Building a Foundation for Survey: Employing a Focused Introduction

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Abstract

This paper discusses the impact of introducing a multi-day introduction in an art history survey course in order to promote student awareness of the transferability of the skills and strategies of visual analysis to other contexts and courses outside of the discipline. Class discussion, course activities, and supplemental support materials were developed with the goal of generating student interest, investment, and self-efficacy in connection with art historical methodology and study strategies. Student performance and feedback in a recent survey course employing this introduction was then compared to earlier offerings of the course that did not employ this introduction. Preliminary results suggest the potential effectiveness of this approach. The observable behavior of students indicated greater enthusiasm and participation with the course. Academic metrics of student performance on course assessments demonstrated improvement in every area, at both the beginning and end of the semester. The teaching assessment instrument given at the end of the semester also showed an increase in students' own evaluation of the effectiveness of the course in developing both their knowledge and broader academic skills.

The majority of my teaching experience has come from offering large art history survey courses at regional public universities within the structure of a traditional, chronological examination of world art. Because these institutions did not offer art history degrees, my survey courses were offered in association with studio arts and/or general education programs. Most of my students in these courses came in with little meaningful knowledge about the content of the course or the methodologies used in the analysis of artworks. Student perspectives on individual artworks at the start of the course appeared to be drawn almost exclusively from personal opinion or other equally subjective factors. After working with students over the course of a semester, though, course assessments demonstrated students' real improvement in the mastery of course content and the academic skills used to acquire and analyze that content. However, in the assessment instrument used to evaluate my teaching, student responses revealed that many of my students remained incognizant of the knowledge base they had developed, as well as the larger academic skills that they had acquired. As a foundational course, it was absolutely critical that students apply their knowledge and academic ability to other courses and contexts. Therefore, I decided to design a concentrated introduction to the methodology of art history, with a particular focus on the importance and usefulness of effective visual analysis. I designed a multi-faceted approach for the first few course meetings that focused on generating student interest, investment, and self-efficacy with course content, along with academic strategies for aiding student learning. Although this project is both new and ongoing, a comparison of student performance and feedback with earlier offerings of the course suggests that holding a focused introduction to the course shows promising potential for making students more aware of the value that can come from meaningful engagement with art history.

Development of the Project

Class time in an art history survey course, which covers so many cultures and time periods, is always very precious to the instructor. This is why, in earlier offerings of the course, I attempted to "work in" many of the same ideas, activities, and strategies that I will be describing as an explanation of the focused introduction that developed; in earlier versions of the course, these approaches were employed in complement with discussions of the assigned course material over the course of the entire semester. For the most part, this approach appeared to be working. Grades, student evaluations, and peer reviews indicated no significant concerns. Still, even though I was continuing to incorporate more pedagogical techniques and strategies every semester, I noticed that I was consistently scoring lower on two of the ten numerically rated questions on student evaluations that were related to knowledge acquisition and its application to other contexts.[1] As I began to look into some of the literature associated with student awareness

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[1] Of course, these evaluations are only one part of a much larger view into teaching effectiveness and are themselves subjected to interpretation; see Pieter Spooren, Bert Brockx, and Dimitri Mortelmans, "On the

of their own learning, I found that I was employing many practices that have been positively correlated with growth in students' epistemological beliefs.[2] However, I began to suspect that course activities and learning strategies were being viewed by students as tasks that needed to be performed for a particular course/instructor rather than being internalized into larger learning goals.[3] Subsequently, I decided to reflect on the integration and presentation of these ideas in the hope of finding a strategy that would increase student self-efficacy and metacognition. Although there is no clear evidence in the epistemological literature as to when these approaches should be offered,[4] recent pedagogical literature on self-regulated learning advocated for an early introduction.[5] All of this led me to create specific materials for presentation and discussion during the first four class meetings that focused on linking the "why" and the "how" of learning course content; I also changed the tone of the oral and written course materials to put the focus on what students needed to do to support their own learning, both inside and outside of class.

In order to make some preliminary assessments about the potential effectiveness of this approach, student performance and feedback from students who received this type of introduction will be compared to earlier groups of students who did not. These classes were all roughly the same size and had comparable rates of return on the student assessment instrument used to evaluate teaching.[6] Specific indicators examined for evaluation will include the observable behavior of students, participation in a note-card assignment, performance on the first exam, final course grades, and selected questions on the student assessment of teaching instrument. This data will be presented and analyzed after a detailed description of the approaches, content, and activities that formed the focus of this pedagogical experiment.

Designing a New Approach for a New Generation of Students: Responding to the Challenges of Teaching Survey as a Foundational Course

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Validity of Student Evaluation of Teaching the State of the Art," *Review of Educational Research* 83, no. 4 (2013): 598–642.

