

Labs Across the Curriculum Course Development Projects: 2012-2013

Authenticity

Daniel Barolsky and Jennifer Esperanza

Spring 2013

In the Spring semester of 2013, Jennifer Esperanza and Daniel Barolsky will offer a team-taught course entitled, “‘Keepin’ it Real?:’ The Pursuit, Defense, and Deconstruction of Authenticity.” This grant will be used to prepare and implement an Enduring Questions course devoted to the topic of authenticity, a theme that has generated student interest and has been central to our respective research projects. The course will explore how varying notions of “authenticity” play a significant role in all walks of life: from the construction of “naturalness” and invocations of political, historical, or national authority to artistic performances and claims of individual or cultural originality. Visits to Kerry International (maker of artificial flavorings) along with Midway Village and Medieval Times (sites for historical “reenactments”) will provide students with an opportunity to examine the different ways in which the “authentic” is invoked, used, and portrayed. The inclusion of various guest speakers and derivative assignments (i.e. response papers, in-class debates, final research projects, etc.) will ask that students experiment with cross-disciplinary perspectives.

Cultural and Artistic Approaches to Mathematics

Darrah Chavey

Spring 2013

We have taught a course in “Cultural Approaches to Mathematics” for the last 20 years, focusing on mathematical ideas developed within non-technological cultures around the world. As Beloit College works to implement an “Artistic and Creative Practices” domain requirement, we will modify the course to meet this new requirement. The course currently studies the art, stories, crafts, and games of certain cultures, as well as more obvious topics such as number systems. The modified course will dramatically increase the attention paid to the construction of these artifacts, especially the art from such cultures. In collaboration with art faculty, we will develop labs that give students the opportunities to work in greater creative depth, constructing the artifacts and art of cultures we study, incorporating both the mathematical and artistic values of these cultures as expressed in their arts. Many of these labs will be associated with specific types of designs, such as those with specialized forms of symmetries, geometrically regular use of colors, and specific types of symmetry breaking or symmetry modification. Other labs will focus on the construction of the numerical quipu (knotted strings representing numbers) of the Inca, the construction of certain number systems, and possibly the development of mathematically related games in various cultures

Transitioning from an Urban Education to the Liberal Arts: The Chicago Public School Context

Sonja Darlington and Cecil Youngblood

Fall 2012

This course will investigate the collaboration between specific programs, such as the ACM pipeline project, the Network for College Success, and the Chicago Postsecondary Transition project, that promote a liberal arts education for students in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). The underlying question is how a liberal arts education can address the needs of first-generation college and poorly resourced students from urban areas. We will start by studying major urban education issues and trends, move to investigating specific issues in educating students in the Chicago Public Schools, and conclude by interacting with individual students, counselors, and teachers at CPS. Classroom activities will include large and small group discussions, guest speakers, oral presentations, a digital story project, and a one-week immersion experience. Sonja and Cecil will co-teach the class and will facilitate a week of activities during fall break in Chicago. Course goals will focus on understanding why CPS students can benefit from a liberal arts education, how admission and retention of CPS students at liberal arts colleges is best guaranteed, and what college students can do to support high school students who want a liberal arts education.

Journalism in the Digital Age

Shawn Gillen

Spring 2013

This lab project will lead to the implementation of a revised journalism minor and the development of a new, regularly-offered course that will serve journalism minors, English majors, and students from across the curriculum. The course, "Writing for Digital Media," (English/Journalism 264) challenges students to write news, feature stories, reviews, and essays for a digital environment. The course is a critical addition to the journalism minor, since most entry-level positions seek writers and editors who can write for digital media. Students will also study digital culture and some theoretical approaches to it during the course of the semester. The project will also involve faculty study this summer at American University in digital media and a strengthened relationship with the college's relationship with American University's domestic program in journalism.

