

Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

Linking Art and Historical Context

Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

This innovative teaching practice involves linking student interests with art and historical context. The instructor begins each class with a lecture that discusses the overall theme and historical context of the work being presented to the class. The instructor's goal for each lecture is for students to determine how each piece of art reflects the time in which it was created. In order to best understand the works, students must understand and apply the concepts of historical context, iconography, and style. During each lecture, the instructor asks students about what they see, their reactions, and how the art might reflect the historical context. The instructor then discusses how contemporary events might affect the understanding or interpretation of the work. The instructor's final discussion topic is how historical and contemporary events surrounding the work align with the artist's intended message.

In order to encourage large group discussion, the instructor presents works of art that might be of interest to students. To determine which works of art might be relevant or meaningful, the instructor asks students what type of art they are interested in and what their hobbies are. For example, a student in one course liked to ride horses, so the instructor presented works of art depicting horses.