



Museum Pedagogy Classroom Exercises

Exploring Emotions through a Portrait Gallery Activity

For more about this project and to access model lesson plans that incorporate these strategies, visit <https://museumcuny.commons.gc.cuny.edu/>

Class-As Curator

Class-as-curator is a specific subset of problem-based learning that our team developed during the 2017-2018 year as a way to offer teachers a wide range of museum-based pedagogies. It offers students a structure in which it is up to them to:

1. Decide what is important from larger pool of material
2. Make choices about what narratives that content tells
3. Organize that content to convey a particular story
4. Practice explaining and justifying those choices.

For Language-Learning, this is gives students an opportunity to:

- Practice and apply their vocabulary and conversation skills
- Work in team to complete a goal-oriented project
- Shape up critical skills in a culturally-enriching, creative activity.
- Actively construct the classroom as learning environment // Investing the classroom space with meaning
- Explore their subjectivity while negotiating with classmates to agree on a collective narrative
- Interact with and learning from their classmates while the teacher models and facilitates

Physicality

Movement fuels interaction and aids comprehension. Biology shows that increasing blood flow helps more oxygen to reach the brain, which enhances brain function. Just as reading about pleasure or pain can never substitute for experiencing it in one's body. In the same way, by creating somatic learning experiences we offer our students additional access points to knowledge that can spark new forms of curiosity and level the playing field for students disengaged with verbal and written modes of communication.

- *tableau*

- when fostering engagement with visual sources, have students act out the image. Great for close looking.
- *gallery walk*
 - distribute textual or visual sources in different locations around the room and have students circulate, rather than each student or small group of students having a full set of materials in front of them.

Narrativity

A **narrative** examines the particular point of view or perspective from which a story is told. A **story** is the synthesis of many narratives and facts into one coherent tale. These concepts are intrinsically linked, and serve complementary pedagogical functions in the classroom. Learning to identify narratives helps to recognize and question dominant perspectives, generate questions, and strengthen connections between students' personal experiences and course content. Story is a powerful tool through which to organize information, generate empathy, and make meaning from diverse content.

- *role play*
 - encourages students to take on the perspective of one or more characters to tell (or re-tell) a story from a particular perspective in writing or verbally
- *what's the story?*
 - invites students who have carefully observed one particular image or artifact to weave their observations or multiple viewpoints together into a coherent story about the source.

Materiality

Objects are central to museum interpretation, but seldom considered in the college classroom. Methods such as **rummaging, close looking, and handling objects** can help professors to be what Elizabeth Latham calls "object advocates" who "not only reveal many more layers of information, but will also provide opportunities...to project their own experiences onto objects," and thereby connect with students at the material, personal, and socio-cultural levels.

- *rummaging*
 - invites participants to "browse omnivorously" through a variety of objects or images.
- *close looking*
 - is a method that often applies visual thinking strategies to ask students to carefully observe one particular image or artifact for a given period.