Objects of Devotion

Natalie Gummer

Spring 2013

This interdisciplinary seminar takes as its focus objects to which and with which devotion is offered—specifically, those artifacts found in the Wright and Logan Museum collections. Drawing upon the theoretical and methodological insights of Arjun Appadurai and others, and engaging with current ethical and aesthetic debates in museum studies about the status, treatment, and display of "religious" objects in artistic and anthropological collections, the course aims to invite alternative modes of seeing and interacting with physical objects, as well as

reflection upon colonial systems of valuation and collection that have drawn objects of devotion into the cultural and aesthetic realms of our museums. Ongoing interaction with these objects constitutes the lab component of the course. Students will research objects in the museum collections in depth and design an exhibit intended to draw the attention of the viewer to the multiple and fraught ways of seeing, interacting with, and valuing these objects that are so often also accorded subjectivity and agency. Finally, the class will inquire into the ways in which these objects may be similar to and different from material objects that function in contemporary American society as icons of power, status, and wealth.

Beloit College: The Book

Joshua Hall

Spring 2013

This course acquaints students with the history of Beloit College through a writing-intensive engagement of the Beloit College Archives. Students will co-author a pictorial history of Beloit College that uses material from the College archives to tell the college's story in a clear and compelling way. The course will focus on the proper use of archival material, the outline and construction of a historical narrative, and the crafting of captions that go beyond a basic description and instead provide historical context and develop a strong narrative surrounding Beloit College's history. After completing a rough draft of the manuscript, students will receive feedback from college alumni and staff before submission to the publisher. Josh hopes to build a framework for future courses focusing on narrow aspects of the college's history such as athletics or departments.

American Realisms: From Grit Lit to Ashcan Art

Chuck Lewis

Fall 2012

This cross-disciplinary laboratory course explores American Realisms in literature and art between the Civil War and World War 1, with an emphasis on naturalist fiction and the work of the Ashcan school of artists. We explore the following questions: How does work in this period reflect the larger concept of "realistic" art more generally? What is the relationship between national identity (and the American social context) and this work? How did writers and painters influence each other? What are similarities and differences involving how we read literature, view art, and write about our experience with both? This course includes a lecture series from an art historian and a lab unit in which students work with the Wright Museum staff to create our own exhibit around museum holdings

The Hidden Harmony

Susan Rice

Spring 2013

Chamber Singers, in collaboration with the Logan and Wright Museums, will rehearse and explore a program of choral music in which each musical selection is paired with one of eight objects from the museums' collections. Music and museum objects that engender the broadest academic intersections will be chosen, allowing

the students to utilize a variety of lenses in their investigation. Mini-lectures provided by select members of the Beloit College faculty will guide the students as they explore not only the form and artistry of the music and museum pieces as individual entities, but also the manner in which each pair might reflect, expand or illustrate one another. At the end of the semester, Chamber Singers will present performances in the Wright Museum with mini-lecture content included in an expansive program booklet, gallery talks, and a reflection session with the student performers, project collaborators, and audience members.

Humanizing and Materializing International Politics

Pablo Toral

Spring 2013

The goal of this project is to bring the humanities into the course that serves as introduction to the international relations major, International Politics. Students will interpret artifacts, testimonials and diaries to understand lived experiences in their own cultural and social context. Contextualizing knowledge is an example of critical thinking that will invite the students to reflect on their own role in the process of knowledge production. I will develop two assignments to be completed within a three-week module. The students will choose one of the two. In the first assignment, students will analyze the history, context, and narrative elements of objects located in the two Beloit College museums. The second assignment will be based on archival research. Our library holds a rich collection of diaries, correspondence, newspaper clippings and other documents generated by graduates, faculty and staff who witnessed some of the key events in the twentieth century. Students intending to study abroad could read the diaries of a traveler in the country where they intend to study to review the traveler's recount and learn how conditions have changed. This exercise will also make them think critically about their own role as an outsider and their relation to the other.

Learning about the Latino Community in Beloit through Writing

Oswaldo Voysest

Fall 2012

In a continued effort to learn more about the Beloit community at large, this lab component of Spanish 215 (SPAN 215) will provide students the opportunity to research and write about the Beloit Latino community. Spanish 215 is an advanced Spanish language course that focuses primarily on writing, and one of the writing projects students will undertake is to produce a newsletter about issues and news that affect the local Latino population. The newsletter will contain information pieces, interviews, photos, announcements, and opinion pieces as a way to inform students studying Spanish at Beloit College as well as the various clubs and interest houses involved with the Hispanic community and Spanish (e.g. Spanish Club, Spanish House, Voces Latinas).