



# INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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## CLICK ON ART

As a part-time art instructor, I find that I don't have the time or financial resources to take my students on field trips and expose them to our local fine art and architecture. Attending an art exhibition opening at the Albany Museum of Art, located adjacent to our campus, or inviting a local artist to come talk to my classes, is usually the most outside exposure I can offer. This issue is of special concern in my art appreciation and art history classes.

### Purpose and Description

To remedy this problem, create excitement, and motivate students in classes where they initially begin with a minimal level of interest, I have incorporated an outside project using a teaching concept from my photography classes—titled Click On Art. My art history and art appreciation students participate in a hands-on photography project that involves three collaborative efforts.

Students cannot go in mass to find and document art and architecture, and some students do not own or have access to cameras. So, I buy disposable cameras (usually 5 or 6) and distribute them to my students, along with instructions to search out, find, and photograph art and architecture that correlate with the periods and styles we are studying in class.

In the first collaborative activity, students must make exposures of different images; summarize their work with each image; and include the name of the artist (if known), the period represented, the date completed, the medium, and the type of work. Students then must discuss the art or architecture in terms of art elements and their personal opinion of the works that they have recorded visually.

After students have completed their independent assignments, they pass their cameras along to others until all have had an opportunity to complete the assignment. I have the film processed. Finally, students make oral presentations with a PowerPoint demonstration.

The collaboration involves the Computer Art class. Since the images are standard color photographs, I give

this class the assignment of converting images from hard copy to digital, using PhotoShop. The images will be manipulated only for color correction, cropping, and clarity, and are then burned to a CD and returned to the owner who can complete his or her PowerPoint demonstration. This gives my Computer Art class a hands-on project by which to learn the different tools in PhotoShop and about projects being conducted in other art classes.

The third area of collaboration involves the English/Learning Support Department. Students who participate in the Click on Art project submit their written reports to their English and/or Learning Support classes for a grade as independent work. Students who are not enrolled in these classes may utilize the Learning Support Lab as a resource for help in writing their papers. Interaction within the Art and English/Learning Support Departments has created a heightened awareness of their aesthetic parallels.

### Evaluating the Project

We evaluate this project by collecting responses to our standard Darton College student survey, scheduling periodic conferences between Art and English/Learning Support personnel, and scheduling independent conferences with students to determine strengths and weaknesses of this project.

### Conclusion

The Click on Art project is an active learning approach to teaching art, designed to make students aware of the art and architecture in their communities. This project has stimulated the critical interests of experiencing, discussing, and writing about art outside the classic textbook environment.

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## THE ETIQUETTE DINNER— TEACHING SOFT SKILLS

As instructors, we work to ensure that our students receive all of the content information for courses established in our curriculum. However, in the rush to meet the criteria of the course, we may find ourselves less focused than we should be on teaching the soft skills that employers look for in our graduates—e.g., possessing a sense of social or professional ethos, demonstrating maturity as well as responsibility and dependability, and being flexible and responsive to change. One of the core abilities that our college has identified as important for our students to develop is managing one's self responsibly—i.e., one demonstrates self-sufficiency and responsibility for effectiveness in one's personal and occupational life. This ability necessarily implies an awareness of control over personal and professional obligations, and conduct. As instructors, we ask ourselves, "How do we go about teaching these soft skills?"

We learned that students in our information technology course were particularly anxious about the job interview process and had serious questions about what to expect, how to act, and what to wear. We decided to host an Etiquette Dinner on campus to demonstrate and explain the necessities of making it through a job interview in a lunch or dinner setting. Participants were expected to dress in business attire and pretend that they were having an interview, which just happened to include a meal. During the hour-long presentation, participants were provided tips and developed strategies for maneuvering through the meal while simultaneously focusing on the interview process.

To add another dimension to this exercise, we asked an Administrative Office Procedures class to plan the event. This class was assigned the task of arranging and reserving the meeting/dining space on campus, planning the details of the meal with an area caterer, and coordinating the logistics of the event, including audio equipment, introductions, and seating arrangements. By assigning these duties to students, we provided practical, hands-on experience. Students were required to outline the details of the event, form appropriate committees, and work cooperatively. They created a budget, petitioned the student activities board for financial support, and worked to plan the event.

As students entered the conference room-turned dining area, they were seated at tables preset for a semiformal dining experience and treated to a three-course catered meal. My colleague and I hosted the event and dressed in character. She became Ms. Faux Pas for the hour, and I became Ms. Manners. We were

an amusing entertainment feature for the students, but we also taught proper dining etiquette for the job interview. In our presentations, we covered topics such as appropriate attire, proper placement and use of eating utensils, and interesting conversation topics.

It was a good learning experience for all involved. One student commented: "When you are planning for a large group and not just yourself, things have to be planned differently. The committee really worked very well together. We learned a lot of new things." Another student added: "Wow, I didn't realize there was so much to know. Now I will be a more desirable candidate."

The Etiquette Dinner is not a new concept and has been held in other settings. However, we discovered that hosting this activity was an excellent strategy for teaching and developing some of the valuable soft skills that may never be addressed in the regular classroom.

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