[2] Krista R. Muis and Melissa C. Duffy, "Epistemic Climate and Epistemic Change: Instruction Designed to Change Students' Beliefs and Learning Strategies and Improve Achievement," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 105, no.1 (February, 2013): 213–25.

[3] Student motivation and performance has greater success when it involves more than just performance goals alone; see Cheryl J. Travers, Dominique Morisano, and Edwin A. Locke, "Self-Reflection, Growth Goals, and Academic Outcomes: A Qualitative Study," *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 85, no. 2 (2015): 224–41.

[4] Barbara K. Hofer, "Personal Epistemology Research: Implications for Learning and Teaching," *Educational Psychology Review* 13, no. 4 (2001): 377.

[5] Linda B. Nilson, *Creating Self-Regulated Learners: Strategies to Strengthen Students' Self-Awareness and Learning Skills* (Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing, 2013), especially Chapter 2.

[6] From Fall 2013 until Fall 2015, the number of students in the course averaged thirty-one and the return rate response for instructional assessment of the course by students averaged 45%. This assessment is online and completely voluntary; a Fall 2015 university study reported that average response rate for my college was 37% and the university-wide average was 45%.

Students have come to expect immediacy in the acquisition of information, both inside and outside the classroom.[7] Yet, despite the amount of information that today's students have at their fingertips, most are not well-informed about practices and viewpoints outside of their own experience. The Internet, like all informational resources, requires an informed user that applies meaningful analysis to the data found within it.[8] Not only is it easy for individuals to restrict the information they see to something that reinforces their own perspectives, but this practice is often encouraged by the interfaces through which most users engage with and explore the Internet;[9] this type of controlled mediation between user and data is expected to increase in the future.[10] The immediacy of the Internet, as well as the organizational emphasis on what is most recent and/or "popular," puts even more value on the events and issues of the present, making the cultures and events of the past seem particularly distant and unrelatable at first exposure. The significance and value of personal feelings about a subject, moreover, is given even greater value by social media, which encourages people to share something based on how much they "like" something; these feelings receive more validation through being appreciated by others.[11] Clearly, the influence of this virtual world can have real impact on the classroom environment, particularly in the areas of research, academic discussion, and critique. Nor do students come to the classroom with an expectation that art history was something they would like; my survey courses have been well-populated courses because they were required, serving either as a prerequisite for upper-level courses in the studio arts major or as a general education credit. Indeed, most incoming students seem unaware of the subject matter or goals of the course; in the case of the few students with strong feelings about the course, most of those feelings are negative.[12]

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[7] Debra Langan et al., "Students' Use of Personal Technologies in the University Classroom: Analysing the Perceptions of the Digital Generation," *Technology, Pedagogy and Education* 25, no. 1 (2016): 101–17.

[8] Despite the fact that most students are "Internet natives," it is clear that higher-order analysis of online information is far from an innate skill. For more, see Ian Rowlands et al., "The Google Generation: The Information Behaviour of the Researcher of the Future," *Aslib Proceedings* 60 (2008): 290–310.

[9] A good overview of many of the issues impacting this complicated relationship can be found in Philip M. Napoli, *Audience Evolution: New Technologies and the Transformation of Media Audiences* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

[10] Janna Anderson and Lee Rainie, "Millennials Will Benefit and Suffer Due to Their Hyperconnected Lives," *Washington DC, Pew Research Center* (2012): 18–19, accessed March 25, 2016, http://www.pewinternet.org/files/old-media//Files/Reports/2012/PIP_Future_of_Internet_2012_Young_brains_PDF.pdf.

[11] Furthermore, the even type of information shared on those social network sites—especially on the sorts of sites shared with acquaintances rather than family or close friends—tends to be selected for sharing because of its perceived universal appeal; see Junga Kim et al., "Factors Affecting Information Sharing in Social Networking Sites amongst University Students," *Online Information Review* 39, no. 3 (2015): 290–309, http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/OIR-01-2015-0022.

[12] While a direct measure for these metrics was not collected, student comments on the student assessment of teaching instrument provide some insight into their lack of initial lack of awareness or

Keeping these issues in mind, I worked to design an introductory experience that held no assumption that students would arrive with any positive expectations about the course. Establishment of the relevancy and applicability of course content and activities would begin immediately and remain the emphasis of the first several course meetings. It made sense to focus on these core issues right away, as students make judgments about the content, structure, and pedagogy of a course very quickly.[13] I decided that the first class meeting would focus on establishing the value of art history to students.[14] I tried to imagine discussion questions and activities that would preemptively answer the questions, "Why should I have to take this course?" and "How am I ever going to use art history outside of this course?" Course organizational information would be referenced only briefly, and students would be directed to review those materials for the second class meeting. The next three class meetings would then focus on providing students with strategies for meaningful and effective engagement with course content. However, rather than present these approaches as passive resources, students would be asked to actively engage with many of these strategies, as well as periodically evaluate the potential efficacy of their application. The ultimate goal was to make students more responsible for their own learning, so that they would be more cognizant of the skills and abilities they were acquiring.

