had a bottleneck of 41.9% of challenges remaining two weeks prior to end of term. This bottleneck reduced by almost half to 21.1% in the Elementary Latin II with tasks. Further, evidence of the effects of the “flipped” tasks on reducing the end of semester bottleneck can be seen in long term improvements across multiple semesters. Tasks not only lead to semester-long reduction in procrastination, but their benefits accrued interest over a longer, two-term course sequence. This in turn suggests that students who were enrolled in the first semester course were able to transfer their content knowledge as well as their knowledge of skills for learning and working in the course to the second semester.

On the one hand, the time it takes to finish the course depends on how quickly one moves through the challenges, so one would expect to see the most capable students progress the most quickly. On the other hand, moving quickly through the challenges involves more than just passing them; students must complete the pre-class tasks in a timely fashion and be present in class for workshops. (It should also be noted that time is really the measure, not the goal: the time a student spends working through the courses is a window into how well they are balancing their workload in these courses and others, and into how well they are understanding how they learn and how they need to learn in these courses, specifically.) In considering the completion speed of the students across the two semesters, factors that I anticipated would be influential in a student’s progress gave no indication of being so. One might expect, for example, that students with prior Latin experience would have progressed more quickly but there is no evidence that previous work in the language correlates to faster completion. If anything, previous Latin work often created a disadvantage for students, possibly because they felt overly confident in their skills and retention, particularly when their prior experience was with a different textbook. In addition, neither gender nor university year (e.g. sophomore or senior) proved to be a significant factor in achievement.
The pre-class tasks, then, did achieve the intended goal of structuring and supporting student progress through the course and contributed to the decrease in end-of-term bottlenecking. Additional evidence—the number of attempts on each challenge and the time between task completion and challenge completion, for example—suggests that the tasks influenced student learning, comprehension, and progress through the course in indirect ways. In previous iterations of the sequence, more students took more versions of each challenge more frequently. Lacking any diagnostic instrument other than their own perception of their performance, students in no-tasks courses would take challenges when they thought that they were ready.\(^1\) In the courses with tasks, with no other changes introduced, students took fewer versions of each challenge, passing often on the first attempt and rarely needing a third. Whether this reduced challenge frequency rate is indicative of the fact that the tasks compel students to work through the material at all, or to do so in specific ways, or if specific elements of those tasks contribute most fully to student learning cannot be determined at this time. What remains apparent is that the tasks deepened student engagement with the content, with the instructor and their peers in class, and with the cultural underpinnings of the course.

Both in their performance and in their reflections on their learning, then, students showed an increased mastery of content and a more acute awareness of how they learned as well as how to read and interpret cultural material in the course from the perspective of their own cultural identity. Moving forward, the two areas most in need of refinement are the prompts that seek to help students connect Task Five (“Culture in Context”) to the chapter’s cultural content and those that seek to inspire metacognitive reflection. With regard to the first of these, about 85% of students could state a viable connection between the material included in these tasks and what they read about in the chapter; the remaining 15% saw no connection. Before the next iteration of the course, I plan to partner with a student to rethink some of the “weakest” Task Five content and craft questions that more clearly cue students to think critically. Similarly, the second area (metacognition) requires further research, reading, and experimentation with creating prompts that help all students understand what is being asked of them.

Even with these adjustments and improvements, the connection between task timeliness, progress through the course, and student motivation requires further exploration and theorization. In both courses that included pre-class tasks, students who finished late in the term most frequently did so because they did not complete tasks in a timely manner, thereby postponing their workshop and their challenge for a given chapter. While not all students will be highly motivated to complete all their work and the course as quickly as possible, the questions of why and how they proceed through the courses at
the rate they do opens up related and intriguing areas for further study and investigation. One hopes that this type of inquiry might illuminate yet additional ways to support students as they navigate the labyrinthine waters of these courses as well as their academic and, later on, their professional lives.

Notes


2 The term is important: here and throughout the essay, I do not mean that I introduced homework qua busywork, but rather that a series of specific, related, and increasingly complex steps that connected implicitly and explicitly to the courses’ learning objectives.

3 The university has a two-semester language requirement (i.e. through the second semester of the elementary level). Most students who study Latin and other languages at the university do so in order to fulfill this requirement. A handful of elementary Latin students are Classical Studies minors and majors.


5 Hans Ørberg, Lingua Latina per se Illustrata. Pars I: Familia Romana (Newburyport, MA: Focus Press) 2003. For me, the benefits of the Lingua Latina series are its inductive method and the complementary need for students to assume responsibility, consciously and sometimes not, for their own learning.


7 These findings are consistent with Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams, Flip Your Classroom: Reach Every Student in Every Class Every Day (International Society for Technology in Education, 2012) and multiple individual studies ChanMin Kim, Seung Won Park, Joe Cozart, and Hyewon Lee, “From Motivation to Engagement: The Role of Effort Regulation of Virtual High School Students in Mathematics Courses,” Journal of Educational Technology & Society 18, no. 4 (2015): 261-272 and Moore, “Fostering Student Engagement with the Flip” 420-425.

8 Indeed, the tasks were designed to connect to each of the courses’ learning goals: to master course content, to engage with Roman culture, to read and write in Latin, to refine critical and analytical thinking skills, to improve English grammar, to expand vocabulary, and to develop transferable skills.

10 As one student wrote, “I think that thinking about pedagogy and learning skills/practices is very valuable in terms of moving forward in other classes and work environments. This kind of reflection can help students become better prepared for working and collaborating with others as well as self-discipline.” Similarly, another noted: “From this course I realize that I take time to process material even more than I thought before. I also realize that for me personally there is immense value in testing myself to see if I have really mastered the material (like the English to Latin).”

11 The decision to use podcasts as opposed to videos was based on student surveys and a consideration of ease and convenience. Students could download the podcasts and listen to them at the gym, in their cars, walking across campus, etc. The greatest benefit of an audio file over a video, we learned, was that it became more portable to students: rather than having to sit in front of a screen, students could take the podcasts with them. An absence of visuals also meant that students had to focus on the words themselves and construct their own notes.

12 Although the inductive nature of the text and its topical content clearly convey information that one would recognize as “cultural” (and although language itself is an expression of culture), students often need to be told that the activity in which they are engaging is explicitly cultural (as opposed to explicitly grammatical).

13 Whether or not students can accurately assess what they do and do not understand, particularly in a flipped classroom environment, is a recurring question. One might suggest that even asking students to engage in this self-reflection is asking them to articulate their perceived level of comfort with and understanding of the material, individually to the instructor, is a valuable exercise regardless of its accuracy. The instructor as well as the student have also at their disposal the ‘concept check (Task IV) which is another indicator and piece of formative assessment for grammatical content mastery.

14 The composition project is key to the course not just because it is the final, culminating assignment, but because it offers students an opportunity to bring together all of the various elements and activities of the course. For these reasons it should not be rushed, particularly in the revision phase. To have students fly through this assignment is contrary to the courses’ ethos.

15 The mean percentage of challenges remaining in the no-task Elementary Latin I course was 36%. In contrast, in Elementary Latin I with tasks, the mean percentage of challenges remaining was 22.6%. This 13.4% reduction in tasks remaining was statistically significant at P <.05 (t=2.61).

16 The 20.8% reduction in bottleneck was also statistically significant in a t-test (t=2.30).

17 Eleven students took both Elementary Latin I (No Tasks) followed by Elementary Latin II (No Tasks). Five students took both Elementary Latin I (with Tasks) followed by Elementary Latin II (with Tasks). The bottleneck size increased among the eleven students in the no tasks sequence by an average of 9.1% of the duration of the two-
semester sequence, implying that procrastination worsened over time for the students lacking the tasks. In contrast, the bottleneck over time decreased by an average of 8.7% for the five students who took both sections that included tasks. Despite the small sample size, the 17.8% difference in long term procrastination behavior was statistically significant (p=0.067; t=1.98).


**Figure I: Chapter Task Instructions**

![Chapter Task Instructions](image)

**Figure II: Sample Lesson Plan, Elementary Latin II**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Take challenge 23</th>
<th>James, Mary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learn chapter 23</strong></td>
<td>Elle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read/work through 23</td>
<td>Christopher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Take challenge 21</th>
<th>Sarah A, Molly, Steven, Phil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learn chapter 21</strong></td>
<td>Nadine, Cindy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read/work through 21</td>
<td>Sarah L.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Take challenge 20</th>
<th>Cyrus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read/work through 20</td>
<td>Tom, Ricky, Matthew</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Take challenge 19          Robert, Mindy, Evan
Read/work through 19      Samantha, Marie
Take challenge 18          Eleanor
Composition Work          Linda, Alexa, Macy

>>Instructor works with groups 23, 22, 21 for c.15 minutes each, floats through 19 and 20, and responds to questions in Composition group

>>Peer Mentor works with groups 19 and 20, then 22, 21, and 23 for c. 12 minutes each

**Figure III: Task Six Overview Instructions and Prompts**

**Overview:**

You have now approached this chapter and its content from multiple perspectives: you have read the Latin, responded to your reading, listened to the podcasts, and engaged with relevant cultural content. This is by no means the end of the learning process, but it’s a good time to pause and take stock of where you are. With that in mind, please respond to the prompts below. You’re free to provide any other information or reflections that you’d like to share, and here too (as in the reading journal portion), any format is acceptable and your work will be assessed for its thoroughness.

**Prompts:**

What effect have the podcasts had on your understanding of this chapter’s grammatical content?
List two items that you learned from the Culture in Context page.
How did these two items (and/or others) enhance (if at all) your understanding of this chapter’s cultural content?
What questions have arisen for you as you’ve worked through this chapter and all of the supplementary material?
How can the instructor help to improve your comprehension of this chapter’s material?
What steps can you take to improve your comprehension of this chapter’s material?
Figure IV: Example of Student Work and Instructor Feedback on Task VI (Synthesis)

What effect have the podcasts had on your understanding of this chapter's grammatical content?

Student: The podcasts put names to two of the new things I noticed in the chapter: deponent verbs as well as ablative absolutes. I feel that I have a better understanding of the new grammar seen in this chapter because the podcasts explained in detail how the new pieces work and their rules. For example, I learned when to translate a passive verb in the passive or when it is acting as an active verb even though it appears in the passive form.

Instructor: Great!

List two items that you learned from the Culture in Context page.

Student: I learned that travel by sea was very slow in ancient times. I looked it up and 4-5 knots is about 5 miles per hour. This is a quite slow way to travel. However, I also learned that a reason people took to the water was because it was much safer than traveling by land. This is not something that I had known before.

Instructor: Why do you think it was safer to travel by water rather than by land?

How did these two items (and/or others) enhance (if at all) your understanding of this chapter's cultural content?

Student: The culture content helped me understand Roman maritime culture. It also helped to shed light on the details of just how big the ships were. This helped me to understand why big ships could not travel on the Tiber.

Instructor: Okay/good.

What questions have arisen for you as you've worked through this chapter and all of the supplementary material?

Student: This isn't related to the grammar, but was it very common for people like Medus and Lydia to travel by boat for leisure? In
other words, was commerce not the primary reason for maritime travel?
Instructor: Good question! It's unlikely that individuals like M + L (in terms of class/status/resources) would have been able to travel like this. Elites and, most often, governmental officials would travel by boat fairly frequently though.

How can the instructor help to improve your comprehension of this chapter's material?

Student: It would be helpful to double check the ablative absolutes I found in the text just to make sure I am seeing them no matter the declension they appear. It is unrealistic to find everyone, but perhaps we could make sure I am finding one in every declension that is present in the passage?

Instructor: Do you have a list? I'd be happy to look it over. Also, what do you mean exactly by "declension"? I hope that our review of the AAs in class with textual examples helped to answer some of the questions re. those you found.

What steps can you take to improve your comprehension of this chapter's material?

Student: I can go back and make notes when a passive verb is translated in the active or passive as well as what indicates that within the sentence. I also can find the ablative absolutes and practice translating those phrases.

Instructor: Good plan.
Figure V: Effect of Tasks on End of Term Bottlenecks

End of Term Bottleneck with and without Tasks

Y-axis: Percentage of challenges remaining 2 weeks before end of term.
Diamond - Semester mean. Bands - 95% CI. Hollow Circles - Individual Students.
Using Self-Annotation as a Tool for Promoting Reflexivity in Critical Analysis Writing
John Kerrigan
Rockhurst University

In a 2002 article in College English, the most celebrated of scholars of writing pedagogy, Peter Elbow, highlighted the gap between the cultures of literature and composition within the discipline of English: his piece attempts to redress this gap by identifying ways that the two disciplines could learn from each other, and in a way that might also speak to how we approach the teaching of writing in the Humanities more generally. Fifteen years since its appearance, Elbow’s appeal for cross-pollination of ideas and methods still resonates, particularly as we use writing to teach literature and literary thinking to students who are not English majors. Elbow called out the academic culture of literary studies for overreliance on distancing techniques often regarded as requisite for critical analysis; he instead called for “more inherent attention and concern for students—their lives and what’s on their minds” in the culture of literary studies. Elbow further suggested the development of “involving” techniques, those that will help move students out of passivity and apathy and toward deeper engagement with the material on their own terms. Elbow suggested further that literature teachers often overlook that “most students need help achieving this kind of personal entanglement with texts.” The implication is that by emphasizing critical distance in our teaching techniques, we may be unduly restraining and thereby limiting the development of the very human elements that are at the heart of the Humanities.

More recently, Sherry Lee Linkon, in her 2011 book Literary Learning: Teaching the English Major, has posited that literature classes too often foreground a pre-set “content knowledge while providing too little overt instruction” to meet students where they are, such as by “giving direct attention to helping students learn to write literary arguments.”
Linkon’s concern is particularly that teachers should work to make more visible and accessible to students the techniques of literary analysis and argumentation, cognitive habits of mind that we often take for granted but which are “actually acquired abilities, special ways of thinking that our students do not yet have and must develop.”

Elbow’s and Linkon’s appeals for more student-centered ways of approaching the work of the literature classroom resoundingly echo my own interest in introductory-level world literature courses to prompt students to think on their own as they read, interpret, and write about texts. Even so, it is still common enough today (as Elbow posited it was in 2002) for literature classrooms to presume and operate from a traditional lecture-based model in which students only write about texts they have already studied and have “heard the teacher’s conclusions about.” Literature classrooms all too often replicate what Paulo Freire once labelled the banking concept of education, in which students become passive vessels absorbing information rather than active agents of their own learning.

