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**Capstone Project**  
Faculty Teaching Certificate Program 2005-2006

**Background**

I believe visual arts courses to inherently incorporate many active learning techniques. Students work individually on projects as well as collaboratively in both pairs and groups. Open format discussions on artists, processes, techniques, demonstrations, and materials are a common daily occurrence as well as lectures and question/answer periods. Students are encouraged to look beyond assignments and find ways to personalize fundamental information and incorporate course materials and concepts into their academic and non-academic work. In the visual arts students are expected to be proactive participants and engaged in their learning process and individual artistic progression.

At first, it was difficult for me to find meaningful and different ways to incorporate some of the concepts discussed at CETL meetings into my teaching practices. As I stated earlier, the visual arts are already so active in regards to student participation and learning. Also, there are the issues of visual arts courses being so objective, personalized, and at times, purely student directed, that the more formulaic practices do not always apply. At least these were my thoughts until we started discussing classroom assessment techniques. I felt that this was an area where the students and I could both benefit in various ways. I came up with two ways I could use assessment techniques in my classes, one for my students and one for me.

**PART ONE**

Up to this point, the only classroom assessment techniques I have ever used are questionnaires and/or student evaluations given to me by the institution where the course takes place. Both of which were administered at the culmination of the course. Most often the questions asked are of a generic quality, few in number, and often do not apply themselves well to the visual arts. Personal reflection and curriculum changes most often occurred after the course was over and any changes made affected the next group of individuals, not the students who originally made the suggestions. I felt this delay to be problematic and ineffective for some of my students.

**Activity**

My students are doing a more in depth evaluation of the course and my teaching practices than just the standard university issued evaluation sheet. It will be administered to students at mid-term, as well as at the final, so any changes or suggestions made can be implemented during the second part of the semester, not just after the semester has ended. In the additional evaluation students are asked questions such as; have you learn something new in this class? Have you enjoyed this class? What were your favorite processes, techniques, and/or projects? What was your least favorite part of this class? What would you change about this class to make it better? Do you think this class will help you in the future? How will you apply some of the processes, techniques, and materials covered in this class into your own artwork or art practice? What grade would you give yourself? Do you have any other comments? Course evaluations will be anonymous so students can feel free to critique the course honestly without repercussions from me.

## **Results**

Students reacted to this evaluation with enthusiasm, interest, and honesty, I received appropriate feedback and many reasonable comments and suggestions on successes in the course and future changes and/or additions to the curriculum. Reasonable changes were made for the second half of the semester and a new course outline was distributed to reflect these changes. For example, some students voiced concern about the amount of time in between course projects. After an in-class discussion it was decided to reduce the number of projects due for the second half of the semester to allow for more time to research, plan, and execute course projects. The result of this change has been increasingly more involved and difficult course work with a higher level of success and satisfaction on the students' and my part.

## **PART TWO**

The second way classroom assessment techniques will be used is in student self-assessment.

Traditionally in visual art classes; assessment has come in the form of verbal critiques or a constructive evaluation given by instructors and peers on an individual's artwork. It is the job of the individual, group, and/or instructor to give useful criticism, to deconstruct the object and evaluate its parts offering the student practical solutions and advice. Critical discussions revolve around the personal experience of the individual, technical skills exhibited, foundational elements of the work, appropriate use of materials, development of concept, execution of concept, context, artistic progression, and the development of critical judgment and aesthetic understanding of each student's artwork made over the course of the semester. Students' are asked critical questions and make appropriate comments in regards to their opinions.

## **Activity**

Up to this point in my teaching career I have never asked, or required students to document or take notes on their critiques. As far as I know, neither have any of my co-workers. What I would like to do is develop a checklist, or document that makes suggestions on what students should be thinking about in regards to their artwork. A list of general concepts and concerns to act as a conversation starter for critiques and serve as a written reminder of what was said and the direction that student is thinking about moving with their artwork. Students would prepare a portion of this written piece prior to their critiques and then make notes on the responses to their comments. This way, there is a written documentation and reminder of the students' ideas at each critique that can compliment the students' visual progression of their artwork. These documents would be collected along with their projects for evaluation and credit. I will then return them to become a part of the student's portfolio for future reference.

## **Results**

I will give this document to students two weeks before the final critique. At the final critique we will discuss what they wrote.

## **Supplemental Course Assessment**

**Instructor: Lean Hughes**

**Course:**

**Semester:**

Have you learned something new in this class? What was it?

Have you enjoyed this class? Why?

What were your favorite processes, techniques, and/or projects? Why?

What were your most successful projects? Why?

What was your least favorite part of this class? Why?

What would you change about this class to make it better?

*Do you think this class will help you in the future? Why and/ or how?*

How will you incorporate some of the processes, techniques, and materials covered in this class into your own artwork or art practice?

What grade would you give yourself for this course?

Do you have any other comments?

## **Critique Discussion Questions**

Name:

Course:

**Semester:**

### **Introduction: What is a critique?**

The word *critic*, *criticism*, *critical*, *criterion*, and *critique* all come down to us from a family of words: in Greek that refers to judging, distinguishing, and selecting. Critiques are a place for constructive evaluation of projects where students are given useful criticism, deconstructing the object and evaluating its parts with the intention of offering the student practical solutions to perceived deficiencies and acknowledging successes.

### **The components of Art:**

*Subject*- 1. In a descriptive approach to art, subject refers to the persons or things represented, as well as the artists' experiences that serve as inspiration. 2. In abstract or nonobjective forms of art, subject refers merely to the visual signs employed by the artist. In this case, the subject has little to do with anything experienced in the natural environment.

*Form*-1. The organization or inventive arrangement of all the visual elements according to the principles that will develop unity in the artwork. 2. The total appearance or organization. 3. The means by which one gives substance to an idea.

*Content*-1. The expression, essential meaning, significance, or aesthetic value of a work of art. Content refers to the sensory, subjective, psychological, or emotional properties we feel in a work of art, as opposed to our perception of its descriptive aspects alone. Content, in a sense, is that which is expressed or made manifest through form, or even as form.

### **Questions:**

What is the subject of the piece?

What story, if any, does this image tell?

What does it make you think about when you see it? Why?

What do you feel when you see it? Why?

Why did you make this piece and/or use this subject matter? What is its significance?

How are you hoping this piece will be interpreted by the viewer?

How do you know that the viewer is interpreting the piece that way?

What form does the piece take?

(Physical form and/or formal visual elements, ex. scale, shape, color, composition, etc.)

Is this form appropriate for the subject and content? How and why?

Is this piece focused on formal elements (ex. shape, color, materiality, etc.) or narrative?  
How?

Do the formal elements compliment and reinforce the narrative? How?

Are the formal elements of the piece organized well? How?

Is the quality of skill and technique high in this piece? Is it lacking? How or why?

Are the materials used appropriate and complementary to the subject?

Do you find this piece to be successful? How and why?

If not, what would you change to make this piece successful?

Any other comments?