Why They Are Going To "Like" Art History: Establishing Relevance

Students were told that, while they may have already seen some of the images that will be discussed in the course, art historical analysis would not only increase their powers of observation, it would also provide them with new insights into these works. This point was reinforced through the display of a famous and easily recognizable image: the *Mona Lisa*.[15] The class was able to quickly and easily identify the artist and title of the work but was unable to explain why this work was so famous. This disjunction provided a great chance to discuss how the celebrity that arose during the later life of the work was only tangentially related to artistic

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interest in the course with remarks such as "I have never cared for history but learning about art history was very interesting" or "Art History now seems fun."

[13] The variety of factors that impact these quick judgments are discussed by Elisha Babad, Dinah Avni-Babad, and Robert Rosenthal, "Prediction of Students' Evaluations from Brief Instances of Professors' Nonverbal Behavior in Defined Instructional Situations," *Social Psychology of Education* 7, no.1 (2004): 3–33. Impressions about the course can also be generated by the syllabus itself, which is often made available to students in advance of the first course meeting; see Richard J. Harnish and K. Robert Bridges, "Effect of Syllabus Tone: Students' Perceptions of Instructor and Course," *Social Psychology of Education* 14, no. 3 (2011): 319–30.

[14] David Kember, Amber Ho, and Celina Hong, "The Importance of Establishing Relevance in Motivating Student Learning," *Active Learning in Higher Education* 9, no. 3 (2008): 249–63.

[15] Donald Sassoon, *Mona Lisa. The History of the World's Most Famous Painting* (London: Harper Collins, 2001).

issues at the time of its production. These issues were then related to today's mass media culture. Students were queried as to why certain media personalities—particularly figures from reality shows—have become famous or why some performers have received more media attention and support than others. Art history also has many cases where the later reception of a work of art far eclipses its importance within its original context. For example, the *Venus de Milo* not only has an exciting story of rediscovery and ownership[16] but also became a much more significant and influential work of art in its current fragmentary form than in Hellenistic times when it was intact.[17] Furthermore, by discussing how one can trace the larger history of works and their influence, students were beginning to engage with the idea of historiography.

All of these ideas led to a natural opportunity to have a dialog about how the notion of a limited body of "great"[18] works of art—whose selection has been strongly influenced by issues of race, gender, sexuality, and culture—has led to establishment of an art historical canon. As an instructor who follows a cultural and chronological order established by a common survey textbook, it is very important to me to make students aware of some of the significant issues and limitations that come along with the use of this framework.[19] In addition to providing students with some awareness of the critical issues connected with the discipline of art history itself, this notion was further connected to a typically unpopular course practice:[20] required slides for the exam would not be provided to students in advance of a chapter. Instead, a list of required slides would be made available only after a chapter had been presented in class; slide selection would be determined by the amount of student discussion each slide had generated. In addition to reinforcing the importance of attendance and participation in class, involving the students in the slide selection process would give them a greater sense of ownership and investment in the course.[21] I explained how these required slides would form a "mental art database" of course knowledge that would provide a foundation for engaging with larger issues and themes, both within and beyond the period and culture of the work's origin. Connecting course practices with

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[16] Gregory Curtis, *Disarmed: The Story of the Venus de Milo* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2005).

[17] Elizabeth Prettejohn, "Reception and Ancient Art: The Case of the Venus de Milo," in *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, eds. Charles Martindale and Richard F. Thomas (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006): 227–49.

[18] The quotes around this word are an intentional reference to Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" *Art News* 69 (January 1971): 22–39.

[19] Of course, an issue of this magnitude is not restricted to the start of the course but instead remains an ongoing subject of discussions and activities over the entire semester.

[20] The suggestion to provide students with the required slides in advance has appeared as a frequent response to the narrative question on the assessment instrument used to evaluate my teaching that asks, "What suggestions would you give your instructor for improving this course?"