Over a period of years, I have devoted much attention to devising strategies to liberate my students from the image of their professor as the sole fount of knowledge in the room, that is, to take ownership of their learning. For me, the first step in this direction in a literature course is that they come prepared for class, ready to discuss and figure things out with me and their peers rather than merely from me. Students need to have done the reading on their own before they can discuss it—and I have used frequent, easy reading quizzes or short, for-credit reflections on the reading, and an interplay between small group and full class discussion, to assure that all students are actively engaged and to stimulate students’ inquiry and independent thinking. Expecting, rewarding, and consolidating students’ engagement in reading has been, in this sense, a preliminary but essential part of an interconnected web of reading, thinking, and writing skills that are, in my view, crucial for success in college-level literary study. Yet in recent iterations of the course, I have been conscious of devoting disproportionate energy toward addressing the problem of getting students to commit to doing the reading, whereas (with relative long-term success in that area), I have lately perceived a more pressing need to focus more on how students work (in these somewhat conflicting ways) to develop independent thinking in critically analyzing literature.

There is an inherent pedagogical tension for conscientious teachers of literature between teaching what we value, privilege, and perceive in the literary texts we are reading and encouraging what our students themselves value, privilege, and perceive in those texts. Having led ten years ago an effort to help my department to integrate more non-Western content and perspectives in its World Literature courses, I am certainly aware that I do aim to achieve some degree of convergent thinking—seeking to stimulate empathy, helping students to learn about and be sensitive to experiences other than their own,
via the authors’ and characters’ perspectives they encounter. Moreover, this layer of convergence accompanies the perhaps obvious expectation that in an introductory literature course, students will develop a degree of competence and sophistication in using critical analysis skills they usually do not possess when the course begins. I also expect that my students will find, develop, and be able to communicate their own meaningful ideas—demonstrating thinking that sometimes may be divergent but is certainly independent, in the sense of not merely mimicking what they have heard from me.

At the heart of deep learning in my classes is introducing students to techniques which will offer them strategies for thinking deeply on their own about literary texts. My particular interest in is helping students develop skill in critical analysis, by which I mean the process of taking an interpretive stance that can be justified by a logical argument that uses evidence from the text, and developing that argument in a way that is well-supported and carefully organized for readers. In contrast to the lecture method that still often characterizes how literature is taught in high schools and sometimes in college, with students learning to repeat or retrace the blueprint of what others have said, my expectation is that students will cultivate an ability to think for themselves, to develop their ideas fully, and to structure their thinking in a way that is comprehensible to readers.

In a lecture-based classroom where students are given an essay to write outside of class, what instruction is offered to students that will help them develop and structure, refine and polish the thinking they’ve acquired from reading the literary text? Often, the assignment sheet itself or a rubric solely suffices to communicate expectations and provide guidance for writing in literature courses. My experience of twenty years of teaching introductory literature courses and twenty years of conversations with my students and with colleagues across disciplines about student writing indicates that without any further guidance or structure, a majority of students will approach the process of writing about literature as a one-shot effort. In spite of habits usually introduced and fostered in Composition courses, most students writing for literature courses tacitly accept the norm that they will procrastinate until they feel the urgency of a deadline, will compose a draft of their essay, often in one sitting, and will turn in that draft as their finished product. And faculty will grade the work and will, later, rightly complain about how deficient or problematic the students’ writing is. This is not a new problem, of course: Composition scholar Donald Murray wrote forty-four years ago,

When students complete a first draft, they consider the job of writing done—and their teachers too often agree…Most readers underestimate the amount of rewriting it takes to produce spontaneous reading. This is a great disadvantage to the student writer, who only sees a finished product and never
watches the craftsman who takes the necessary step back, 
studies the work carefully, returns to the task, steps back, 
returns, steps back, again and again….Rewriting isn’t virtuous. 
It isn’t something that ought to be done. It is simply 
something that most writers find they have to do to discover 
what they have to say and how to say it.9

Reading, thinking, and writing are interconnected processes, but most 
literature faculty, even those who also teach Composition courses, may not 
necessarily be paying attention to the ramifications of this interconnection for 
students—especially, as I will argue, to the value and necessity of rereading.

**Promoting Critical Self-Reflexivity in Literary Analysis**

The implication of Murray’s final statement (in the excerpt quoted above) 
is that effective academic writing for an audience necessarily involves a two-step process: first, identifying *what to say*, and then working on *how to say it*. 
Academic writing across disciplines has become increasingly savvy in 
prompting students to engage with the first of these two concerns—i.e., 
developing strategies for generating and discovering their ideas.10 But the 
cross-curricular emphasis on discovery-writing (heuristics prompting students 
to spend more time on “what to say”) has not necessarily been accompanied 
by greater attention to help students try to improve writing-as-communication 
(“how to say it”). Time is a crucial factor here. Recent research suggests that, 
for complex reasons, students may actually be spending increasingly less time 
planning, writing, and revising their work.11 We increasingly inhabit a culture 
which fills students’ time with preoccupations other than academic work, but 
we also should recognize how teachers’ interventions to prompt students to 
pause, reflect, reread, and revise, in the service of prompting student agency, 
can create the conditions for effective writing.

The culture of composition—research in the teaching of writing—offers 
numerous strategies that can be employed across disciplines to prompt 
students to figure out how to say what it is they want to say.12 Modeling, peer 
review workshops, individual or group conferences, and written formative 
feedback from instructors on drafts are some of the most pervasive 
contributions of the process pedagogy movement in composition to prompt 
students to revise their work. The intention behind all of these strategies, I 
contend, is to cultivate in students what I wish to call critical self-reflexivity,13 
which is an introspective way of reading their own work, a metacognitive 
engagement involving rereading their writing that opens up an inner dialogue 
about what they think of their work and how others will perceive it. Student 
writers who are practicing critical self-reflexivity have transitioned from novice 
readers who only crank out first drafts to experienced, proficient college-level
writers who return to their own work to read and reflect on it with a critical mindfulness. Student writers who learn to develop a habit of rereading their own work are the students who have learned to write well.

Critical self-reflexivity involves motivating students to revise rather than merely to edit their work before turning it in. This distinction between revising and editing is one that many students, and indeed perhaps even teachers, may not recognize in a conscious way. I have found, for example, in twelve years of working with English majors in an upper-level undergraduate course that prepares them to teach writing, that most juniors and seniors really only have experience with editing and not with revising their work. Donald Murray’s notion that “writing is rewriting” is quite foreign to them. These students, among the most advanced undergraduates I teach, have learned well how to edit their work to eliminate surface errors, and “error-free writing” is the image of good writing that they bring to the course. But even these upper-division students mostly report that they are not accustomed to revising their work—rereading, for example, to establish an essay’s focus, to further develop its content, to better structure the way it presents its ideas.

Critical self-reflexivity works in a literature class in a more specific way as students engage with the genre of critical analysis of literature. Literary analysis involves making an argument—putting forth a claim, supporting that claim with evidence, structuring the development of the argument in an intelligible way. Mariolina Salvatori posits that we should teach students “to be critically aware of how arguments—their own and others—are constructed.” This means, in other words, helping students be aware of the choices they made and why they made them, in deciding on a claim, in expressing that claim, in collecting and marshalling evidence in support of the claim, in organizing the presentation of and justification for the claim. Just as I encourage students to ask “how and why” questions in order to practice critical reading when they discuss and write about literature, I have lately begun asking student writers to pause and ask “how and why” questions of their own texts to engage in critically self-reflexive readings that will prompt successful revision—to render the choices they made in drafting visible to themselves, and to open up possibilities for how they can improve the communication of what they want to say.

In the critical analysis of literature, teachers should be cognizant that students need to use different and sometimes conflicting kinds of critical thinking to achieve independent thinking. On one hand, many of the World Literature students enter college fairly well trained in convergent thinking, able to execute an argument given to them by employing deductive reasoning. Furnished with a prompt that guides them toward potential directions for an argument, most of my students on in-class midterm and final exams can rather capably assert a claim and justify it with textual evidence in a well-organized way. However, when those same students are prompted to come up with
their own ideas, to generate their own critical analysis essay, they struggle with
the added layers of complexity of this task. Writing a critical analysis essay that
does not just recapitulate what we have already said in class requires students
to employ both inductive and deductive reasoning. Students practice inductive
reasoning in my class, and in most literature classes, when they are prompted
to find passages from the text on their own and marshal them together to
make general claims. This is a standard practice that, in English, we call close
reading. When we employ inductive reasoning, we are in the process of
figuring out what we want to say, what claim we want to make, and as we
finish the process of our thinking, we arrive at our general claims or
conclusions.

However, effective critical analysis writing will venture beyond merely
showing the steps of the writer's discovery of an idea. Instead, it is geared
toward readers. Now that the writer has figured out what to say (first-draft
thinking or discovery-writing, based on close reading and induction), the task
becomes how to say it effectively for readers. Having arrived at a general claim
via induction, the writer now needs to assert that claim as an argument geared
toward readers, and to use deductive reasoning to validate the points of
contention. Effective critical analysis essay writing thus depends on a
combination of strategies, first induction and then deduction.

A particular struggle in writing about literature in this way is the tendency
for students to lapse into plot summary. I often refer to a chapter from John
Trimble’s book Writing with Style that helps students perceive a crucial
conceptual distinction:

The difference between a plot summary and a critical analysis
is like the difference between (a) an account of the highlights
of the Vietnam War and (b) an explanation of how the U.S.
happened to get into it, why we stayed in it, and what its
effects were on us. A plot summary begins with no thesis or
point of view; it merely recapitulates the facts. A critical
analysis, on the other hand, takes a viewpoint and attempts to prove
its validity; its object is to help readers make better sense of
something they’re already familiar with.16

However, even when students intellectually grasp this distinction, they struggle
to put it into practice. Students often produce written essays that merely
summarize instead of analyzing. Asserting and maintaining their own claims is
a challenge.

Ultimately, when I find ways to prompt students to revisit their work,
students who have produced first drafts that summarize are able to turn
them into final drafts that analyze. But I have found that this extra step is
usually and most successfully achieved in my course via extensive formative
feedback to help students see how and where revision would help them to transform a summary-laden draft into an analysis-driven essay. Over the course of several years, most students indicated on surveys that they developed a good understanding of critical analysis writing only after they received my feedback on a major essay assignment. Across four semesters of asking students about the most important factors contributing to their learning of critical analysis skills, a significant majority of students ranked my written feedback on a paper or exam most highly.

As I stepped back to examine my teaching practices, I found myself very much agreeing with my students that my written feedback had been the key element advancing student learning about critical analysis in my class. I was promoting their critical self-reflexivity, but I was doing so in a quite time-consuming and inefficient way. Furthermore, my interventions were potentially preempting rather than facilitating student ownership of critical analysis techniques. One student suggested on a 2016 survey that “I think requiring every person to meet with you would be good so you can tell them exactly what you’re looking for.” It was clear that I needed to find a better way of encouraging students to figure out how to write analytically on their own—that is, to stimulate student self-reflection in their critical analysis writing.

**Self-Annotation as a means of promoting critical self-reflexivity**

Prompted by the desire to maintain a high level of student learning but to scale back on the extensive commentary that had been necessary to achieve it, I began to build consciously into my course more frequent and deliberate connections between the course readings and students’ opportunities to write about them. Through more effective scaffolding to build up to the critical analysis writing, students gained more practice earlier in the semester on smaller assignments. They developed skills that they could transfer to later critical analyses on essays and exams. Reworking my course schedule to replace some of the course content (literary readings) with concrete examples of student writing in the genre of critical analysis has allowed us to discuss together what was successful and not successful about the models, and allowed students to see how thinking evolves and becomes more precise as writers progress from draft to draft. Devoting more in-class time to working with students on writing was a practical way of realizing Sherry Lee Linkon’s call to make literary learning more visible to students.

The most critical new intervention that has benefitted my students’ learning has been a self-annotation assignment that I see as a tool to help students use close reading skills, applied to their own critical analysis writing, to self-assess their work. Now, in my course, students first write a draft of their critical analysis of a literary text and then, through an interconnected follow-up assignment, **self-annotate their own text**, their essay draft, using an
instrument that guides them to review their draft’s performance on crucial elements of essay writing and of critical analysis thinking. In other words, students are asked to practice close reading by annotating their own work in a self-directed way, *using their own text* as a basis for reflection on specific elements of their performance. The Self-Annotation assignment (see the appendix) is an innovation intended to get students to slow down, to pause and review their own work with care—to notice and pay attention to fundamental aspects of critical analysis writing. It is intended to inspire them to want to revise their own work, and to improve the quality of their skill in critical analysis, not just on one essay but in a more transferrable way.

Since introducing my students to the Self-Annotation assignment, I have noticed higher levels of achievement in their critical analysis skills at the end of the semester. Figure 1 illustrates that in the two semesters after implementation of the Self-Annotation assignment (Fall 2016/Spring 2017), 65% of student essays (30 of 46) earned an overall evaluation of excellent or good (grade of A or B), whereas 48% (23 of 48) had earned evaluations of excellent or good on that essay assignment during the prior two semesters. Furthermore, in comparing performances on a specific rubric category for “critical analysis” in evaluating these essay assignments, I noticed in the semester before implementation of the Self-Annotation assignment that 27% of essays were rated as the “unacceptable” or “poor” on the rubric scores for critical analysis, whereas only 13% of essays earned this rating after implementation (See Figure 2). The Self-Annotation assignment seems to have contributed to higher levels of achievement in students’ critical analysis skills.

Furthermore, the clearest way in which I have been able to notice my students’ learning-in-progress is in examining their work on the Self-Annotation assignment, which prompts them to pause and reflect on their work on a draft of their critical analysis writing, to self-evaluate their performance and, most crucially, to return with active engagement to a process of rereading and annotating their own text, so that they can metacognitively perceive what they have achieved and what they might achieve through some revision. Whether they are re-stating their own arguments, demonstrating their awareness of their claims and supporting evidence, or developing a plan for how to revise, the Self-Annotation assignment provides a quite transparent and interesting snapshot of student learning. These results are further corroborated by what students reported on surveys administered at the end of each semester. Figure 3 indicates a greater level of students’ perceived confidence in their ability to write critical analyses: 76.7% were “confident or very confident” during the final year of my research, compared with 66.7 in the first year and 71.7% in the second. Likewise, students’ self-reporting of their perception of the value of the Self-Annotation assignment supports the notion that it is contributing to student self-efficacy, with 38% identifying this assignment as “very important” or “important” in helping to improve their
critical analysis skills, while no students labelled the assignment as “not important” (see Figure 4). On the other hand, Figure 5 shows a marked decrease in students’ perception of the importance of my written feedback to their learning about critical analysis. In other words, students have found other means of bringing about their learning of critical analysis skills rather than predominantly relying on my feedback. Not all students were pleased with this arrangement foregrounding their own efforts, however: one student commented, for example, “I feel as if we were left to do much of the ‘figuring out’ on our own, with the assignments counting as such a huge part of our grade.”

Perhaps the most encouraging set of responses on the surveys were in students’ articulating their own sense of the value and applicability of critical analysis, beyond just its obvious relevance for interpreting literature. Here is a sampling from my Fall 2016 class of the ways they articulated this value:

“Careers in every field need people who are able to critically analyze situations and find solutions to problems”

“Critical analysis thinking helps you look for trends and commonalities in a piece of writing and in life experience. It helps you to form coherent thoughts.”

