

## ART CONTRIBUTIONS TO CULTURAL COMPETENCY COURSE

In 2013 The Arts Components in this class were confined to group discussions of what culture means and why the arts and humanities matter. Literature and visual arts help to express the differences between groups of people and to honor all cultures for their individual contributions. Story telling, music, poetry and visual arts all contribute to our understanding and embrace of one another. The use of journals and life maps were used to emphasize the humanities elements that inform cultural competency.

In 2014 the Arts Components were further developed and refined.

Zill presented quotations by a number of well-known people who extol the arts and humanities in contributing to their creative and successful lives. (See attachment.)

She then presented a study by the <sup>Crystal</sup>Bridges Museum of American Art labeled “*Art Makes You Smart.*” This study demonstrated that the arts give you:

- Critical thinking skills,
- Higher levels of social tolerance,
- Greater historical empathy,
- A taste for art and cultural institutions.

The study (synopsis included here as an attachment) also showed that low-income individuals, rural folks and minorities benefited the most from exposure to the arts, two to three times more than white middle class suburban types.

Zill presented another study (Museum Magazine report also included as an attachment) called *Museums in Good Health* that addressed 1) health literacy, 2) medical training, 3) mental health and 4) nutrition and wellness.

One of the most important findings of this study is:

“The ability to observe carefully, describe accurately, and then interpret what one sees is essential in clinical diagnosis. These skills are also requisite in the visual arts.”

Zill also discussed her decade ago teaching experience with first year nursing students in the gallery (partnering with UNE’s Karen Pardue.) The collaborative element was essential to the student’s experience. Partnering helps train health care professionals to notice details in patients’ appearance – color, lines, symmetry, posture, expressions and moods. Small teams of two or three students examined works of art together. One participant noticed one detail, while another caught some other element, allowing the description as a whole to be better than its individual parts.

She then presented two case studies for the groups’ perusal as they gathered around several big books:

- 1) Ancient art examples (up to 30,000 years ago) from many different parts of the world to demonstrate both the commonality of human artistic expression

as well as the individual differences among people from many different cultures and experience.

- 2) Eight surrealist women artists from many cultures incorporating animals into their art. These examples highlight the little-known contributions of women to this artistic genre, whose best known proponents include such artists as Pablo Picasso, Andre Breton, Salvador Dali, Man Ray, Rene Magritte and Max Ernst. They famously explored the importance of the emotional core of human imaginings, including the unknown and mysterious in us, as well as the universal impulse of artists to embrace the animal world in concert with humans. The women surrealists, only getting their due just now, include Dorothea Tanning, Remedios Varo, Dorr Bothwell, Leonra Carrington, Frida Kahlo, Lee Krasner, Yayoi Kusama and Louise Bourgeois.

Zill concluded her section of the second year's immersion course by sharing a Lisa Phillips paper (published by The Washington Post) entitled "*The Ten Top Skills the Arts Teach us:*" 1) creativity, 2) confidence, 3) problem solving, 4) perseverance, 5) focus, 6) non-verbal communication, 7) receiving constructive feedback, 8) collaboration, 9) dedication and 10) accountability.  
(see attachment.)

Her conclusions, for consideration in future versions of this course:

- Cultural Competency means knowing how to live and work among many different groups of people with sensitivity, empathy and kindness – all qualities associated with *emotional intelligence*. Health care providers need these qualities in abundance if they are to be successful.
- Cross disciplines and inter-professional learning help us to judge situations more accurately, communicate more effectively, lead and manage collaboratively.
- Using the arts, in this case primarily the visual arts, engages the right brain with the left, the instinctive and creative with the linear and rational to deepen our learning experience. Saul Bellow quoted Joseph Conrad in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech. 'The scientist knows the world by systematic examination. The artist, however, begins by descending to that part of our being which is a gift, not an acquisition, to the capacity for delight and wonder...our sense of pity and pain, to the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation – and to the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity that knots together the loneliness of innumerable hearts...which binds together all humanity – the dead to the living and the living to the unborn.'
- The arts teach us about things at once outside and deep within ourselves that develop our sensitivities to the rich and diverse universe of our humanity, that which is fundamental, enduring and essential.

## CULTURAL COMPETENCY

### Taste Bites

Here is a group of short reading materials on the broad subject of how we human beings who wish to be educated and to continue to learn new things daily about how to lead a rich and rewarding life of service throughout our time on earth.

These are drawn from this year's deaths of people I admire, from short pieces in news articles and books/magazines that I have collected in the recent past.

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President, Center for Ethics in Action (A Women's Center in Alliance with Men to promote women's leadership across disciplines)

President, Fund for Constitutional Government

**Steve Jobs:** (Apple founder) He was sparked by intuition, not analytic rigor. Trained in Zen Buddhism, Mr. Jobs came to value experiential wisdom over empirical analysis. He didn't study data or crunch numbers but like a pathfinder, he could sniff the winds and sense what lay ahead. He liked to reference Albert Einstein who said "Imagination is more important than knowledge." His biographer, Walter Isaacson noted that Jobs "had the ability to apply creativity and aesthetic sensibilities to a challenge." He goes on, "In the world of invention and innovation, that means combining an appreciation of the humanities with an understanding of science – connecting

artistry to technology, poetry to processors. That was Mr. Jobs' specialty.”