[21] Providing students with some sense of choice—even within the context of a strictly mandated curriculum—has been shown to positively impact student motivation; see Evelyn Ford-Connors, et al., "Comprehension Instruction within the Context of Common Core Standards," in *Comprehension Instruction: Research Based Best Practices*, 3rd edition, eds. Sheri R. Parris and Kathy Headley (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2015): 113.

course goals was critical, since more dedicated and meaningful learning comes from students that are invested in the educational outcomes of a course.[22]

Making the Familiar Strange and the Strange Familiar: [23] Visual Analysis as a Critical Skill

While the art of the past often appears unchanging and timeless to most casual viewers, I wanted to establish to students how visual imagery has always been a living language that adapts and adopts elements to communicate to a viewer and/or meet functional goals. A few iconographic examples provided a quick way to illustrate this point to students. While images from the past, such as a swastika, did seem to clearly communicate the point to the students, much more discussion was generated by a discussion of contemporary examples, such as the "Save" icon; all of the students knew the function associated with that image, even though the icon—the 3.5" floppy disc—hasn't been regularly used as a method of computer data storage for over a decade. However, because the evolution of images is such a critical concept, I also decided to explore an important figure that has appeared in the art of a variety of periods and/or cultures. While I considered exposing students to the significance of a figure about which they knew little, such as the Buddha,[24] I decided to use Christ, because I wanted to establish that all visual images in the course would be subject to the same type of academic analysis.[25] The class discussed the various modern images of Jesus they have seen, such as a blond-haired, blue-eyed Jesus or a Jesus with black skin, reflecting on why these images were made and how they related to Christian beliefs and practices. Then I showed the class an early image of Christ as a beardless shepherd taken from the pastoral tradition of pagan Roman art—and certainly not shown crucified—to make the point that Christians throughout history made images of Christ that reflected the culture and religious ideas at that time.[26] I ended the discussion by mentioning that there was even a brief

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[22] Alf Lizzio, Keithia Wilson, and Roland Simons, "University Students' Perceptions of the Learning Environment and Academic Outcomes: Implications for Theory and Practice," *Studies in Higher Education* 27, no. 1 (2002): 27–52.

[23] The origin and complicated history of this phrase—which has still not, to my knowledge, ever been associated with art history—is discussed by Robert Myers, "The Familiar Strange and the Strange Familiar in Anthropology and Beyond," *General Anthropology* 18, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 1–9.

[24] The familiar American image of the Laughing Buddha is discussed by Ryan Shin, "Why Does the Buddha Laugh? Exploring Ethnic Visual Culture," *Art Education* 63, no. 3 (2010): 33–39.

[25] When one thinks about multiculturalism, the tendency is to think about its application only in regard to cultures other than one's own. However, I have found that treating one's own culture in the same manner as others is not only critical to establishing an inclusive classroom environment, but it also allows students to better understand the inherent complexity and incompleteness that comes with all these types of investigations; for the latter, refer to Dipti Desai, "Imaging Difference: The Politics of Representation in Multicultural Art Education," *Studies in Art Education* 41, no. 2 (2000): 114–29.

[26] Robin Margaret Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

time during the Byzantine culture when images of Christ were considered idolatry,[27] which demonstrated the impact that images can have on viewers.

Now that students had gotten some exposure to the potential power of images, we discussed how images are not typically subject to the same scrutiny as words and numbers, even though visual images are exerting increasing influence in our contemporary world.[28] I reinforced how this was particularly problematic, since—as we saw from our discussion of the *Mona Lisa*—truly meaningful information about a work is not something one can learn simply by looking at it. I suggested that students needed to employ their newly gained powers of observation like that of an investigative reporter interviewing a subject that doesn't want to talk about anything more than surface issues. I then displayed an image of the Early Classical Greek statue known as the *Kritios Boy*, which is from the start of the period (c. 480 BCE), and told them that we needed to get this youthful looking work of art to reveal its real "age." After a discussion of some of the significant elements in the work associated with original context of its production, the work was compared with statues from other periods in Greek art. Shortly before the end of the class meeting, I displayed an unknown image and asked them to associate the work with a culture, period, and date. I used this activity to demonstrate to students that they all had the capability to apply visual analysis to images outside of the works of their "mental art database" and, thus, would possess greater self-efficacy in connection with the unknown slide questions that were included on the exams.[29] I also reminded them that visual analysis was not limited to the art of the past but was a critical skill that could be used in connection with any image; then, I sent them out the door with the following command: "Now, go out and look at the whole world in a new way!" Students responded with claps and shouts, suggesting that the activity had been effective in promoting engagement.[30] Students who walked into the class on that first day without any apparent knowledge or interest in Ancient Greek art—or, for that matter, art history in general— appeared to be leaving the class meeting empowered by new insight and, hopefully, would be eager to return to learn more.