“The value is in having the skills to think beyond the surface level, beyond just something’s literal meaning, to come up with your own thoughts and insights”

“It is important to synthesize information and be able to draw your own conclusions about it, as well as to be able to support your claim with evidence”

“Makes you think for yourself and use your own creativity.”

“Critical writing shows contemplation about a text, not just comprehension.”

“Enables us to expand our horizons; if we can critically think in our day to day lives, we can find meaning we did not see before. It is so important to look at anything we are presented with from more than one perspective and back up what we claim.”
Conclusion

Although my work here is specifically framed within the discipline of English, the tension between instilling convergent knowledge in students and cultivating independent skills for students to practice and develop on their own is not particular to literary studies but has application in any of the Humanities disciplines. The Self-Annotation assignment seems furthermore a generally transferrable idea: that if we expect students to do their best work in not only generating an independent idea but in communicating that idea in a focused, well-developed, and carefully structured way, we should structure a process that will slow students down and will prompt their self-reflexivity. Certainly, there are other means of engendering students’ active, reflective attention in the writing process, and there are plenty of Humanities classrooms that do employ one or more strategies such as peer group workshops, teacher-student conferences, peer tutoring via a writing center, and written formative feedback as motivators for students to slow down and reread. Self-annotation can be combined with any of these strategies – indeed, in my view ought to be combined with them – so that we as instructors do everything we can to locate the responsibility for student learning where it should be: not with a tutor or peer or professor, but with the student herself or himself.25

Notes

2 Ibid., 539.
3 Ibid., 540.
4 Ibid., 538.
6 Ibid., 8.
10 For example, John Bean’s book Engaging Ideas: The Professor’s Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom, 2nd ed. (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2011), is an excellent resource that promotes writing-as-thinking, a resource that is distinctive in its interdisciplinary approach to writing.
For an enumeration of such strategies, see Nancy Sommers’s *Responding to Student Writers* (New York: Bedford, 2013) or John Bean’s *Engaging Ideas*, 35-37. The term is used by Composition scholar Mariolina Salvatori, for example in her “Conversations with Texts: Reading in the Teaching of Composition,” *College English* 58, no. 4 (April 1996), 440-454.

Ibid., 451.

The claims and evidence provided from my recent teaching are the result of my participation in a three-year, four-university work group, the Collaborative Humanities Research Project, supported by a grant from the Teagle Foundation. Further details about the course and evidence can be found in my online course portfolio published by the University of Kansas Center for Teaching Excellence: [https://cte.ku.edu/chrp/portfolios/kerrigan](https://cte.ku.edu/chrp/portfolios/kerrigan)


https://cte.ku.edu/chrp/portfolios/kerrigan#studentwork

Only 11 of 24 students, all of whom had been provided with extensive feedback, chose to pursue an option to revise an essay in Fall 2016. Furthermore, my extensive comments on a critical analysis essay even when it was revised did not correlate to improved work on a second critical analysis essay later in the course.

Some examples of student work that have been used as models to prompt class discussion of effective critical analysis writing are included in my course portfolio published by the University of Kansas Center for Teaching Excellence website: [https://cte.ku.edu/chrp/portfolios/kerrigan#studentwork](https://cte.ku.edu/chrp/portfolios/kerrigan#studentwork)


The inspiration for my work on self-annotation was provided by Karen Sheriff LeVan and Marissa E. King, who at a one-day conference at Johnson County Community College in April 2016 gave an excellent presentation on self-annotation as a strategy to help underprepared writers at two-year colleges. LeVan and King’s work has since been published as “Self-Annotation as a Course Practice,” in the journal *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* 44, no. 3 (March 2017), 289-305.

Rubrics for the critical analysis assignments are available in the online course portfolio.

https://cte.ku.edu/chrp/portfolios/kerrigan#studentwork

https://cte.ku.edu/chrp/portfolios/kerrigan#studentwork

I wish gratefully to acknowledge the support of Dan Bernstein and the Collaborative Humanities Redesign Project (CHRP), and the Teagle Foundation which supported CHRP via a grant for improving teaching in the Humanities. Thanks also to Dan Martin, Jason Arthur, and Jenna Kelley for reading drafts of work-in-progress.
Figure 1. Overall Student Performance on Critical Analysis 2 Essay

Figure 2. Performance on Category of "Critical Analysis" using the Critical Analysis 2 rubric
Figure 3. Student self-perception of confidence in critical analysis writing, reported in surveys at the end of the semester.

Figure 4. Student perception of the importance of the Self-Annotation assignment in helping to improve their critical analysis skills, based on two semesters of survey results in 2016-2017.
Figure 5. Comparison of students indicating "Dr. Kerrigan's written feedback" as the most crucial factor for their learning in the course, based on surveys administered in 2014-2017
**Self-Annotation Assignment**
To review your work in a careful way and reinforce your learning about the key elements of critical analysis writing, perform the following self-annotations:
1) You need to mark or circle each element in your text (handwritten or typed).
2) Provide an annotation addressing the question posed in the “Annotation Guide.”
3) Score the element in the chart below, from 1-5, using the scoring guide at right.

Using this Self-Annotation system properly should help you slow down and pay attention to distinct elements of your work, to make sure you’ve done your best and produced an essay that you will be proud of and pleased with. Once you’ve completed your self-evaluation, seek the assistance of a Learning Center writing tutor or a trusted peer from class for a second opinion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual Elements of a Critical Analysis</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Annotation Guide: Question</th>
<th>Self Assess Score (1 - 5, see above)</th>
<th>Peer Eval. Score (1 - 5, see above)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Makes a Claim</td>
<td>To make a claim, you must stick your neck out, articulate a position that is debatable, something that not everyone will agree with.</td>
<td>Is the claim something that needs to be argued/justified, rather than a fact or something obvious? Does the claim seek to answer a how or why question?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develops the Claim</td>
<td>Contains body paragraphs that start with a mini-claim or point that develops the essay’s main overall claim.</td>
<td>Are the sub-points (or mini-claims) in each paragraph clear? Are those points in the body of the paper connected to the main overall claim?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Supplies Evidence
Details and examples (including indirect reference to or direct quotation from the text) to support your paragraph’s claim.
Mark and label each piece of supporting evidence. Is it clear how the evidence supports the point you are making?

### Formal Elements of an Academic Essay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Annotation Guide: Question</th>
<th>Self Assess Score (1 - 5, see above)</th>
<th>Peer Eval. Score (1 - 5, see above)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(1) Title</strong></td>
<td>Captures what is unique or distinctive about your work.</td>
<td>Does your title specifically name what your essay is about? (not in a generic/general way?)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>(2) Intro. Paragraph</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(2a) Opener</td>
<td>First sentence finds a way to draw readers in.</td>
<td>How does your opening sentence seek to engage readers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2b) Thesis</td>
<td>States the main argumentative claim of the essay.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(3) 1st Body Paragraph</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3a) Topic sentence</td>
<td>Paragraph’s first sentence introduces the main idea of the paragraph, makes a mini-claim that the rest of the paragraph works to support.</td>
<td>Does the paragraph’s first sentence effectively introduce the mini-claim and overall idea of the paragraph to come?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3b) ¶ Unity</td>
<td>All of the sentences in the paragraph support the main idea of the paragraph.</td>
<td>Reread the entire paragraph: does it</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>(3c) Transitions</strong></td>
<td><strong>(3d) Concluding sentence</strong></td>
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Expanding the Dimensions of Learning a Language: Assignments that Emphasize Intercultural Competence and Balance It with Linguistic Proficiency

Brandon K. Essary
Elon University

I. Introduction

In the following article, I will describe the transformation of Italian (ITL) 121, Elementary Italian I at Elon University, from a course focused primarily on gaining linguistic proficiency and communicative competence to one that strikes a balance between language learning and intercultural competence. Part II of the study, entitled “Background” describes the base line version of the ITL 121 course from fall 2014, as it was before changes and enhancements were made. The course description and intellectual goals found therein are for the same fall 2014 iteration. In part III, “Implementation,” we will turn our attention to the questions of student understanding and performance. Samples of student work—in this case, chapter exams—will be analyzed to show the language learning focus of the base line iteration of the course. These examples will offer a contrast to the variety of activities implemented throughout the course redesign. These redesigned activities give students the chance to practice and be evaluated on intercultural competence and critical thinking, at times in conjunction with linguistic learning, at times separate from it. A “Double-Entry Journal” in which students compare and contrast a travel writer’s observations of Italian and American culture is indicative of this sort of activity. A final video project in which students must take on the role of an Italian traveler speaking with American peers about his or her travels is another example analyzed in this study. Blank models and actual examples of student and grading rubrics will be available to the reader. In part IV, “Student Work,” analysis of the aforementioned examples will be offered. In part V, the
“Conclusion,” I will offer some final reflections about the changes in the course and student learning over the three years of the pedagogical experiment.

II. Background

Course Description

Italian I, ITL 121, is an introductory course designed to equip students with linguistic proficiency, intercultural competence, and critical thinking skills. With regard to language, students learn to use the present tense and relevant vocabulary to talk about daily routines, family and friends, likes and dislikes. The majority, let’s call it 90%, of class time is dedicated to developing linguistic proficiency and communicative competence. The majority of that time is spent speaking in the target language, practicing the target language. With regard to intercultural competence, in that other approximate 10% of the time, I am experimenting with students reading and discussing, in English, the travel writings of an Italian journalist who lived in the US. These activities are conducted in the majority of students’ native English language so that we can delve deep into questions of Italian cultural identity and reflect on our own culture’s identity. Often, this discussion leads to critical thinking, too, the kind of thinking that students cannot easily speak about and interpret in the target language with the novice-level discourse of this elementary level. Most students take the course to fulfill the first of the two-course language requirement at Elon, in this case ITL 121 and ITL 122. For some students, it acts as the foundation for continuing with the Italian Studies Interdisciplinary Minor. Students range from first-year to fourth-year and almost always have little to no background with Italian. The course is capped at 22 students.

Intellectual Goals

The intellectual goals I have for my students revolve around strengthening the intercultural competence dimension of the course and creating a balance between activities focusing on the development and discussion of intercultural competence (mostly in English, sometimes in Italian) and those focusing on communicative competence (mostly in Italian with occasional meta-discussion of grammar and language in English). The goals for communicative competence can be understood with the reference to the NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements. The proficiency goals for the course are currently “Novice High.” Thus, for instance, with regard to interpersonal communication, by the end of the course students “can communicate and exchange information about familiar topics using phrases and
simple sentences.” And, they can “usually handle short stoical interactions in
everyday situations by asking and answering simple questions.” For
presentational speaking, they can “present basic information on familiar topics
using [practiced] phrases and simple sentences.” And, finally, in the target
language, students’ interpretive reading demonstrates the ability to “understand
familiar words, phrases, and sentences within short and simple texts related to
everyday life.”

Prior to the course redesign, those ACTFL standards were the primary
ways of establishing goals and defining student success in the course. They
had to do primarily with linguistic proficiency and work students did
(reading, writing, speaking, listening) in the target language. The course
redesign described in this essay incorporates also clear goals related to
intercultural competence. These goals are established for all language classes
in the Department of World Languages and Cultures at Elon. The
department’s goals at this course level are adapted from the AAC&U
“Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Value Rubric”:

1. Knowledge (Cultural worldview frameworks):
   Students begin to demonstrate awareness of the elements
   important to members of another culture in relation to its
   history, values, politics, communication styles, economy,
   or beliefs and practices.

2. Knowledge and Skills (Cultural self-awareness and
   openness): Students begin to demonstrate awareness that
   cultural rules and biases exist in the target culture (C2) and
   home culture (C1). Students express some openness to
   cultural difference, but typically respond with own
   worldview.

3. Skills (Verbal and nonverbal communication):
   Students begin to identify some cultural difference
   although rarely incorporate them in verbal and nonverbal
   communication. Students begin to show awareness that
   misunderstandings can occur based on those differences.

4. Skills (Connecting linguistic difference to cultural
   difference): Students begin to show awareness of
   different patterns between languages and see the target
   culture on its own terms, rather than a completely
   separate “other.”

III. Implementation

Student Understanding and Performance
In my course redesign, I examine more closely students’ development of intercultural competence skills. More specifically, I’m interested in helping students achieve the aforementioned departmental goals by having students:

1. Name and discuss at least two elements of Italian culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.
2. Identify and engage in discussion about some cultural differences/similarities between the culture they are studying and their home culture.
3. Articulate the value of and reason for a specific cultural practice within the target culture.

These learning outcomes address our departmental goals regarding intercultural competence, and they come directly from Elon University’s Core Curriculum language requirement expectations. Prior to this redesign, language acquisition and communicative competence were the primary, and nearly exclusive, goal of the course. Almost all lessons focused on linguistic, grammatical, and vocabulary content. When cultural concepts came up they came up incidentally in class based on textbook readings or grammatical discussions, but there was no deliberate effort to evaluate intercultural competence. Assessments, too, were focused primarily on linguistic, grammatical, and vocabulary content.

The ITL 121 syllabus from Fall 2014 for the baseline course I taught the year before my redesign, shows this singular focus, and is organized primarily on grammar points and vocabulary themes. In this scheme, student understanding on written evaluations was judged by how well they understood grammar and memorized vocabulary:

“B+” Exam from ITL 121 Fall 2014
“B-” Exam from ITL 121 Fall 2014
“C” Exam from ITL 121 Fall 2014

Communicative competence was also evaluated with a primary focus, naturally, on elements related to linguistic proficiency (grammar, vocabulary, fluency, intonation) through “oral exam” activities. The activities, as their description from the aforementioned Fall 2014 baseline syllabus indicates, required students to communicate about Italian culture vis-à-vis its regions and cities: “Oral Presentations (15%). You will have 3 oral presentations in groups of three throughout the semester that focus on the regions and cities of Italy. For the first presentation, each person in the group will choose and act as the “expert” of one of three broad regional categories: Northern Italy, Central Italy, and Southern Italy, as divided in the textbook on page 18. The second
presentation will be in new groups of three and require each person to select a specific region from each of the broad regional categories—one from the South, one from central Italy, and one from the North. The third presentation will be even more focused and require each student to select a city in their region from the second presentation. Detailed information will be provided for each. You should visit your professor during office hours in order to effectively prepare each presentation.