**Roger Molander:** (Creator of Ground Zero in the cold war Reagan era) “So bring on the Russians,” he wrote with his twin brother in the LA Times, 1982. “Try their vodka, listen to their music, read their novels, watch them dance. Maybe take one to lunch and start a conversation on a topic of mutual interest. Try ‘the fate of the earth,’ for starters.”

**Margaret Mead:** When a student asked the anthropologist what was the earliest sign of civilization, he expected her answer to be a clay pot or perhaps a grinding stone. Her answer was “a healed femur.” This was a sign that someone cared enough to do the injured person’s hunting and gathering until the leg healed. “The evidence of compassion is the first sign of civilization.”

**Maurice Sendak:** Before the great children’s book author/artist (Where the Wild Things Are) died in the spring of 2012, he gave a long audio interview in which he said the following: “I look out at my trees, hundreds of years old. I think it is a blessing to get old. So many beautiful people – I will miss you. Live your life!”

**Jane E. Brody:** This Personal Health columnist for the N.Y. Times wrote about having a richer life by seeing the glass half full. She took note of one study showing higher death rates over a 30-year period for pessimists than for optimists. She stated that life is a lot more pleasant when one looks at the bright side. It is important not to neglect

the power of positive thinking. Researchers recommend taking a few minutes at the end of each day to write down three positive things that happened that day – to end the day on an upbeat note.

**Dan Schectman:** This Israeli scientist who won the 2011 Nobel Prize for Chemistry, for his discovery of quasicrystals. This discovery, among other things, revolutionized our understanding of how atoms arrange themselves in solids. “The main lesson I have learned over time,” he said, “is that a good scientist is a humble and listening scientist, not one that is sure 100 percent in what he reads in the textbooks.”

**Bella Abzug:** A member of the US Congress from 1970-1977 and famous for declaring “this woman’s place is in the House –the House of Representatives,” some of her most enduring contributions to her world occurred after her time in electoral politics. At the UN Women’s Conference in Nairobi, Kenya in 1985, she ran a panel attended by thousands of women around the world entitled “What If Women Ruled the World.” In 1990 she co-founded the Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and organized a conference of 1500 women from 83 countries to produce a blueprint for the 21<sup>st</sup> century called Women’s Action Agenda 21. She went on to play a leading role at the United Nations, highlighting issues of concern to women at all the major UN Conferences in the 1990’s. WEDO developed strategies to monitor governments’ compliance with the commitments they had made at these Conferences. She believed the environment

was a key issue, saying, “We believe that the continuance of the earth and the maintenance of its health is fundamental to life itself.” Shortly before she died after heart surgery in 1998, Bella Abzug declared. “Women will run the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The new millennium has to have significant change. We can’t continue the errors of the past, which have been created largely by one part of the population. This is going to be the women’s century, and young people are going to be its leaders.” She also said many times in her later years that “You can’t continue to have a world without equal participation of men and women. That’s my central thesis. It’s not that I think women are superior to men, it’s just that we’ve had so little opportunity to be corrupted by power.” And she added more seriously, “...I believe that women can change the nature of power.” She believed that power must be shared by everybody.

The **Self Care Art Exhibition** (March 1-8, 2014) was headlined by a UNE staff member's eight by ten feet cloth with a painting of a giant, sensitively drawn bear. Her artist's statement talked about the post-operative breast cancer surgery when her physical therapy program involved lifting both arms above her shoulders. She worked on this painting using paint brushes held in both hands. The result was not only a beautiful painting, but a successful healing in both a literal and figurative sense. This piece was emblematic of all the works in this show, demonstrating across many mediums and artistic genres the inspiring and even transformative power of the visual arts.

During the week there were a series of artistic programs: The Opening Reception included a dance performance and recitation about 'Finding Love' by interpretive dancer, Frederica Chapman. There were all 12 students in attendance as well as additional UNE faculty and staff members and visitors from the community – 25-30 for each event.

At a noontime program the next day, Elizabeth McLellan spoke about the creation of her non profit organization, Partners for World Health. She described how as a nurse at the Maine Medical Center she observed how frequently unused medical materials from bandages to crutches and wheelchairs –and everything in between— would be routinely thrown into the trash and hauled out to land fills. She began collecting these materials and several years later now sends multiple cargo containers full of medical equipment to many different medical facilities in countries around the globe.

During another lunchtime program session writer James Hayman read from his latest thriller set in Maine, *Darkness First*. He described his writing process as akin to being a camera, swinging from side to side, detailing the physical scene and moving through the unfolding events of the story vividly, deliberately.

The final program featured a discussion by Dr. Malcolm Williams, a holistic chiropractor who explained his philosophy of treating his patients with sensitivity and respect, valuing them as complex human beings with emotional, physical and intellectual needs, not simply as one-dimensional problems to solve or mistakes to correct.

This multi-faceted arts week underscored the inter-relatedness between the arts and health, creativity and healing, the importance of emotional understanding and self care.