

Human Expression: Discovering the Power of the Global Humanities

“I am a citizen of the world [*kosmopolitês*]”

- Diogenes Laertius, vi. 63, 4th century BCE



As an educator, I firmly believe that it is the Humanities that help make thematic associations across disciplines, and shed light on the inter-connectedness of the world throughout history. Many of my students are non-art majors with interests in science/healthcare, business or criminal justice, who benefit from a visual course that introduces them to human creativity and experiences, through object-based learning.

The Art History survey course is an introduction to the global history of art, tracing its development from prehistoric times to the 21st century. It provides a comparative perspective on diverse cultures by highlighting the societies, technology and theories that have influenced and contributed to the development of the visual arts. The analyses of art and architecture promote discussions on history and politics, mythology and religion, as well as international trade and certain aspects of the sciences. The complexities of world mythology are brilliantly illustrated by the stonemasons of Egypt, the Mediterranean and Asia, and students get to learn world religions through the study of images from medieval India as well as Baroque Europe.

The globalized content of Art History would give students the knowledge to recognize cross-cultural exchanges over time and help them appreciate the connections between religion and politics – as seen in the illustrations. The Colonial appropriation of the iconic form of a Buddhist stupa helped mitigate the Imperial ostentation of the viceregal house; and the White House reflects obvious allusions to the classic Greek temple, thus linking it to the original birthplace of democracy. The study of the symbolism of the books and objects in the portrait of Henry Louis Gates at the Smithsonian reveals the interdependence of the New world and the Old.¹ In our shrinking digital world we require the ability to make connections between knowledge and experience through cross-disciplinary study. More than ever before we need to understand what it means “to be” a human instead of just focusing on the scientific recognition of what “is” a human.

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¹ Images: *Rashtrapati Bhavan*, *Sanchi Stupa*, *The White House*, *Model of a Classical Greek Temple*, *Portrait of Henry Louis Gates* by Yuqi Wang