However, the rubric used to evaluate the activity did not explicitly evaluate elements related to critical thinking or intercultural competence:

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<td>target sounds: vowels, consonant</td>
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<td>combinations; stress</td>
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<td>comprehension</td>
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In my course redesign, I included a variety of activities – in Italian and in English, focusing on speaking, reading, and writing – in the fabric of the course that allowed students to engage and be evaluated on intercultural competence. I wanted students to understand that language learning is more than just conjugating verbs and memorizing vocabulary; and it goes beyond the essential goal of developing communicative competence. Rather, language learning at Elon focuses, too, on critical thinking vis-à-vis activities that stimulate intercultural discussion and lead to intercultural competence. That is, understanding not just how Italians speak, but who are the Italians? What are important, distinctive Italian cultural elements? What are some similarities and differences between Italian culture and students’ home culture?

And, finally, the most challenging and important aspect, how can we teach students to think about and articulate the value of and reason for those cultural elements? These questions are extremely important – and often neglected, in my experience as a student and teacher at other institutions – in language classes. Through this work conducted as a part of the Collaborative Humanities Redesign Project and with the generous funding of The Teagle Foundation, I have learned that they are equally important to the linguistic
questions we raise and the language we teach our students, no matter the
target language. For me and my students, intercultural competence is a skill
transferable to any country, any culture in the world. Even if students are not
able to continue studying Italian at Elon and beyond, they will have learned
some basic skills for thinking, talking, and describing any other cultures in
general with respect and some nuance after taking Italian classes at Elon
University.

The redesigned course has three chapters of grammatical, linguistic, and
cultural theme content, which is fewer than the original Fall 2014 iteration’s
six chapters. This decrease allowed for a “quality over quantity” experience,
and made space for intercultural competence and critical thinking activities.
The units come from Vista Higher Learning’s *Sentieri* textbook, and are
divided in the redesigned Fall 2015 ITL 121 Syllabus by cultural and
vocabulary themes. At the end of each unit students read a chapter of Beppe
Severgnini’s *Ciao America! An Italian Discovers the U.S.* It is a set of witty,
critical observations about US culture through Italian eyes that inevitably
leads to comparison (and equally amusing criticism) about Italian culture.
During the end of class, about once a month, students reflected on Beppe’s
observations in a double-entry journal. They discussed in groups, in English,
their journal entries on the review day prior to each unit exam. The first 40-
50 minutes of the review day – we have 70-minute class periods at Elon –
were dedicated to reviewing the grammatical and vocabulary content on the
upcoming exam. The last 20-30 minutes were spent discussing the
Severgnini reading and reflecting upon American and Italian cultural identity.
These journal entries acted as preparatory activities that led to the final video
project in which students conduct an interview of Beppe Severgnini that
revisits his most important observations; compares and contrasts elements of
US and Italian culture; and attempts to explain why and assign value to those
elements.

**Initial Focus Assignments: Double-Entry Journal and Final Video Project**

**Double-Entry Journal**

In column one, students will write three direct quotations from the
Severgnini chapter with regard to his observations of American culture that
they find most interesting, surprising, discussion-worthy, etc. In column two,
students will describe briefly what each observation reveals about American
culture. And in column three, they will describe what, in turn, Beppe’s
commentary on American culture might reveal about Italian culture and/or his
Italian identity. Here is a linked sample chapter from Severgnini’s *Ciao,
America! An Italian Discovers the U.S.* and a link to the double-entry journal
The double entry journal format will be visible in the linked samples of student work included below. Students read for and prepare the journal entries at home. Then, in class, students gather in groups of three to discuss their observations and the meanings of them. The assignment requires them to find information that corresponds to the following learning outcomes: “Students name and discuss at least two elements of Italian culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices”; and “Students identify and engage in discussion about some cultural differences/similarities between the culture they are studying and their home culture.” “Sample 1” for the Double-Entry Journal is a successful example for these to learning outcomes. In the first quotation, the student brings up the notion of “time.” He posits that “Americans are very focused on their systematic lives and try to cram everything into one day for maximum efficiency.” He hypothesizes, based on Severgnini’s statement, that “Italians are much more relaxed and do not fret about overcomplicating things.”

These are the most accessible elements of the intercultural competence goals, and the majority of students tended to achieve them. Learning outcome three, “Students can articulate the value of and reason for a specific cultural practice within the target culture,” is more difficult to reach for students by themselves. The in-class discussion is where I guide them to go beyond the relatively superficial observations that the journal solicits and deeper into the questions of what cultural value those observations might hold, and the reasoning behind that value. During the semester, this guidance led to better observations for some students. In addition to more cautious, less generalizing observations, I also began to encourage the students to pose discussion questions to stimulate more thorough discussion with their peers. “Sample 2” for the Double-Entry Journal reflects this sort of improvement. The student chooses a quote from Severgnini’s work on the appearance of Americans. To this student, the “American Cultural Meaning” is “Although we have a stereotype of being on the larger side, Americans have been on a fitness kick for several years now. Staying healthy and beating obesity has been of the utmost importance to many.” The student wonders with a cautious “may” statement about Italians: “Italians may not value physical fitness as strongly as Americans.” Then, in preparation for leading a group of her peers on this topic, the student connects these reflections to the broader – and most Italian – concept of “beauty”: “How does the concept of beauty differ between Americans and Italians? Why has Italian commercialism not influenced Italians the way that American commercialism has influenced Americans in regard to body image?” At the end of semester, after practicing throughout the semester, the final video project led them to focus specifically on the questions of reason and value.
Final Video Project

The final video project is the culminating point for students to review the most important elements observed from their journal entries and in-class discussions throughout the semester. It also requires them to address the more difficult aspect of “articulating the value of and reason for” those cultural practices.

IV. Student Work

First Redesign Iteration – ITL 121 in Fall 2015

Double-Entry Journal

As mentioned before, in the original way in which the course was conducted, language acquisition and communicative competence were the primary, and nearly exclusive, goals of the course. Most lessons focused on linguistic, grammatical, and vocabulary content. If cultural concepts came up they came up incidentally in class based on textbook readings, but there was no systematic effort to evaluate intercultural competence. That changed drastically in the first redesign iteration of ITL 121 in Fall 2015. With the incorporation of the readings from Beppe Severgnini’s *Ciao America* and the focus on them through the double-entry journal, in-class discussions, and final video project activities, students faced head on and regularly not only linguistic and grammatical material, but also activities that required them to acquire knowledge about and awareness of elements important to Italian culture (albeit, vis-à-vis this one Italian’s point of view); differences and similarities between Italian and American culture; and, through guided class discussions, ideally, critical thinking skills helping to discuss the origin of those elements, and ask respectful and nuanced questions about another culture’s values.

For instance, one student picks the following quote from Severgnini’s work that concentrates on technology use by people in the US: “Depending on the historical context and the mood of the moment, they adore [technology], they abuse [technology], they talk about it, they fiddle with it, they laud it to the skies, or they damn it to hell. But they get to grips with it. They actually use science.” Based on the structure of the “Double-Entry Journal,” the student must then state (with some expertise, since she is, in this case, a US citizen) what meaning Beppe’s observation might hold with regard to American culture: “Our lives depend on technology. We let technology cause many different emotions in our life such as stress, hatred, or contentment with ease. We always are using it.” The journal also requires the student to hypothesize as to the possible Italian cultural meaning, which, depending on its accuracy, I endorse, critique, challenge, or correct: “Italians
do not use technology as much as Americans do. Beppe says that Italians feel like characters out of a science-fiction novel if they used it as much as Americans did. He even goes on to say Americans don’t respect science because of our overuse of it.” In this case, during class discussion I would qualify a few things: Beppe is writing in the mid-90’s, when the technology scene would have been different; he, as someone in his 40s at the time, is representing the opinion of an older Italian; and, finally, I would caution the student not to make such a sweeping statement as “Italians do not use technology as much as Americans do.” Conveniently, the textbook unit in which we were working when this observation was made offered an article about the omnipresence of mobile devices in Italy. Beppe’s comment and the student’s focusing on his views with regard to Italian perceptions of technology led us to seek and find more and updated information from the textbook and the internet.

This example indicates strengths and weaknesses that were found across student responses in the “double-entry journal” assignment. A strength and successful change can be found in that, unlike in former iterations of the course, students regularly achieve the first criterion of the aforementioned Elon Core Curriculum language requirement student learning outcomes. Namely, with every entry into their journal and follow-up discussion in class, they “name and discuss at least two elements of Italian culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices;” and they “identify and engage in discussion about some cultural differences/similarities between the culture they are studying and their home culture.” At this course level, with little or no prior cultural or linguistic experience with Italian, students had a hard time achieving the third of three Core Curriculum learning outcomes: “Students can articulate the value of and reason for a specific cultural practice within the target culture.” That’s where the discussion in class was essential in that I, the relative expert on the subject, could help critique any oversimplifications, generalizations or erroneous statements. I also did so by reading, and, correcting when necessary, students’ journal entries.

Final Video Project

The Final Video Project offered to students the chance to review their observations from previous in-class discussions and Double-Entry Journal assignments. Having already discussed the elements/observations in class, they were to focus on and demonstrate to their classmates in their videos this last element: “the value of and reason for those cultural practices.” As seen above, I designed the rubric with the Core Curriculum student learning outcomes and departmental goals in mind: the bulk of the grade went toward naming and discussing at least two elements of Italian culture; a
slightly smaller part of the grade went toward identifying and engaging in discussion about similarities and/or differences; and the last twenty percent, the points needed to earn a “B” or an “A” went toward the most challenging learning outcome, articulating the value of and reason for a specific cultural practice.

For the project, there were five groups of two to four students. The grade distribution ended up being: 2 “A’s,” 2 “B’s,” and 1 “C.” All of the groups earned five out of five points for naming and discussing at least two elements important to members of Italian culture vis-à-vis Beppe Severgnini’s specific commentary. The groups that earned an “A” received all three out of three points for engaging in discussion about some cultural differences and/or similarities. The “B” and “C” groups earned only two and a half out of three. Finally, the premium points for articulating value of and reason for cultural practices were distributed thus: the “A” groups earned one and a half out of two; the “B” groups earned one half a point and one point; the “C” group earned zero points.

All the groups earned all the points for naming and discussing important elements to members of Italian culture. Students did this well on the whole throughout the semester in the Double-Entry Journal and, not surprisingly, in the final project. There was some variation in quality of the discussion about cultural differences and similarities. One of the “A,” – see “Sample 1 for the Final Video Project” – discussions focused on the important role of sports in the two cultures. The students parsed out how (professional) sports in the US tend to be for entertainment value, no matter how seriously people take them. The students had done some extra research (and highly productive, though optional, in-office discussion with me) to discover that soccer in Italy is at times highly politicized. Political ideologies – and sometimes quite radical ideologies – are sometimes associated with certain teams. Fans can go to matches not only to be entertained, but also to vent and vaunt their political beliefs. This group was the only group to go into deep culture territory to attempt to articulate also the value of and reason for a specific cultural practice. They discussed the fragmented regional nature of Italy and Italian politics (to which we could add language, cuisine, and so much more) and the multitude of political parties that exist. This propensity for the development of political parties that sometimes represent local and/or regional concerns helps explain how they might also attach themselves to their local soccer club. This sort of work has become the “gold standard” for what students can achieve in the way of intercultural competence when we give them the opportunity.

In order to avoid a one-sided representation of the positive potential and results of the assignment, I will conclude by outlining here some of what did not go as well as expected with the groups who did not do so well with the comparison-contrast or articulation of the value of and reason for a specific
cultural practice. In one “B” group, they picked good quotes to discuss in their interview with Beppe. However, when they proceeded to compare and contrast, they focused almost exclusively on a quote having to do with Italians and respecting rules and laws. They emphasized excessively – even after this same topic came up in class; after we agreed that it was a bit of a stereotype; and that such comments should be viewed with nuance – that all Italians hold the law and rules in low esteem. I encouraged the group to avoid sweeping generalizations and to recall from our discussions throughout the semester that often such opinions will change from region to region, city to city, and person to person, just as they do here in the United States. This tendency to generalize and/or not to take quotes, observations, and cultural elements beyond the topical caused students to lose points on this part.

Finally, in the case of students articulating the value of and reason for certain practices, the gold standard was set by the group discussing soccer as mentioned above. The other “A” group did just as well, though not as eloquently. They discussed some deep culture points that touched on value and explained some “why.” For instance, their video concluded with a discussion about Americans’ obsession with quantifying practically everything and (ab)using technology to do it: from calories and steps per day to GPAs and game score predictions calculated to the one-hundredths decimal place. This group also talked about cuisine and regional differences in Italy. One of the two “B” groups, for whatever reason, did not attempt to assign value or explain why. The second “B” group interrogated Beppe dramatically with “why?” questions to this end; however, the responses did not materialize. Finally, the “C” group, for whatever reason, did not address this part of the assignment at all; ironically, since the two students in the group did excellent work in all their assignments prior to the final video project.

On the whole, the implementation of these activities acted like a light switch. Before it was flipped, ITL 121 was heavily focusing on the first of the World Language and Cultures Department’s three goals: language proficiency. The second two goals – intercultural competence and critical thinking – were sometimes actualized incidentally, as a result of language discussion, but were not programmed into the course. With the switch flipped on, activities focusing on intercultural competence came to take place regularly. And students engaged them in ways that resulted time and again in students actualizing the Elon Core Curriculum learning outcomes of intercultural competence: naming and describing elements important to the target culture; comparing and contrasting those elements with regard to one’s own culture; and articulating the value of and reason for them. Indeed, I found a striking upward trend in my Student Perceptions of Teaching evaluations which are completed by the students at the end of each course. In brief, and as the charts below reiterate and visualize, each year during the redesign process students got
more and more from the course in terms of critical thinking and using evidence to support claims. This critical thinking and necessity of supporting claims with evidence are directly connected to the activities regarding intercultural competence:

1.2) Course assignments fostered analytical and/or critical thinking

1.8) The instructor challenged students to think critically about course material.
Thus, the aforementioned light has been turned on, and I have seen many improvements in my students’ learning in just the ways I hoped for and which were only visible as incidental sparks in prior course iterations. However, upon careful reflection, I have thought of some ways in which I might be able to improve these activities, which will be considered in the conclusion below.

V. Conclusion

Based on the results of the instructional redesign of ITL 121 in Fall 2015, it might be helpful to expand the intercultural discussion aspect of the course (double-entry journal and otherwise) and discontinue the final video project.

Both worked well enough in ITL 121 of Fall 2015, however, the video project was: 1) somewhat redundant, as it repeated conversations which had already taken place earlier in the semester, albeit with some new comments; 2) challenging from a technological point of view for some students; and 3) came about at the end of semester, when, in fact, I wanted that kind of student learning to be taking place throughout the semester. In an effort to increase student accountability, as well as decrease the quantity and increase the quality of observations, it might be helpful in the future to implement a system by which, on each of the three review/discussion days, the class is divided evenly into groups of three or four with rotating leaders. The leader might plausibly bring: 1) a single quality quote from Severgnini’s book or the day’s film with analysis of the “American Cultural Meaning,” and the “Italian Cultural Meaning”; 2) a discussion question; and 3) an answer to that question focusing on possible deeper cultural meaning with which to engage their peers. This change would shift emphasis from quantity of quotes to quality of quotes and analysis, and also require the students to lead their
peers, effectively co-teaching small segments of the class. Group members might only need to bring in a quote and question in preparation for the discussion. By going for quantity over quality in this way, it would also make it easier for the instructor to grade more often and more thoroughly the written assignments.

