ArtHist.net

Re: Art history – education (evaluation methods/new technology)

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Hello Professor Swartz:

I think that the teaching of art history varies with the level of the class, the mixture of students, the purpose of the course, the objectives of the professor, and the course's function as defined by the deptment within under the guidelines of the university. Evaluation methods will vary according to the teaching methods and expectations relative to the factors noted above. Whereas an undergraduate course will require evidence of knowledge through testing, a graduate level course facilitates the student's ability to think more critically about art historical data and theories as per reading list, related class discussions, and presentations by professor and students. So evaluation in the graduate course may require a major paper that displays the student' ability to identify an art historical problem, develop a set of questions around a particular inquiry, engage appropriate objects, iconography, iconology and/or theories that are relevant to the inquiry. [...]

The web offers teaching-enhancement possibilities that I find remarkable. I use webct in both my undergraduate and graduate courses. In my undergraduate courses, I post each powerpoint lecture which includes slides and major points discussed in class. Undergraduate students can, therefore, study each lecture set on any computer on or off campus by using their password to enter the course. They can also copy the lecture sets. Students come to class as well because key points and slides are merely points of entry into a much larger body of information. I have in some undergraduate classes divided students into groups and assigned different readings to each group. That requires continuous monitoring and engagement. I find the calendar useful for putting important information for students (dates of exams, exhibitions they need to see, assignment due dates, etc.). However, my syllabus is also posted for their use, in case they need to read and don't have their syllabus with them. My next move this semester is to have 4 groups of students to engage a critical question online, but not in simultaneous time because of the difficulty of student's schedules in the evening.

I also plan to give quizzes, but they will count as homework. I give exams using powerpoint which is taken in real time, in the classroom. In my

graduate class this semester, I find it very useful to have students post
1-page critical response to each reading covered. Not every student, just
those assigned to the readings of the day. If there are 3 readings, there
will be 3 postings which everyone must download and bring to class for
discussion with their own critical responses. In that class, students are
also expected to download 1 or 2 images that are relevant to the readings of
the day. I have put 182 images in this course. These images range from
Wittgenstein's "duck-rabbit" icon to Rotimi Fani-Kayode's photographs.
(black Nigerian/British photographer)-no longer alive.) This class is Visual
Culture and Critical Race Theory.

Essentially, web-enhanced teaching can be great. It requires an immense
amount of work. Unfortunately, in communication with other professor who are
using new technology-enhanced teaching methods, I find that they are not
getting proper recognition or support from departments; that departments do
not appreciate the amount of work that goes into the production of such a
course, so the professor who does it, does so because he/she finds it
important to his/her objectives. Testing on line is common in the sciences.
We in the humanities lag behind, and must update ourselves in order to
heighten the teaching experience. Our students grew up in the computer age,
they need quick access to information, and the capability of accessing that
information at any time. What we need in the university is a commensurate
structure that is supportive; one that provides the professor with the
student tech assist which is likely to come from engineering or computer
programming, rather than art history. University media centers are useful in
teaching short classes, but the real work for class lies with the professor
and what she/he struggles with to do alone, or with a student tech
assistant. Imagine how much more we can teach our students with the same
timeframe. Greater access to knowledge means higher expectations. Evaluation
methods will vary. Each professor has to determine for himself/herself
whether a method is proper or not. Online testing can be a good thing. The
students may also have an opinion about this method, and that will come out
in the student course evaluations.

I would be interested to know what the professor and the students think
about it.
Sincerely, Freida High W. Tesfagiorgis, Professor
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Reference:

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