Learning to Learn: Guided Self-Assessment

The second class meeting was focused more on course mechanics, with a particular focus on the format of the exam and study skills. I began by telling the class that their new skill of visual

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[27] This period of iconoclasm within a Christian context was explicitly connected with several other non-Christian cultures later in the semester.

[28] Hélène Joffe, "The Power of Visual Material: Persuasion, Emotion and Identification," *Diogenes* 55, no. 1 (2008): 84–93.

[29] Laura Ritchie, *Fostering Self-Efficacy in Higher Education Students* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[30] Robert J. Marzano and Debra J. Pickering, *The Highly Engaged Classroom* (Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree, 2013).

analysis was—like all skills—going to require practice. I teased the class by saying that they would be glad to hear that there were numerous assessments in the course that would provide them with ongoing feedback about how well they were mastering the skill of visual analysis. However, I quickly followed up by telling them that I was actually very serious about making it clear the ways in which they would be evaluated and how they could effectively prepare for those evaluations. My goal was to help empower the students to take control of their own learning in the course.[31] I explained that learning how to understand, study, and learn new material would be an ongoing process and—although this was reflected in the fact that the percentage value of exams increased over the course of the semester—these exams were not the only way in which they could measure their mastery of course content and skills. I encouraged students to constantly self-assess,[32] using both direct feedback from the instructor on assignments and exams, as well as indirect feedback from in-class discussions, activities, and practice questions. Once an issue was identified, students needed to review the study support materials that were available for them at any time through the online learning management system for the course.[33] If following the posted advice did not solve the issue, I explained how I would welcome the opportunity to meet with students, as I was very committed to both understanding them as individual learners and devising approaches that would help every student master course content.[34] I also requested that students bring their notes and study materials to those meetings so that I could more effectively work with them to explore a variety of learning strategies.[35] While I did warn them that they could still expect to be contacted by me if they had poor attendance or their academic performance declined, I urged students not to wait to be

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[31] David Yearwood, Ricky Cox, and Alice Cassidy, "Connection-Engagement-Empowerment: A Course Design Model," *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching & Learning Journal* 8, no. 3 (2016): 1–15, http://www.kpu.ca/sites/default/files/Transformative%20Dialogues/TD.8.3.2_Yearwood_etal_Connection -Engagement-Empowerment.pdf

[32] Ernesto Panadero and Jesús Alonso-Tapia, "Self-Assessment: Theoretical and Practical Connotations. When it Happens, How is it Acquired and what to do to Develop it in our Students," *Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology* 11, no. 2 (2013): 551–76.

[33] For example, for a student having difficulty keeping up with class discussion, the support materials suggested skimming the assigned chapter before class along with some specific note-taking strategies; those strategies include links to academic study support websites from other institutions, discipline-specific points of significance (style, context, and significance/meaning), tips specific for my course (such as writing down the figure number rather than all the other identification information being displayed), and a few specialized suggestions (such as sketching the displayed image and incorporating key information into that image).

[34] Roger A. Federici and Einar M. Skaalvik, "Students' Perceptions of Emotional and Instrumental Teacher Support: Relations with Motivational and Emotional Responses," *International Education Studies* 7, no. 1 (2014): 21–36.

[35] While the standard posted advice worked well for the vast majority of students, a few still needed an approach more closely tailored to their particular needs, skills, or situation; sometimes, this also necessitated working in conjunction with other services on campus.

contacted by me, as that would suggest that they were being unobservant, which is not a good trait for anyone trying to learn how to analyze visual images.

I tried to further reinforce this notion of regular self-assessment with a basic study approach that I recommended for all students and made available on the online course management system. A downloadable PowerPoint containing the required images and their respective identifying information was updated regularly. There were also directions—as well as some examples— about how students should add three significant observations about the style, context, and/or function to each slide before printing them out as individual notecards.[36] These prepared notecards should then be added to those from previous postings for ongoing cumulative reviews. I emphasized how this process of study not only fits our current knowledge about how the human brain forms and recalls long-term memories,[37] but they would find it much easier to fit short reviews of prepared notecards into their busy lives and, on the night before the exam, they could even go to bed early. In order to reinforce both student success and motivation, I warned them that I would periodically require that students use, share, and/or submit notecards in connection with a variety of class activities. I also wanted to make students aware of the potential flexibility of this type of study system. I told them not to keep their notecards in the same order, but to rearrange them regularly, sometimes with a specific purpose; for example, notecards made it easy to lay out all the depictions of a particular figure, context, or theme, which was especially helpful for preparing for some of the specific types of questions that appear on the exam. I also suggested that they expand the idea of notecard making to include culture/period/movement cards, which should include the following: the overall date range; any social, political, or historical events of note during that time; stylistic traits or other visually distinctive elements during that time; and any visual changes that may have occurred over the course of that time. I promoted these types of cards as particularly helpful for students who were looking for a way to avoid memorizing a lot of individual dates, which students often express as a source of difficulty.