The notion of asking questions would be an important addition to the improvement of the redesign. It could take the reading journal assignment beyond passive observation to active interrogation and discussion of Italian and/or American culture. This addition might also prompt me to adjust slightly the grading rubric, putting a premium on good, cautious questions that try not to generalize excessively or stereotype and that hypothesize directly about possible deep cultural implications. Student responses, like in “Sample 2” for the Double-Entry Journal” found above, inspired in part this adjustment for future redesigns.

As described above, I want future iterations of the course redesign activities to focus on quality and not quantity. In doing so, I want to help students avoid, in observations and in questions about other cultures, simplistic, overly-generalizing, and/or stereotypical observations. This shift can come about by having them focus from the outset on one good observation, comparison/contrast, and asking them explicitly to attempt to articulate value of and reason for some cultural element. Finally, I believe the activities could be enhanced by including more variety of authors, texts, media and genres; and preferably in the target language. I knew Beppe Severgnini the best, and had read and assigned his book off-and-on over the years. A translated portion of Mario Soldati’s America primo amore could show another perspective and time period of an Italian viewing the US. Then, it would be helpful to include perspectives of foreigners writing about living in Italy. In this vein, Italian Neighbors, by Tim Parks, comes to mind as an accessible and fun text for the 100 level. If authentic Italian texts would be preferable, I envision using films with Italian audio and English subtitles. Students would watch the films at home, read and quote the transcript (provided by the instructor), as opposed to quoting a text translated into English. The film scene and transcript quote would act as the basis for preparing an observation, a comparison, and a question for group discussion.

Having witnessed good intercultural discussion and critical thinking as a result of this course redesign, my perspectives on teaching have shifted. I realize that students, especially at the 100 level, need the chance to speak in English occasionally to think more deeply and critically (or to be able to express the thinking that’s already going on) about the complex subject of intercultural competence. This realization goes against the grain of the robust pedagogical preparation I received in graduate school regarding the communicative approach, an approach which in theory requires 100% of class to be conducted in the target language to simulate immersion. The Department of
World Languages and Cultures and the Core Curriculum at Elon University identifies intercultural competence and critical thinking alongside language proficiency and communicative competence as fundamental to the education of our students as global citizens. So, I still teach the majority of my class in Italian; however, I now do not fear or resist using low-stakes, high-impact activities in English to stimulate deep thinking and discussion with my students. Indeed, I now embrace it, recognizing that students might not continue to study or speak Italian after they leave my courses. However, it is likely that they will travel to other lands or encounter people from other cultures at home or abroad. The lessons of intercultural competence – identifying significant elements, comparing and contrasting with nuance, and critically thinking about the reasons for these elements and the values of the target culture – can and will serve them no matter where they go, no matter what languages they speak, no matter what they study.

Notes

10 Ibid.,
https://cte.ku.edu/sites/cte_drupal.ku.edu/files/docs/CTEprograms/CHRP/Portfolios/Essary/Severgnini_SampleChapter.pdf.
11 Essary, Brandon, “Double-entry journal format,” 2015,
12 Anonymous Student, “‘Sample 1’ for the Double-Entry Journal,” 2015,
https://cte.ku.edu/sites/cte.drupal.ku.edu/files/docs/CTEprograms/CHRP/Portfolios/Essary/DoubleEntryJournal_Sample1.pdf.
13 Anonymous Student, “‘Sample 2’ for the Double-Entry Journal, 2015,
https://cte.ku.edu/sites/cte.drupal.ku.edu/files/docs/CTEprograms/CHRP/Portfolios/Essary/DoubleEntryJournal_Sample2.pdf.
14 Essary, Brandon “Final Video Project Description,” 2015,
https://cte.ku.edu/sites/cte.drupal.ku.edu/files/docs/CTEprograms/CHRP/Portfolios/Essary/VideoProject_Description.pdf.
15 Anonymous Students, “Sample 1 for the Final Video Project,” 2015,
https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B79XAKvnNZQnUktuZThQakVjWDg/view.
Interview with cover artist: Michael Sanford
Shawn R. Tucker
*Elon University*

Interview with the cover artist Mike Sanford, ceramics professor at Elon University. Mike has been at Elon since 1988. In 1993 he received Elon’s most prestigious designation, the Daniels-Danieley Award for Excellence in Teaching. He spoke with me on November 20, 2017 about teaching and his art work.

**Shawn Tucker:** Can you give a sense of your approach to teaching art students?

**Mike Sanford:** Given that most of our students are relatively new to art-making, the first things we have to address and then break down are the tendencies to think in terms of right and wrong answers, a deeply engrained fear of ambiguity, and the most difficult obstacle, a fear of failure. Students also struggle with an evaluation process that appears subjective and based on somewhat abstract standards. Making course objectives clear through both a text-based rubric and concrete visual examples of excellent work helps to define the standards to which we aspire. Effective teaching and learning in art are also the product of well-sequenced hands-on projects, individualized instruction, and most importantly, teaching strategies that build a functional vocabulary of art, facility with materials and tools, and confidence in one’s ability to develop unique approaches to visual expression. The best we can ask is that students make important connections between concept and
process; develop, own, and defend their individualized expression; and learn how to critically evaluate their own work.

**ST:** What do you mean by a standard?

**MS:** Students need to understand that their performance is not evaluated relative to other students in the class. Rather, they should strive for a standard of excellence that is defined by impeccable craft, intentional and skillful manipulation of materials, an awareness of the characteristics of “visual rightness”, an introduction to ceramic works from other time periods and regions of the world, and ultimately a deeper level of personal expression through visual form. Of these standards, craft is most important for the beginning student because it directly conveys the artist’s facility with material and language. Students should always be questioning what they make and constantly search for ways to make compelling and interesting art. This is one of the reasons I really like PowerPoint. It wasn’t that long ago that we waded through files of slides or even made slides of our own to augment lectures. Now one has access to countless images to illustrate the broad diversity of approaches to form-making and surface design. The images we use span cultures, time periods, and changes in the availability and use of materials.

**ST:** Do students seem to respond well to this?

**MS:** The large majority really want to be challenged and realize their abilities through focused exploration. Yet even as they embrace this process-oriented approach to learning, they will simultaneously acknowledge the cognitive and creative dissonance that occurs when they confront new approaches to problem-solving. This usually manifests itself through frustration, negative language, and self-doubt. It is very important to directly and overtly address this aspect of the creative process and acknowledge that it takes time to make this transition in thinking and making. As students progress through the curriculum and the various course levels, they will begin to work more independently, take greater risks, and engage in more complex and challenging projects. Upper level students will especially begin to recognize a transformation within themselves. It is at this point in their learning I suggest that each new attempt is like a footprint in the snow. While that work of art may be a completed piece, it does not represent a
destination in their creative journey. One by-product of this overall approach is that students begin to recognize the intensely individualistic nature of learning in the arts. The key is to remain focused on the ideas that immersion in process drives learning, that each artist is accountable for constructing a cohesive, unified whole that expresses something in an intelligent way, and that mastering the technical language of the material is inextricably tied to conveying meaning through form. By constantly reinforcing that standard, students will develop and hold themselves accountable to it.

**ST:** So that standard and then individualized classroom feedback are central to your teaching practice?

**MS:** Yes, exactly. In fact, the analogy of a three-lane highway works well here, where the lanes represent three separate but interconnected aspects of art-making. One lane is understanding the materials and the tools, a second lane is the formal elements related to composition and design, and the final lane is content. Projects are set up to introduce (in a scaffolded way) greater complexity for each one of these aspects of making art. This somewhat artificial division allows students to isolate their most challenging and problematic difficulties, and that helps me address their needs.

**ST:** Are there specific classroom practices that support this?

**MS:** We start most classes by talking about how our activities that day will connect to what we did in the previous class and what we will do in the next class, thereby reinforcing the overall goals of the assignment and class. We also benefit from discussions of ceramic works from different times, places, and cultures. Students see similar formal and compositional elements addressed in artwork by human beings across a spectrum of time and space as well as what was being conveyed in the content or narrative aspects of the work.

**ST:** One of the reasons I think you can do this successfully is because this creative process, the emphasis on craft, on formal elements and composition to convey content, matches what you do as an artist. Can you speak to that in your own work?
MS: Yes, these emphases do influence my approach to teaching as well as the characteristics I value in a work of art. So, when making art I strive to remain critically engaged with these issues throughout the evolution of the work. Typically, the artwork emerges in the form of sculpture in clay or a mixed media work with clay as the primary medium. I am also very interested in artwork that is issue oriented or narrative in nature. One piece that comes to mind is a piece of sculpture that I created after having been at Elon for only a couple of years. During this time period, selected faculty were invited to offer a formal presentation on their research for the entire college community, and I was asked to participate in this program. Given my concerns about environmental issues, I decided to create a piece of ceramic sculpture that would symbolically represent the critical nature of this problem and document each stage of the sculpture’s development in slides, with the goal of illustrating critical points in the creative process that shaped decision-making, altered the trajectory of the work, or dealt with structural and/or technical issues which determined the visual coherency of the piece. The process began with three female figures in various stages of emergence from a neutral ground plane. The goal was to depict these figures as nurturing forces who were rising to the challenge of supporting our fragile planet. While the three figures were chosen for symbolic reasons, there were also practical considerations. They would hold up the globe, and three figures, like a three-legged stool, would help to balance the upper form evenly. On the top of the globe are two grotesque, male hybrid animal-human figures. They are purposefully poised over the two dominant geo-political forces in the world, and their destructive claws are pulling back the outer layer of life on our planet with countering forces. This metaphor seemed appropriate, because without that thin layer of skin, just like the skin on a human body, the planet would no longer be able to support life. The work, called “Opposing Forces,” confronts us with a choice, will we be the ugly forces of destruction or the nurturing, supportive forces of care and concern? The piece took over 300 hours to construct and document, and it eventually reached the point that every clay artist must reconcile: once you put something into the kiln, you don’t always know how it is going to turn out. One is no longer in control of the process and ultimately, the result. You don’t know if it’s going to blow up, or crack, or come out warped beyond recognition. That’s why it is so important to attend to craft and understand critical connections between material and process.
ST: How did the presentation go?

MS: It went so well that I was asked to present to incoming first-year students. That presentation took place in McCrary Theatre and over 500 students and their instructors filled the seats. Once I was finished with that crowd, the theatre emptied and I repeated the talk for a second group of over 500 students and instructors. I had never spoken to a group that large, but what a profound learning experience!

ST: Do you typically get a lot of feedback while you’re making work?

MS: The most meaningful in-process feedback comes from my wife who is an artist with remarkable skill and a great eye for identifying unresolved areas within a composition. I know the feedback is going to be intelligent, useful, and honest. I also receive feedback when artwork is exhibited, especially following an artist’s talk in a gallery space. It is important (and challenging) to remain open, listen, and then apply whatever seems applicable to the next attempt.

ST: Don’t you have another piece of sculpture that addresses the themes of loss and power? Can you speak about that?

MS: Yes, this sculpture is a representational figurative work entitled “Mother and Child.” The inspiration for this piece stemmed from the proliferation of genocide and ethnic cleansing that has become so pervasive in our world. While the sculpture holds much personal meaning, it primarily seeks to capture that incredibly sorrowful moment when a mother embraces her lost child. Many of the formal elements are purposefully manipulated to reinforce the physical and emotional dimensions of the work. Like “Opposing Forces,” this piece introduces themes of patriarchal power, greed, hate, and even fear of difference in our world.

ST: Some of your most recent work still looks at vice, the abuse of power, and even masculinity.

MS: Yes, some recent sculpture does revisit these and other socio-political themes, but of course the work has changed quite a bit over time. But that change seems to be a very natural result of steady and persistent making. It is not unlike our conversation about teaching,
learning, and footprints in the snow. We hope that students will look back on their journey and appreciate all of the twists and turns that contributed to their becoming an independent artist-thinker. It is especially rewarding to hear them speak and write about those transitional moments when they’ve experienced a leap in their ability to be critically engaged while making. Regardless of our journey, we frequently imagine that things will go in a certain direction, but challenges and obstacles emerge in the course giving form to our ideas and realizing our dreams. These are the kinds of experiences that make learning, making, and even failure meaningful.
Community Building as Pedagogy in Art History

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Introduction

Etienne Wenger discusses two scenarios of socially defined competence or social learning, wherein our experiences and engagement with others around us inform what and how we learn.¹ In one scenario Wenger describes the experience of one who is already competent and enmeshed in a particular community for many years. She is comfortable and is considered competent among her peers in her community. Then this same individual, a scholar, for example, is introduced to a new community at an academic conference or through discussions with peers from other disciplines. These disciplines (communities) have different practices, different definitions of competency, and different perspectives. The experience of engaging with these different perspectives and competencies challenges what her "home community" defines as competency.² Inspired and challenged, she applies her experiences to her practice and tries to redefine her competence in her home discipline—her community. According to Wenger, she is using her experience to pull competency of one community to another.

Wenger's discussion of how this individual, the scholar in our example, attempts to reconcile within herself the knowledge and practices of her home community with that of other communities parallels my experience with rethinking my pedagogical approach to teaching survey-level art history. As a graduate student, I developed an adequate level of competency and perspective within my home community of art history that still serves me well in that community. However, when introduced to perspectives in the Art & Visual Culture Education (AVCE) community, I was challenged to reevaluate my competency and apply what I have learned from AVCE to my art history
teaching practice. Considering the unfortunate paucity of discussion among art historians about pedagogical practice, I seek to add much-needed dialogue to the scant conversation. Among the key concepts I have learned from AVCE that I continue to apply and advocate for in teaching art history and AVCE to undergraduates is that of community building through object making, discussion for community building, and participatory museum education models.

Literature Review

What I have applied to my teaching practice from AVCE and will continue to advocate for in the teaching of art history is grounded in the scholarly literature that explores building a sense of community within the classroom as well as among colleagues to support effective pedagogical practice. I find the concept of community building most important because so many other key concepts in AVCE stem from having a sense of community in my classrooms and with my colleagues. Specifically, though, this report discusses building community in the classroom through three primary themes and discusses community building among colleagues in the fourth theme. The first theme discusses active learning through object making in the "Study Skills Tradition" and choice-based learning. The second theme focuses on discussion as a community builder through collaborative dialogue, communal interpretation, and Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). The third theme related to building community explores participatory museum education practice by way of Elizabeth Vallance's ideas of commonalities in pedagogical practice between classrooms and museums. The final theme of scholarly literature discussed in this report focuses on community building among colleagues to support pedagogical practice. This literature listed in this review is specific to AVCE. It does not include literature external to AVCE that has also been influential in my teaching practice. Therefore, where relevant in the Discussion portion of this report, I have included references to external literature.

