

Arts Advocacy

Value of the Arts

The College of Fine Arts will spend the 2013-14 academic year exploring the value of the arts. Each faculty member is requested to spend at least a few minutes during the semester discussing this topic with students in each course taught, including general education courses as well as courses for majors.

You are invited to use any approach that works for you and your students. On the back of this page you will find a list of “conversation starters” compiled by a committee of your colleagues. Feel free to use this list or ignore it.

If this project is successful, we will consider extending it beyond this year. The ultimate goal is that our students, by the time they graduate, will be able to articulate in their own words some type of value statement regarding the arts.

Two guidelines:

- Please try to steer the conversations to a global view of the arts rather than focusing on only one discipline.
- Please try to steer the conversations to an intrinsic value of the arts rather than focusing on more utilitarian arguments such as increasing academic achievement or enhancing the economic life of a community. These are certainly important, but we want to expand the conversation. A two-page summary of a report that discusses this distinction is attached.

Web Site

In addition to these classroom conversations, we will be adding a section to our website that includes an introduction to this topic. Following the introduction, we would like to include short quotes on the subject from our faculty. These can be printed text or short video snippets. Please consider volunteering to express your thoughts in this way.

Arts Week

As yet unscheduled, the committee has also discussed the possibility of a multi-day event geared toward expanding this conversation to the community. More details will follow.

(Over)

Conversation Starters

- It seems safe to assume that sheer effort of staying alive would have occupied significant portions of time in the life of prehistoric humans. Nevertheless, our ancestors took the time to paint on cave walls and create musical instruments at least 30,000 years ago. Can you speculate on why humans have an urge to create art?
- Discuss some of the similarities across the arts.
- How are you a consumer of art? What is the difference between consuming art and producing art?
- Define your "culture."
 - What has shaped your childhood?
 - What do you look at, listen to, entertain yourself with?
 - Now, looking at you have written/talked about, do you notice a pattern?
 - Did you write about art, music, literature or film?
- How significant were the arts in your life?
- What would your life be like without the arts?
- What is culture? What is art?
- What would the world be like without art? Is it important?
- Do the Arts define Culture? If so, how?
- Does art change the way we think about culture?
- Does art provoke dialogue? If so, with who? About what? Through what means does it achieve response?
- Can art and other disciplines be studied concurrently?
- In what ways does art inform the human experience?
- What institutions support the arts nationally? Locally? Why do they do this?
- What does a culture/community need to support a thriving arts community?
- Can the arts be a catalyst for change in cultural attitudes?
 - What limitations might there be if they exist?
- Why is there a creative impulse?
- Why do children create? Why does this impulse slow as we grow older? Is this learned or biological?
- What does being an artist mean in America today?
- What responsibilities do artists have today, versus the past?
- George Bernard Shaw said: "Without art, the crudeness of reality would make life unbearable." Do you agree?
- What is unique about what we do?
- Name your favorite artist and discuss why.
- Talk about your earliest memorable arts experience.
- Whose responsibility is it to support the creation of art in our society? Can you name examples of how you support the creation of art and of artists in our society?