While many of these strategies are broadly applicable to the academic study of a variety of different disciplines, it is equally important to contextualize these strategies with the specific content of the course.[38] For that reason, the third class meeting was a presentation of the content from the first assigned chapter and the fourth class meeting was an in-class review of that

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[36] Information about how to use the "Handout" settings under the Print dialog was provided to the students so that they could print out notecards in a variety of sizes. If students decided to create digital flashcards using one of the many free programs available online, I warned them that it remained their responsibility to make sure that the format would be compatible with any notecard activities or submissions associated with the course.

[37] Alan Baddeley, "Working Memory: An Overview," in *Working Memory and Education*, ed. Susan J. Pickering (Burlington, MA: Academic Press, 2006) 1–31.

[38] Sigrid Blömeke et al., "The Relation Between Content-Specific and General Teacher Knowledge and Skills," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 56 (2016): 35–46.

chapter. In that review, students were asked to identify the larger themes for the chapter and then support those themes with points drawn from observations about specific works. Student notes from the first discussion of the chapter were reviewed and some general suggestions for better note-taking were discussed. Sample questions using the images from that chapter were displayed in the same formats used on the exam, and the class worked together to craft effective answers. The class also collaborated on adding three significant observations to a required slide to serve as a model for an effective notecard. At the end of the class, students were instructed to make another notecard for homework for next period; the review materials discussed in class were also posted on the online learning management system for the course for students to revisit as needed. Although I continued to try and reinforce all of these ideas, approaches, and skills in future class meetings, chapter content formed the primary focus of our schedule for the rest of the semester.

**Preliminary Results and Conclusions**

Several indicators suggest that the academic performance of students who had this type of introduction to the course performed better on earlier assessments and, ultimately, in the course overall. On the first exam, which was graded out of 100 points, the class overall average from Fall 2013 to Fall 2015 was a 77. However, in my last offering of the course in Spring 2016, where I very clearly applied these strategies in a focused way at the start of the semester, the class average rose to a 79. This improvement in academic performance was not limited to the start of the semester; the overall course average from Fall 2013 to Fall 2015 was a 78.5, while students in Spring 2016 ended the semester with a course average of an 82.

Student Academic Performance
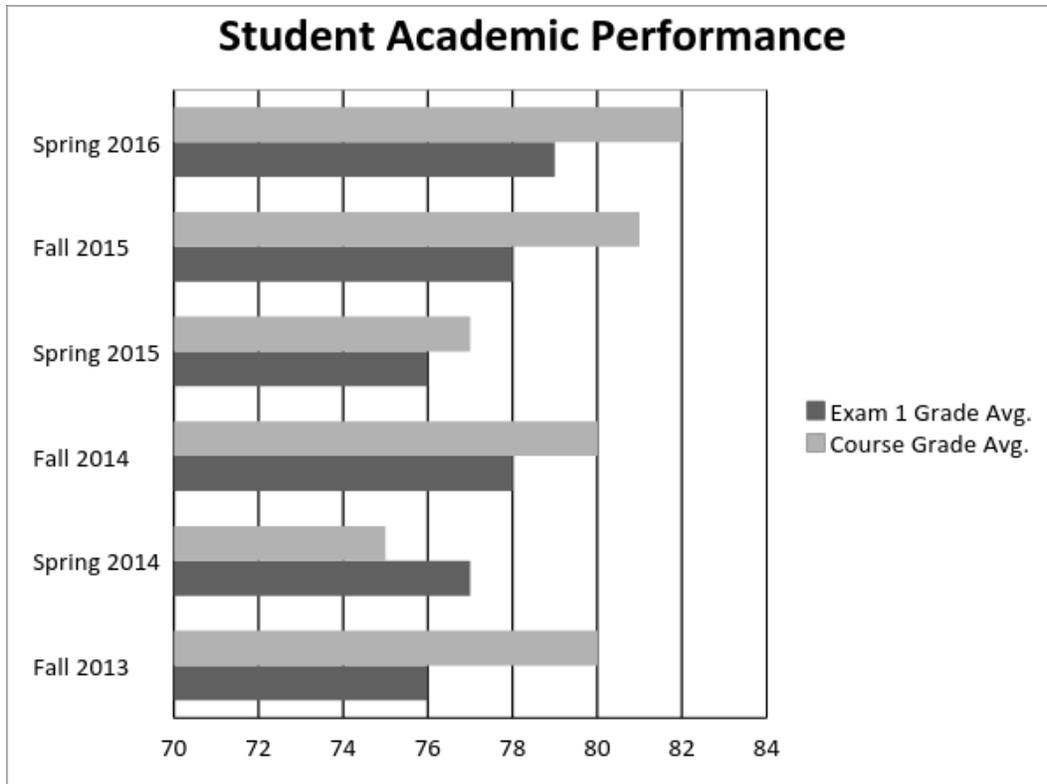
In regard to the notecard assignment, there were indications that students perceived greater value in that activity in the Spring 2016 semester. In every semester, the assignment was figured into students' participation grades, and students were provided with feedback regarding the content of their submission. Students from Fall 2013 to Fall 2015, however, earned credit simply through the submission of the notecard, while students in Spring 2016 were assigned either a "Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory" participation grade in association with the content of their notecard submission. However, even though less effort was required for students to gain credit for the assignment than in earlier semesters, a larger percentage of students submitted the assignment in Spring 2016; in Spring 2016, 91% of the students participated in the assignment, while the average for previous semesters was only 84%. This suggests that the focused introduction made students more aware of the usefulness of this activity in mastering course material.