Object Making

James Haywood Rolling, Jr. argues that "...arts and design educators have the means to aid learners in transferring the potency of other non-visual or non-communicated systems of meaning into multi-modal renderings." I have learned as an educator of art history trained in AVCE that I, too, am able, and should, encourage multi-modal learning of my students. I have also learned from AVCE how to help facilitate the growth of non-visual tacit knowledge of art history students via active learning through object making. How I approach active learning through object making with art history and AVCE students has been inspired by the history of object making in general curriculum education.
discussed by Brown and Korzenik and by recent 21st-century research studio centered choice-based art education in Teaching for Artistic Behavior (TAB).

**Study Skills Tradition:** Art making for study skills, according to Brown and Korzenik, values art making as a tool for learning in a variety of disciplines. The "Study Skills Tradition" discussed by Brown and Korzenik is an approach to teaching that began in the 18th century. The emphasis of this approach made notable by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, as discussed by Brown and Korzenik, was to engage boys' interest and "natural inclinations" in the classroom. Rousseau noted that children's, specifically young boys', physical activities had stages of development. He argued that at each stage these physical activities should be harnessed for educational purposes, via object making or other sensory exercises.

By the nineteenth century, other educators developed Rousseau's ideas of education into formal programs and pedagogical practices. Among them, Heinrich Pestalozzi and Frederick Froebel created "object lessons" aimed at engaging children's sensory, developmental stages within the general classroom setting. Their development of Rousseau's ideas inspired Wayland Parker and one of the most influential educators of the twentieth century, John Dewey, whose work remains influential in art education as well as across general curriculum education. Dewey's desire was that "art should animate the general curriculum in schools of the twentieth century." Through the "Study Skills Tradition," it has done so, as Brown and Koreznik recount examples of math and science teachers who continue to employ art making in their curricula.

**Choice-based art education:** Teaching for Artistic Behavior (TAB), developed by Douglas and Jacquith, is also a pedagogical model but focused on choice-based art making education with K-12 students. TAB "offers students authentic experiences for artmaking by providing real choices." Student ideas and preferences drive TAB. Students are viewed as artists, and materials in the studio classroom are often organized in centers, and students are allowed to choose their materials and process.

A TAB class period, according to TAB, begins with a short teacher demonstration of techniques, materials, or art history content or other relevant content chosen by the teacher. The TAB instructor then gives students the majority of a class period to create. The creation period allows for time to develop inspiration or interest, explore materials, and begin creation. The teacher's role during this period is that of a facilitator. She is not involved in direct instruction but is available to assist and guide if needed. After the creation period, there is a reflection, which TAB suggests can be done as a traditional peer review, critique, or via another reflection activity agreed upon by teacher and students. Each phase of a typical TAB class period involves encouraging the choice of the students to enable them to experience the work
of the artist through authentic, active learning opportunities and responsive teaching.14

**Discussion as Community Builder**

Etienne Wenger argues that "participating in 'communities of practice' is essential to our learning."15 Within these communities, we engage in social learning wherein we build on our existing knowledge with knowledge and competencies from those around us. This engagement develops within our communities' standards of excellence and even laws by which we all agree to abide. Wenger describes these communities as being built by the interaction of knowledge and "mutual engagement" to collectively establish expectations and norms of the community.16 They are bound together by what they each and as a group understand is their communal purpose. In applying Wenger's discussion of community to an undergraduate art history or AVCE class context, the students must understand and agree to their roles as engaged learners to form a community that will encourage knowledge development. And I have learned that my role as an instructor is to facilitate their community building for knowledge growth. I have grounded my practice in AVCE scholarship about collaborative dialogue, communal interpretation, and VTS.

**Collaborative Dialogue:** According to Vivian Loh, collaborative dialogue creates community in the art classroom. She claims that although collaborative learning, which is student-centered, is typically encouraged, many teachers are "hesitant" to try it because it is less manageable than the traditional teacher-centered approach.17 However, Loh advocates for developing a classroom environment that encourages collaborative dialogue because it provides a space wherein students gain knowledge through "first-hand inquiry."18

Loh reflects on her experience of shifting from teacher-centered to student-centered teaching as a way to encourage collaborative dialogue. In doing so, she lays out what she defines as the four attributes of "meaningful collaborative dialogue."19 Her four attributes, which rely heavily on the work of Vygotsky and constructivist learning theory, are: "increase in competence level; time set aside for listening, reflecting, and talking; willingness to listen to diverse opinions; and, establish a caring community within the art classroom."20 Loh's article is the result of her journal entries and reflections from an action research project she conducted in two art classes of 14-year old boys. Her conclusion of her project is that by creating a space that fosters collaborative dialogue, a community is built between instructor and students which engages and improves learning.

**Collective Learning:** Similar, but in contrast to collaborative dialogue, is collective learning as explored by Ehsan Akbari et al.21 The goal of collaborative dialogue is to develop one communal meaning or understanding.
of a work of art or concept. But, according to Akbari et al., collective learning is learning that, though built within a group working in constant proximity, results from the sharing of individual ideas and knowledge. Akbari et al. note that it is "when students share individual expressions with each other that collective learning arises."22 Akbari et al. discuss their implementation of a curriculum focused on collective learning through social media. In a program specifically designed for collective learning, students used their mobile devices to create images, collages, and other digital content to upload, share, and create a dialogue about each other's works. One assignment of particular interest discussed by Akbari et al. is the "What is it?" assignment.23 This assignment asked students to upload a photograph of something so zoomed in or cropped so closely that the other students had to determine what the photo was representing. This connects to Loh's discussion of collaborative dialogue among students, but in a collective learning context, all answers of the students would be shared as their own rather than one unified interpretation of the image.

Communal Interpretation: Another form of community building interpretive strategy in AVCE is communal interpretation. Terry Barrett argues that individual interpretations of an artwork should be informed by interpretations of other people and sources.24 Although personal, or individual, interpretations are valuable and should be built from other interpretations, left as is they run the risk of being "too personal," subjective, and "overly idiosyncratic."25 This view contrasts with Akbari et al. in their discussion of the value of collective learning. To create a communal interpretation Barrett grouped students together in small groups and asked two guiding questions to begin the interpretation. Barrett suggests instructors ask "What do you see?" and "What does it mean?"26 The first question relies only on descriptive skills, which can help ease students into the interpretive second question about meaning. And by grouping students together their small community conversation engages listening and visual skills. These skills are engaged, according to Barrett, when students help each other see details others may have missed. More importantly, building upon each other's individual interpretations could "contribute more knowledgeable and comprehensive understandings" for all in the group.27

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)

VTS, developed by Housen and Yenowine, is also a pedagogical strategy that uses communal interpretation strategies to build critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students. According to VTS, it is "a method initiated by teacher-facilitated discussions of art images and documented to have a cascading positive effect on both teachers and students."28 Like Barrett's method of asking open-ended questions to prompt student visual and
critical-thinking skills, VTS provides a three-question model beyond Barrett's two questions that lend themselves to additional questions for discussion building. The VTS suggested questions are: 1. "What is going on in this picture?" 2. "What do you see that makes you say that?" 3. "What else do you see?" The sequence of questions, suggested to be asked to a group of students, encourages close looking and discussion to promote dialogue among students looking at a work of art or object of visual culture. But VTS is not solely focused on art education curricula. VTS founders advocate using VTS as a way to encourage problem-solving discussion, critical thinking, and visual literacy skills in many subjects including art, math, and science. This approach to interpretation and discussion enables students to use existing visual and cognitive skills to develop confidence and experience, learning to use what they already know to figure out what they don’t; they are then prepared to explore other complex subject matter alone and with peers.

The group discussion built from VTS enables students to develop a willingness to share their ideas in a safe, supportive community environment of their peers, which encourages further discussion and deeper understandings of content and perspectives.

**Museum Education**

In addition to learning valuable lessons from scholarship about community building through discussion and object making, I have also learned and found very valuable concepts from museum education research and practices in AVCE. Building from my understanding of Elizabeth Vallance's research in which she offers teaching strategies from museum educators to classroom educators, I applied this concept to teaching art history to undergraduates. Specifically, I have used Nina Simon's approaches to encourage and value visitor engagement, knowledge and content as well as Simon's development of audience-centered programming, like visitor generated labels, to engage undergraduate students in the classroom.

**Commonplaces**

Vallance proposes the idea of museum education as a model for classroom practice by elaborating on the commonalities between pedagogy in art museums and classrooms by examining four traditional models of K-12 curriculum. The first model Vallance discusses is the commonplaces of education, developed by Joseph Schwab, wherein every educational setting can
be defined by subject matter, teacher, students, and milieu. The second model is the Tyler Rationale. Ralph Tyler argued that curriculum should be evaluated based on sequencing of objectives and how those objectives are met. Vallance describes the third model as ways of “valuing the curriculum,” in which Duane Huebner calls for teachers to evaluate their teaching based on five perspectives in a model similar to the Tyler Rationale. Model four is “conflicting conceptions of curriculum.” Vallance argues that the conflicting conceptions model does not focus on finding commonalities in models of teaching or curriculum building. The conflicting conceptions model, instead, seeks to find areas of disagreement in educational theory to propose change.

Vallance proposed changes to thinking about curriculum by taking each of the four models for K-12 curriculum and applying it to a specific case in museum education. One application is Joseph Schwab’s theories of “commonplaces.” According to Schwab, museums and classrooms share an emphasis on four key areas: subject matter, teacher, students, and milieu. Vallance connects Schwab’s concepts between classrooms and museums by paralleling subject-matter with the collection, a teacher with a museum educator and/or curator, students with the audience, and milieu (classroom) with museum space. After exploring the commonalities between classroom and museum education through all four models, “but with modifications,” Vallance proposes a fifth model—the narrative model—which builds on visitor-centered constructivist ideas of curriculum development through the structure of “purpose, engagement, and reflection” focused on the visitors. Applied to Schwab’s ideas of commonplaces, Vallance’s fifth model also applies to classroom curriculum. The fifth model proposed by Vallance is designed around visitor narratives and experiences, which encourages community building through dialogue.

**Participatory Museum Education**

According to Nina Simon “a participatory cultural institution is a place where visitors can create, share, and connect with each other around content.” A participatory museum program is an audience-centered activity or project that facilitates this creation, sharing, and connecting with visitors. Through a participatory program, the museum visitor is also able to engage with an institution (via their objects) in a multi-directional rather than transactional experience. This larger cultural shift in museum practices from the traditional model of one-way dissemination of information from museum to visitor into a co-produced experience. The visitor’s knowledge and experiences are not only considered, but also engaged, and may result in more meaningful and relevant experiences for visitor via communal engagement with art and the museum. For the visitor, the museum becomes a relevant,
accessible, and useful place for leisure or educational activities. Therefore, the museum gains new audiences who feel their contributions and participation help make the museum relevant and accessible. Simon's ideas relate well to TAB in that Simon wants to encourage choice and values the voice of the visitor/student. And her ideas of communal dialogue and interpretation support scholarship from Barrett, Loh, and VTS.

Community Among Colleagues

**Professional Learning Communities:** Linda Whelihan argues that the creative collaborations we plan for and facilitate among our students should also be encouraged among our colleagues. She discusses her experience of creating a "DIY professional learning community" built out of her desire for a reduced sense of isolation, and growth in her teaching and artistic practice. Whelihan defines professional learning communities as "collaborative groups within schools that meet regularly across grade levels and disciplines." They do this to create a supportive environment for reflective discussion and learning.

Whelihan builds from this commonly accepted definition of the professional learning community by applying what she does within her art classroom, such as craft making or visiting art museums with colleagues, to also encourage creativity development among participants. Whelihan's DIY professional development sessions lasted for three months and included three other elementary school art teachers in Vermont. The weekly sessions at a local museum resulted in collaborative dialogue and brainstorming about lesson plans and activity ideas for their students. Results of these development sessions were an increased sense of community among educators, who were co-creating lessons together, many of which were interdisciplinary lessons. According to Whelihan the teachers "had formed a neighborhood, borrowing books and ideas from one another." Whelihan's study adds much-needed perspective to the paucity of research regarding professional development for art educators.

**Peer Mentoring:** Like Whelihan, Karin Tollefson-Hall also discusses reducing isolation through community building. Tollefson-Hall focuses her discussion on the art education/graduate student experience. She does so because, as she notes, our graduate student experience and academic relationships formed in our program will "carry over" into our teaching even after our program is finished. Tollefson-Hall's article centers on the importance of creating a formal peer mentoring program within art education graduate programs. She notes that in higher education peer mentoring programs are primarily limited to studio art, so there are few for art education graduate students. Tollefson-Hall explores theories of traditional mentorship versus peer mentorship, recounts an implementation of a peer mentoring
program, and concludes that sense of community and collaboration among peers was developed. Ultimately, the benefits of peer mentoring are that the mentees and mentors both built supportive connections with one another through which they were able to "provide scaffolding" to build knowledge and reflect on their teaching practice.

Analysis

Relationship of the Project to the Literature Reviewed

Through my AVCE training, I have found much inspiration for teaching undergraduate AVCE and art history from the literature reviewed. Admittedly, none of the literature in the above review focuses specifically on teaching art history. Because of this, I have been challenged to apply concepts from AVCE to teaching art history. And it was not too difficult. Thinking with Vallance via Schwab, museums and classrooms are commonplaces. Building a community of learners engaged with art is the goal of each institution. And that is my goal. So, I have taken the AVCE literature discussed in this report, modified and adapted its traditional definitions, like Whelihan, and have created lessons and classroom environments specifically intended to encourage engagement and collaboration to build a "community of learners."

Object Making

Although art making for study skills and choice-based art education are approaches designed for teaching art making to children, I have found them both useful tools for undergraduate students in art history and art and visual culture education courses. The guiding principles of each model and of art making, even on a basic, non-studio level, engage critical thinking and problem solving. This keeps undergraduate students task-focused and inquisitive. It also helps build a sense of community in the classroom furthering discussion and learning.

In Spring 2016 I taught an undergraduate foundations of AVCE course. I felt wholly unprepared to do so because my competency was in teaching art history, not teaching art and not teaching future educators. But, this class required that I teach undergraduates how to think about teaching art making through different theoretical frameworks. Based on my AVCE training I noted an emphasis on art making and visual expression for class discussions to help illuminate the topic. This art making aligns with the "Study Skills Tradition." But, it also aligns with a guiding principle of choice-based art education in TAB, which is to facilitate and encourage student engagement and creativity through meaningful art making. So, following the TAB principle in which I understood my role of teacher as a model, facilitator, and demonstrator, I had
my AVCE students create visual responses in every class. I provided basic supplies for art making, or they could bring to class whatever media they wanted to work with, and several did. My approach was to give students ideas to choose from for how they could model their teaching style through the "Study Skills Tradition" and TAB framework, as had many of my professors in the AVCE program.

A specific example of modeling TAB behavior in my teaching is when I held our class outside at the campus turtle pond for a lesson about context-based art education. The reading for that day emphasized using nature as a way to engage art students. I modeled for my students a lesson focused on creating field guides of campus flora and fauna. They worked in self-formed groups to locate, document, and sketch plants and animals in their campus environment. As groups, they chose what flora and fauna would be included and how. Afterward, we discussed the assignment in relation to readings about using environmental issues and climate change awareness in the art classroom. Then I facilitated discussion about their experience and ways in which they, as future K-12 art teachers, could modify the field book concept to still allow for exploration of their own students' interests and environments.

This type of modeled lesson plan in which my students engaged and applied their ideas in a group art making project and post-lesson reflective discussion helped create a community of students within our classroom. By mimicking and elaborating on the model I provided, and wherein their choices were encouraged and valued, they felt safe and were able to build on their own and each other's experience and interests with content taught in meaningful dialogue. I found value in the concept of art making for study skills approach discussed by Brown and Koreznik in connection with TAB. It helped my AVCE students grasp concepts multi-modally, and it provided them with a model to develop their practice in teaching studio art.

I recently applied the same approach to active learning through "Study Skills Tradition" and TAB principles to teach an art history survey course. In class discussions, students used play dough to show me their understanding of sculpture-in-the-round versus relief sculpture when we discussed Paleolithic and Neolithic culture and art. They designed ceremonial vases (2-D and 3-D) to reflect their understanding of registers, hierarchal scale, and ritualistic visual narrative when we discussed Mesopotamia and Egyptian art. As self-selected teams, they used index cards and paper clips to reconstruct famous Gothic cathedrals, using images and descriptions in their textbook as guides. For their midterm and final project, several students chose creative art making projects, such as the visual evolution of Greek pottery and a Chinese-style landscape painting based on Xie He's six principles. One student wrote, narrated, recruited other classmates as actors, and produced a radio show discussing freedoms of women in Etruscan and Egyptian cultures as seen in their art.

Like my AVCE students, art history students had to reflect on their art...
making. Their written reflections showed engagement and learning on unexpected levels, even to themselves, building new understandings through art making in their self-directed inquiry process. One student reported having a completely different understanding of Greek pottery design after having engaged with it, and another noted the intensity of metalworking required for making stained glass after having designed her set of windows modeled from ones in the textbook. Several students were upset by the paucity of research and discussion in the textbook about non-Western cultures after having recreated works they studied at the Arizona State Museum. This showed me that students, many of whom are not artists or art students, were engaging with larger concepts of the history of art making and the discipline of art history through art making connected to art historical lessons.

Brown and Korzenik note that art making for study skills practices are not only beneficial to students training to be artists. These art making activities "give access to art making processes" to students who might not have ever considered themselves or desired to be an artist. Admittedly, I have had to adjust how I implement both approaches according to the tradition of how my discipline has and remains to be taught. Unfortunately, I am not able to design a classroom studio space conducive to art-making beyond basic practice. However, in the traditional layout classroom, grouping desks together and supplying basic art making materials has proven to be effective for survey level art history students. By engaging in the art making process they choose, non-art students have a low-stakes, basic level, multi-modal and more enriching experience of various artistic processes the textbook and lectures cannot provide. The "Study Skills Tradition" and choice-based approach of art education, though intended for studio art or art making courses, has proven instrumental in developing community as well as engagement in my art history survey teaching approach.

Discussion as Community Builder

In my experience as an art history student at the undergraduate and graduate level no matter the class demographic, dynamic, or course, students were typically shown a work of art and asked, as a class, "What does this mean?" This is my understanding of the accepted tradition of teaching art history, which has value as a pedagogical tradition. As a student, for me, it was terrifying because I rarely felt equipped to adequately answer it, especially in front of so many strangers in the room. With interpretation, there is a perceived right answer which implies there are endless wrong answers to this question. I did the readings, and I took notes in class. But as an undergraduate in the intro-level survey courses this all-too-common occurrence was more unnerving because I was not part of the art history community yet. It was not my home, and I did not have the competence of that community, nor did my
other undergraduate classmates. So, I felt I had nothing of value to offer, especially in front of other students.

In remembering my experiences as an undergraduate student in the survey course, I wanted to encourage students to share their ideas but with a method that would avoid inflicting on them the fear of interpretation. So, I have applied Terry Barrett's model of communal interpretation in connection with Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). The way I have applied communal interpretation in my art history and AVCE classes is by following Barrett's suggestion to group students together. This grouping also helps, as noted, in art making activities. Barrett notes that "To interpret is to make something meaningful for ourselves" and then we share it with others. Interpretation is a personal act, which can make students (such as my past undergraduate self) feel vulnerable and exposed, especially if the interpretation is so personal and individual that it confuses others. Therefore, to have small groups develop, build, then share their communal interpretation helps reduce the vulnerability connected with interpretation. The act of sharing with only one to three others who are also sharing their personal interpretations with each other rather than sharing with 20-200 others creates a safe space for having their interpretations confirmed or elaborated upon by others.

The key to developing discussion in communal interpretation exercises though is to use the discussion by Sandlin, Schultz, and Burdick and challenge the way I present works of art to the students. Rather than showing a work of art on a PowerPoint slide, waiting for the silence to pass when I ask for interpretation, and then moving on to providing the accepted scholarly interpretation, I have the groups discuss it to solve the problem presented, which is the "What does it mean?" question that Barrett asks. First, I have the students write the three VTS questions first. Then, when they are ready, I show a mystery image, one not in the textbook. I do so to develop collective learning skills, inspired from the "What is it?" assignment discussed by Akbari, et.al. At that point, each group uses their collective experiences and knowledge to answer each question plus one question asking them to connect their interpretation to the textbook's discussion of that culture to engage their close looking, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. After 20-25 minutes each group shares their interpretation and comparison with the class to build on all groups' ideas.

For example, in our discussion of Southeast Asian art and culture, I combined elements of VTS, collaborative dialogue, communal interpretation and collective learning. I showed work from the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston's collection. The museum information noted that it was not known who the damaged sculpture represented, but it had a date and culture of origin. Students used their understanding of the text, their experiences, and discussion of VTS questions with each other in a collective learning situation to develop a communal interpretation of the work. Then they found an example work in
the text with comparable visual features and interpretation to support their communal interpretations. But the interpretations were individual to each group, and we, as a class, took the time to discuss and value each. Our class discussion allowed everyone to see what other groups were thinking and seeing in the same work. This point was discussed throughout the semester about what art historians do, which is to continually ask questions and make connections to build a communal understanding of art and visual culture.

Museum Education

Building on Elizabeth Vallance's ideas of classrooms and museums being able to share ideas and practices through visitor/student narratives, I have designed and used an online assignment inspired by Nina Simon's audience-centered practices. I created the assignment focused on museum labels for undergraduate art history survey students, but it is open enough to be used in intro to visual arts courses as well as AVCE courses. I built this assignment from an activity I completed as a graduate student in a museum studies course. I took concepts of that assignment, modified them and built them into an online version for non-major undergraduate level students. I designed it as a 40-50-minute-long fully online lesson accessed via Prezi and using Google Docs. Objectives for students are to discuss museums, museum labels, and then create a museum label for one work in a non-specified encyclopedic art museum. After they complete this work, they reflect on their labels in connections with their majors and other labels by classmates. They do this through a collaborative Google Doc set up for each of the four discussion activities. The reference material I assigned for this lesson are: excerpts from The Participatory Museum by Nina Simon, excerpts from "Label Writing Activity" by Judy Rand, examples from the Louvre Museum and the Art Institute of Chicago, The Odditorium, and the American Alliance of Museums annual "Excellence in Exhibition Label Writing Competition."57

The rationale for this lesson is to increase student understanding of and engagement with art through a creative activity relying on concepts of constructivist learning, participatory education, and collective learning. I chose a museum label making activity because in completing a more advanced version of this assignment I was introduced to literature that noted how irrelevant most people find labels to be, though they are an important educational component.58 This leads to low attendance rates for museums, particularly art museums. In thinking with Vallance and the idea of commonplaces, strategies for addressing low engagement in museums could also work to address low engagement in art history classrooms. By designing a lesson that encourages students' experiences, voices, and interests to be part of the creative writing experience, I intended to increase a sense of belonging and develop a community of learners through museum education practices.59 I will
continue looking to Vallance's research on commonalities between effective classroom and museum practices. Understanding both as reflections of the other has allowed me to incorporate critical discussion of museums via a creative activity in my art history curriculum.

Community Among Colleagues

According to Parker J. Palmer, "good teaching is about more than technique." Palmer is among many scholars, including Marilyn Weimer, across disciplines who advocate for building community as educators by having meaningful discussions about their own and others’ teaching on a regular basis. Through AVCE scholarship and my personal experiences with AVCE, I have learned that this is essential to helping my pedagogical practice as well as for building a (second) home community for myself among scholars in AVCE and across the humanities.

Palmer argues that talking about teaching with other educators is "essential in creating a community of discourse about teaching and learning." Weimer also argues for the discussion of teaching and academic experience among colleagues across disciplines. But as Whelihan notes, the scholarship of professional development in AVCE is scarce, and this may stem from what Tollefson-Hall notes as a lack of community building through peer-mentoring programs in AVCE graduate programs. Both researchers argue that professional development and peer mentoring are essential to community building and development of teaching practice.

As discussed by Palmer, Tollefson-Hall, Weimer, and Whelihan, the benefits of this community of peers are an increased comfort level in reflective discussion about teaching and a higher willingness to elicit constructive criticism and differing opinions regarding practice. It can also decrease the sense of isolation among new faculty and graduate student teaching assistants. Isolation, as noted by Whelihan and Tollefson-Hall, is a common condition for many educators. In their study consisting primarily of humanities graduate students Grady, et al. argue isolation is also a prevalent condition among most graduate students. Therefore, community building early in any humanities graduate program is beneficial. Additionally, when scholars create their own professional development community, they surround themselves with other educators who are also interested in student-centered approaches to improve their practice. So, their informal meetings become active research brainstorming sessions of collaborative dialogue and collective learning in which they share ideas and inspire one another.

Conclusion

Sandlin, Schultz, and Burdick contend that "the basic assumptions
undergirding most educational research adhere to largely commonsensical cultural constructs." With this statement, the authors are claiming that what we all accept as meaningful and effective research about, and I argue, ways of teaching is largely based on accepted tradition. These authors ask us to reconsider and challenge our assumptions about what education is, has been, and could be. After having exploring literature and practices within the AVCE community and seeing how I could apply my new competencies into my art history teaching practice, I contend that the importance of building a community of learners is critical to engaging learners and practitioners of art history.

It is from my understanding of the importance of community building that I have incorporated AVCE scholarship about the benefits of object making, choice-based art education, discussion as community builder, museum education, and community among colleagues. All of these key AVCE concepts have also proven valuable and, in my experience, are all products of a community built in the classroom and my community built among colleagues. I will continue to focus on community building as a pedagogical goal because as Wenger argues when you build a community each member agrees to contribute to the community's "joint enterprise" through mutual engagement. Mutual understanding is thereby built between myself and students as well as myself and colleagues that helps us in our joint enterprise of developing their learning and continuing my learning.

Notes

2 Ibid., 227.


10 Ibid., 132.

11 Ibid., 133.

12 Ibid., 136.


14 Ibid.

15 Wenger, "Communities of Practice and Social Learning Systems," 229.

16 Ibid.


18 Ibid.

19 Ibid. Loh sets out to describe five attributes. But, the article does not include the third attribute. Therefore, I only discuss the four attributes actually discussed by Loh.

20 Ibid.


22 Ibid., 21.

23 Ibid., 23.


25 Ibid., 296-297.

26 Ibid., 293.

27 Ibid., 294.

28 VTS.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.


33 Vallance, 348.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., 351.

38 Simon, 1.

39 Ibid.


41 Ibid., 15.
42 Ibid., 9.
43 Tollefson-Hall, "Building a Teaching Community through Peer Mentoring," 30.
44 Ibid., 31
45 Ibid.
46 Vallance, 343-358.
47 Wenger, "Communities of Practice and Social Learning Systems," 229.
48 Brown, M., & Korzenik, D., 3.
52 Brown, M., & Korzenik, D., 138.
53 Barrett, 292.
54 Barrett, 291-301.
55 Jennifer A. Sandlin, Brian D. Schultz, & Jake Burdick. "Understanding, mapping, 
   and exploring the terrain of public pedagogy." In Handbook of Public Pedagogy: Education 
   and Learning Beyond Schooling edited by Jennifer A. Sandlin, Brian D. Schultz, & Jake 
56 Akbari, et. al, "This Allowed Us to See What Others Were Thinking," 23.
58 Steven Bitgood. "The Role of Attention on Designing Effective Interpretive 
59 Etienne Wenger. Communities in Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity. Cambridge: 
60 Palmer, P.J. "Good Talk about Good Teaching: Improving Teaching Through 
61 Weimer, Learner-Centered Teaching.
63 Weimer, Learner-Centered Teaching.
64 See Whelihan, "Do-It-Yourself Professional Learning Communities"; Tollefson-Hall, 
   "Building a Teaching Community through Peer Mentoring."
65 Ibid.
66 Rebecca K., Rachel LaTouche, Jamie Oslawski-Lopez, Alyssa Powers, & Kristina 
   Simacke. "Betwixt and Between: The Social Position and Stress Experiences of 
67 Jennifer A. Sandlin, Brian D. Schultz, & Jake Burdick. "Understanding, mapping, 
   and exploring the terrain of public pedagogy," 2.
68 Wenger, "Communities of Practice and Social Learning Systems," 229.
Other Works Consulted


Encouraging Students to Collaboratively Use Twenty-First Century Learning Tools

Shawn Tucker
Elon University

In his 2010 TED talk “Bring on the Learning Revolution,” Sir Ken Robinson explores what he describes as a human crisis. This crisis is a poor use of human talents and vast human resources. Robinson puts forward that current educational practices disconnect people from their talents and their passions. This disconnection brings about the tremendous loss of human creativity and contributions. Robinson calls for a reconsideration and then a revolution of educational practices to address this human resource crisis. Inspired by Robinson’s call, this research questions all-too-common educational assumptions. At one time, the center of knowledge was the library. Instructors had a command of the basic knowledge and the resources in the library, and a large part of education was getting students to use resources therein. In the twenty-first century, much of what in the past was found in the library is now found online. The first goal of this project, of this revision of educational practice, was to train students on how to use online resources to become people who can learn independently of an instructor. The second goal was to encourage students to use those tools collaboratively, to use them in conjunction with other students, in order to learn more effectively.