Note-card Assignment
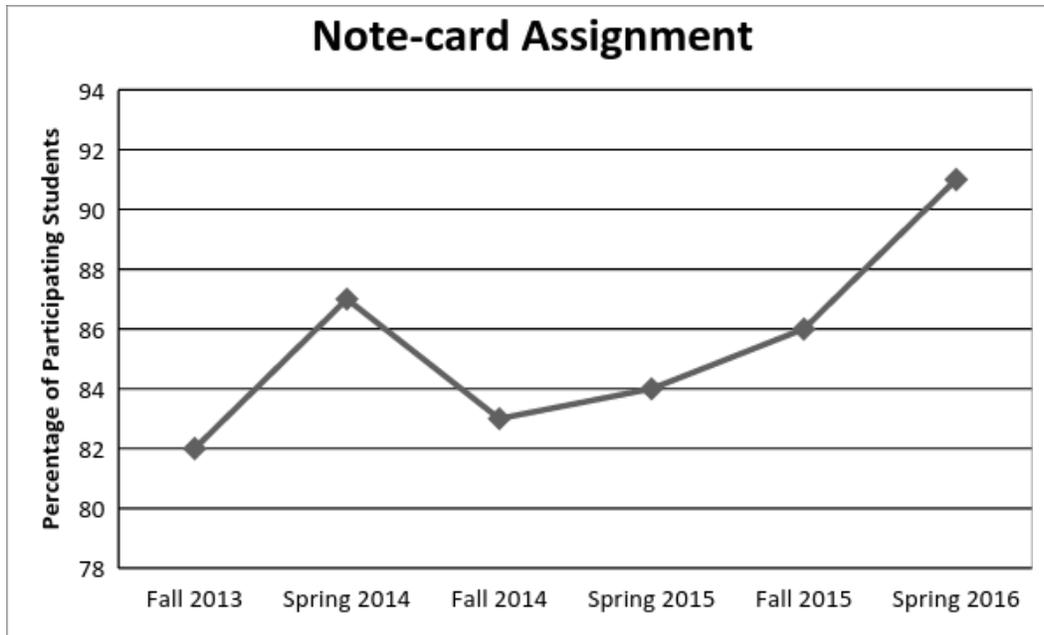
In the assessment instrument used to evaluate teaching at my current institution, there are ten objective statements that can be ranked on a scale from 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree) and three non-objective questions. The objective question most applicable to students' evaluation of how much they learned about the course content is the one that poses, "This course increased my knowledge of the topic." The average score on that question from Fall 2013 to Fall 2015 was a 4.71. In Spring 2016, however, the average score on that question was a 4.93, which represents a 4.4% increase. The objective question that is most applicable to students' evaluation of the approaches and strategies that they acquired in connection with the course content is the one that poses, "This course helped me further develop my academic skills (for example, speaking, critical analysis, performance, artistic abilities, etc.)." From Fall 2013 to Fall 2015, the average score on that question was a 4.45, but in Spring 2016, the score was 4.80. This represents a 7.0% increase, suggesting that the introduction was more effective in raising students' awareness of academic skills than content knowledge.
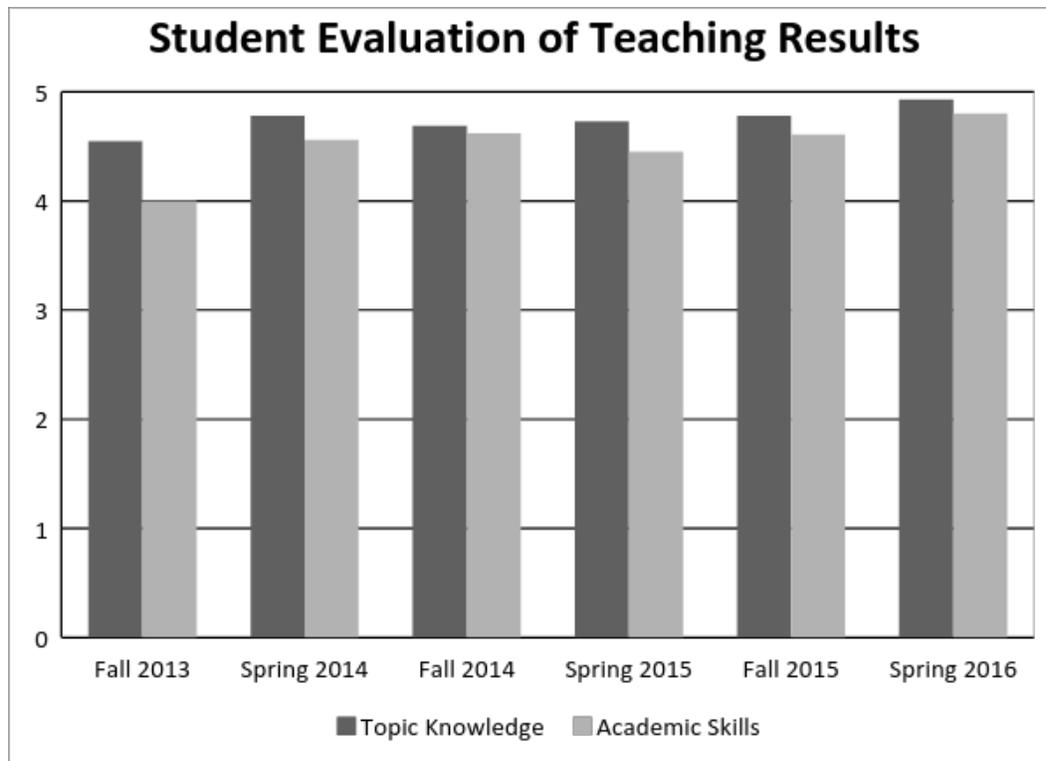
While some direct measures of student's observable behavior were already mentioned in the discussion of the project itself, student narrative feedback on the assessment instrument to evaluate teaching also contained more specific praise in connection with the presentation of content knowledge and course preparatory activities. Responses to the narrative prompt, "What were the best features about this course?" included the following:

- "Her willingness to help any student with understanding the course or even methods for studying can also be very helpful for later material."
- "I liked that she gave us advise [sic] on studying for the exams and I really enjoyed the instructor's energy and enthusiasm when talking about the course material."
- "The use of multi-media examples as well as small activities that involved the class to understand more of the topic."
- "Loved the activities she had us to do. She gave me a better understanding of the material by doing that."
- "She made it easy to understand and enjoy the subject."
- "I have never cared for history but learning about art history was very interesting plus the professor made this course very interesting."

Taken as a whole, these preliminary results suggest that the focused introduction helped to make students more cognizant of the knowledge and skills they developed from their semester taking survey, as well as more successful in course assessments over the entire semester.

Future Directions

I plan on continuing to use a focused introduction in the course and look forward to the collection of more data in this area. In particular, I would like to develop assessments that would allow me to take more specific measures of some of the individual elements employed as part of that introduction to better understand which elements are having the most direct and effective impact on student learning and understanding. Still, although more detailed investigation needs to be undertaken in connection with the many pedagogical strategies associated with the course, the preliminary results suggest that this focused introduction has the potential for promoting more effective engagement with the survey, particularly among students who almost certainly came with doubts about the potential value of the course. In an anonymous in-class questionnaire that was given only to students in Spring 2016—before any modern art was even the subject of course content—the written survey asked: "Do you think the material in this course has caused you to reflect on any modern social and/or political issues?" Students were directed to circle one of the following choices: "Frequently," "Sometimes," "Rarely," or "Never," along with an area where they could leave a written comment if they wished. 76% of the students affirmed they were able to make connections either "Frequently" or "Sometimes" between art of the past and issues of today. Although there is no comparative data from earlier courses, the fact that two-thirds of these students indicated that they perceived some real relevance in the examination of these ancient and foreign materials seems very encouraging for the future of art historical survey as a solid foundation for engaging with today's multicultural, visual world.

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