While Robinson’s insights inspired the course redesign so that students can better use twenty-first century learning tools, Matthew Lieberman’s insights about social learning were behind the collaborative thrust of this redesign. In Lieberman’s book Social: Why our Brains are Wired to Connect, the author emphasizes the tremendous human need for social connection. Lieberman goes so far as to propose that Maslow’s famous Hierarchy of Needs is exactly wrong, and that our most fundamental need for human survival and thriving is to be socially connected and cared for. Lieberman’s
chapter “Educating the Social Brain” cites current research to highlight the value of social learning techniques like peer tutoring and learning-for-teaching.\(^3\) Even more current research that supports Lieberman’s ideas about the value of social learning includes George Jacobs and Nicolas Greliche’s insights about how students all benefit from learning and working together.\(^4\) These scholars go on to add strategies educators can use to persuade students that learning with peers increases instead of diminishing their success. While this re-design encouraged students to use twenty-first century learning tools, it also encouraged them to use them collaboratively, to use them with other students as a way to maximize learning.

This research involved a re-design of elements of my Humanities course. The course is called Laughter and the Humanities, and it is composed mostly of first-year students at Elon University, a small, private, liberal arts university. The course fulfills general studies requirements, and it attracts a large percentage of students in the pre-professional schools. To reach the re-design goals of encouraging students to use twenty-first century tools and to use them collaboratively, the project had two components. The first component was to deliberately train students on how to use twenty-first century learning tools. Those tools include resources like Wikipedia, YouTube, Google scholar, the Khan Academy, and other online resources. While I already use these resources in my class, I foregrounded these resources and how to use them more deliberately. The second step involved changing the course exams. Previously, for each exam, students generated a piece of writing for a specific audience. For example, the course’s second unit deals with dark or black humor. On this exam students must write a letter to a hypothetical relative who is antagonistic toward both the arts and dark humor. This letter to a “Cranky Uncle Dan” required that students use evidence from the works we had studied to persuade this apprehensive relative about the value of art that treats tragic, painful, or taboo material or content. The change I made was to the exam, specifically to the works of art students must treat in the letter. Previously I required students to address four works of my choosing for the exam. Students were not told beforehand which of the works we had studied in the unit they would be asked to write about. They were encouraged to prepare to write about all of them. For the revised exam letter, in addition to three works we had studied in the unit, I required that students use a work we did not study in class. I announced this work at the beginning of the unit, giving students plenty of time to learn about it. Students had to use their twenty-first century learning resources and skills to learn about that work of art independently of the instructor. Finally, to encourage collaboration, students were offered two and a half percentage points of extra credit on the exam if they studied for the exam with a study group. Students who wanted the extra credit had to email me a picture of them studying with their group, and they
also had to provide a short discussion of how helpful studying with a group had been.

**Methods**

In order to determine the effectiveness of this change, I compared the essays in the revised exams against the archived essays in previous exams. The exams given in the fall of 2015 used the previous, unmodified approach. Starting in the spring term, 2016, students took the revised exam, an exam where they had to use a work that was not examined in class. I developed a rubric to examine how effectively students used information about works of art in their letter (see appendix 1). I compared how well students used information and evidence about works we studied to how well students used information and evidence about a work that students studied independently of the instructor (appendix 2 has the contrasting exam assignments).

In November 2015, I submitted a protocol to Elon’s IRB to get approval to do this research. I provided the consent form that I would send to students as well as the parameters and the objectives of the research. In December 2015 I was notified that my project had been approved. Each student was subsequently contacted and was given the opportunity to participate or not. The essays were then coded using the evaluation rubric. This evaluation rubric also includes three evaluation levels. Papers ranked as “excellent” use at least three pieces of specific, clear evidence from all four works of art. They also show that the writer knows the works well and can use them as part of the larger argument. Papers coded as “Very Good/Good” use some evidence from all four works, but the evidence from some works may be weaker than others. Some of the evidence might be rather vague. A “fair” letter uses only a fair amount of evidence, and some works may be really weak (samples of the coded exams are appendix 3).

**Results**

Below is the data from the evaluation of the exam letters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2015</th>
<th>Winter 2016</th>
<th>Spring 2016</th>
<th>Fall 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good/Good</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here is the same data presented as percentages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2015</th>
<th>Winter 2016</th>
<th>Spring 2016</th>
<th>Fall 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good/Good</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

The unrevised exams were given in the fall of 2015 and winter of 2016. Revised exams, exams with essays that required students to incorporate a work not discussed in class, were given in the spring and fall of 2016. The strongest exams were the ones produced by students in the fall of 2016, students who were addressing a work not examined in class. The first year of the implementation of the new exams saw a fair essay and a few more very good/good essays and fewer excellent ones compared with the last time the unrevised exams were given. The first iteration of this revision resulted, therefore, in slightly fewer substantive essays, but, learning from this data, I was able to be more deliberate about training students on how to use online tools.
Conclusion

Encouraging students to use online tools and then to work collaboratively resulted in stronger exam essays. Furthermore, this re-design allowed me to add one more work to each unit. For the first exam I added another painting, for the second I added a poem, for the third I added a film, and for the fourth I added a play. The revision prompted me to be much more deliberate and intentional in how I train students to use twenty-first century tools. During the first class of each unit, I gave students the writing prompt for the unit’s exam. That meant that from the start of the unit students knew what work they would have to learn about outside of class. I spent time during the first day of each unit having a class discussion about how students will use twenty-first century learning tools to find out about the work. I connected this very deliberately with how they use those same tools to prepare for every class. We have had very fruitful discussion about how to use (and not use) YouTube, Google, and other online resources as ways to learn about works of art. This deliberate foregrounding of the tools and the independent learning skills has helped me be more intentional and has helped students clearly understand what they are doing and what they are learning.

While the data above shows that students can bring knowledge acquired independently of the instructor to bear on the exam, it does not address the collaborative and social learning side of the research. I do not have strong data on this element. As mentioned above, I offered two- and one-half percentage points of extra credit to students who prepared for their exams by studying with study groups. I have consistently had between 60% and 75% of students take advantage of this extra credit and prepare for exams with study groups. In addition, I find that students who do prepare with a study group report enjoying the experience and getting a lot out of it. They may be responding more to the extra credit than the real value of the study group, but my impression from the almost universal enthusiasm for it is that students genuinely find it a useful and effective way to learn. Many have commented via email about how much they have learned from studying with others.

Notes

3 Ibid., 275-89.
EMAIL TO CRANKY UNCLE DAN

Your Uncle Dan complains a lot about college. He’s a very practical man, and studying anything in college that does not lead clearly to some well-paying job seems foolish to him. And then he found out that you are taking a laughter class! He is beside himself, seeing such a class as a useless waste of time. Oh, and on top of that, Uncle Dan happens to be someone who is rather easily offended. He thinks that dark humor or gallows humor is offensive and inappropriate.

So you just got an email from Uncle Dan. In this email, he gives his usual complaint about how you are wasting your time in your useless laughter class. In a clean, persuasive, and insightful email, respond to Uncle Dan. Your email must persuade him that art can be a powerful response to tragedy. To really persuade Uncle Dan, your email must feature an evidence-based, persuasive argument about how art can powerfully respond to tragedy. To support your argument, you must use plenty of clear evidence from four (4) works we have studied. Those works are:

- Man Ray The Gift
- Kubrick’s Dr. Strangelove
- Kara Walker’s Slavery! Slavery!
- Fleisher’s Zombieland OR Essaydi’s Les Femmes du Maroc: Grande Odalisque 2

Assume that Uncle Dan does not know about these works of art, so you will need to draw clear evidence from them to make your points. You do not need to summarize the works. Instead, use your expertise to describe the works, using plenty of clear evidence from those works to support your argument.

Spring 2016 and Fall 2016

EMAIL TO CRANKY UNCLE DAN

Your Uncle Dan complains a lot about college. He’s a very practical man, and studying anything in college that does not lead clearly to some well-paying
job seems foolish to him. And then he found out that you are taking a laughter class! He is beside himself, seeing such a class as a useless waste of time. Oh, and on top of that, Uncle Dan happens to be someone who is rather easily offended. He thinks that dark humor or gallows humor is offensive and inappropriate.

So you just got an email from Uncle Dan. In this email, he gives his usual complaint about how you are wasting your time in your useless laughter class. In a clean, persuasive, and insightful email, respond to Uncle Dan. Your email must persuade him that art can be a powerful response to tragedy. To really persuade Uncle Dan, your email must feature an evidence-based, persuasive argument about how art can powerfully respond to tragedy. To support your argument, you must use plenty of clear evidence from four (4) works we have studied. Those works are:

- Kubrick’s Dr. Strangelove
- Kara Walker’s Slavery! Slavery!
- Fleisher’s Zombieland OR Essaydi’s Les Femmes du Maroc: Grande Odalisque 2
- Siegfried Sassoon “The Hero”

Assume that Uncle Dan does not know about these works of art, so you will need to draw clear evidence from them to make your points. You do not need to summarize the works. Instead, use your expertise to describe the works, using plenty of clear evidence from those works to support your argument.
Book Review

For those of us pertaining to the humanities branch of the current U.S. higher education system, having to defend our *raison d’être* has become a daily struggle. Whether at the administrative levels of our own universities or the federal government, the price society is willing to pay for the maintenance of what Socrates called the fostering of “an ethical predisposition” is becoming dangerously low. In this context, making the “case” for the humanities, as author Eric Touya aptly calls it, has become almost a genre in itself. One need only glance at studies on this subject. As Frederick Luis Aldama’s *Why the Humanities Matter* (2008), or the innumerable TED talks defending the humanities, most notably Liz Coleman’s “A Call to Reinvent Liberal Arts Education,” (2014) or Patrick Awuah’s “How to Educate Leaders? Liberal Arts” (2014) show us, the future rests not only on the humanities’ value to society, but also on our own ability to argue for them. Metaphorically, today’s public arena represents for the humanities a courtroom where every citizen is a potential juror.

It comes as no surprise that Touya begins his study by focusing on the link between the cultivation of liberal arts and the survival of democracy. In the first chapter, titled “The Humanities in the City,” he opposes Stanley Fish’s thesis that the humanities are an end in themselves, and sets out to prove their utilitarian value. In doing so, he reminds us primarily that current discussions on the topic are not new. Since their inception, the *artes liberales* have had to fend for themselves (the Socrates/Sophists debates), because “the political implications of education revealed that if it was necessary for citizens to be virtuous it was equally essential to form righteous leaders.” A lengthy discussion is dedicated here to Montaigne’s ideas on ethnocentrism and alterity, as they draw attention to *how* one learns and not just *what* is learned through education. For Touya, Montaigne underscores “the importance of
acquiring empathy” and highlights “the political significance and value of critical thinking, cross cultural awareness, and interdisciplinary approaches to learning.”3 Keeping in mind the current US and world political and economic climate, the fostering of these qualities in today’s youth is more important than ever.

The second chapter, aptly named “Humanizing Economics,” focuses our attention on imperative topics, such as the confluence between the markets and the liberal arts, as well as the necessity to put a human face on the global economy. Here the author decries the gradual rupture of economics from morality due to its ascension to scientific autonomy. In turn, Touya proposes as a solution the “demystification of economic science.”4 For the critic, this constitutes the first step towards humanizing economics, because in “presenting the economic reality as a product of market forces, a fact of nature against which no intervention was warranted, the dominant economic thinking imposed its views in an authoritarian fashion.”5 Furthermore, in his close analysis of the novel The Grapes of Wrath by Nobel Prize winner John Steinbeck, Touya clearly shows that through literature, economics students can empathize with the less fortunate, and thus become aware of the “consequences and limits of economic growth and development.”6

Chapter 3, “Searching for STEM’s telos,” delves into what is perhaps the most poignant dichotomy in Academia today, as the antithesis Humanities/STEM lies at the heart of this issue ever since the Arnold-Huxley debate at the end of the 19th Century. If Thomas Huxley insisted in opposing science to the belles lettres as true versus artificial knowledge (a view that continues to have supporters to this day, evident in the constant challenging and undermining of the latter), Touya argues that science has multiple limitations. Despite Auguste Comte’s positivism, which calls for objective neutrality in scientific research, this assumption of objectivity can “actually have a negative impact on scientific study as well as culture in general.”7 Here the author harshly criticizes and warns against the blind divinization of scientific inquiry, since not all questions central to the human experience are answerable to science,8 nor can STEM fully explain what it means to be human.9 Instead, Touya argues for an interdisciplinary approach and a reconceptualization of scientific and technological training that must include a greater emphasis on what the humanities teach us through ethical and historical considerations.”10 In his view, both Leonardo da Vinci and Albert Einstein aptly exemplified this interdisciplinarity through a constant mélange in their work of science and art.

The fourth and final chapter, “Transcendent Humanities,” focuses on the field of the humanities itself, encompassing both its fortes and limitations, such as the transmission of cultural and linguistic heritage, the fostering of empathy and civic responsibility, as well as opening doors to perception and comprehension. In the author’s own words, “Being educated through the
practice of the arts, letters and poetry frees young souls who, as prisoners in a technical and utilitarian world, increasingly ignore themselves and others.”

On the other hand, the limits of the humanities were questioned particularly after the Holocaust and Theodor Adorno’s famous conclusion that poetry is dead. Thus, Touya reminds us, it became apparent that “Western civilization neither saved us from Auschwitz nor made it impossible.” However, in his discussion of Paul Celan’s poem “Todesfuge” (Death Fugue), Véronique Tadjo’s novel The Shadow of Imana (which recalls the Rwandan genocide), and the works of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra conducted by Edward Said’s friend Daniel Barenboim, Eric Touya demonstrates that “humanity could only redeem itself through the absolute recognition of the other.”

To conclude, the reader should expect to find in Eric Touya’s study a well-researched and grounded defense of not just the humanities as a conglomerate of academic disciplines, but of all those human endeavors that aim to promote civic service and the equitable progress of communities and cultures. Backed by concrete data and a profound knowledge of the impact higher education has on students and society at large, the author reminds us that the “task of the artist, writer and critic is political,” because “what they uncover is a sense of infinite responsibility towards the other.”

Even so, while closing the pages of The Case for Humanities one cannot help but wonder — since it is impossible to ignore the gloomy political climate of our country — if his message will ever reach the right ears. Sadly, those of us who take the time to read Touya’s study are not the ones in need of convincing.

~Anca Koczkas
University of West Georgia

Notes

1 Touya, Case for Humanities, 23.
2 Ibid., 24.
3 Ibid., 33.
4 Ibid., 48.
5 Ibid., 51, italics are mine.
6 Ibid., 65.
7 Ibid., 70.
8 Ibid., 70.
9 Ibid., 83.
10 Ibid., 89.
11 Ibid., 101.
12 Ibid., 111.
13 Ibid., 112.
14 Ibid., 121.