Putting theory to practice: Teaching for Creativity via Zoom in Artist-led inclass workshops.

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**Introduction:** Active learning is an approach to instruction that involves actively engaging students with the course material in dynamic ways. While the instructor’s guidance is still important in this process, this approach places more responsibility on the learner. Active learning activities may range in length from a couple of minutes to whole class periods or may take place over a series of class sessions. A popular pedagogical technique used for active learning is that of inviting guest speakers into the classroom. There are many benefits to having inclass guest speakers; from offering students a glimpse into the life of an industry professional (Noon & Ashley, 2013; Jablon-Roberts & McCracken, 2020) to learning about potential career paths and having industry professionals address questions and concerns about the industry they work in (Jablon-Roberts & McCracken, 2020). Prior to the COVID 19 pandemic, Ashley (2010) conducted an introductory study using video conferencing (Skype) between students and industry professionals, as did Noon and Ashley (2013) using Blackboard Illuminate. Results from both studies indicated positive student experiences and that video conferencing was a valid instructional tool in connecting students to industry professionals.

With the shift to remote learning during the 2020 pandemic, video conferencing software is now being considered a legitimate resource to connect students with guest speakers who were previously inaccessible due to time, geography, and financial constraints (Doggett, 2008). The positive benefits or negative impact of utilizing video conferencing as an education platform is dependent on several factors, including hardware issues that impact the technologies' performance, instructor and student comfort and computer literacy levels with video conferencing technology, and instructor and student attitudes toward video conference technology as an educational platform for learning (Lieberman, 2020).However, there is a limited amount of research on students’ perceptions of using video conferencing platforms such as Zoom in the delivery of inclass workshops. The purpose of this study was to understand fashion design students’ perceptions of an inclass workshop delivered via Zoom.

**Theory:** An environment in a fashion design classroom that is dynamic and promotes active learning can foster creative student outcomes through teaching for creativity (MacDonald & Bigelow, 2010). The aim of teaching for creativity is learner-centered and focused on developing a student’s creative ability (Rutland & Barlex, 2008). Rutland and Barlex’ (2008) “Three-feature model for creativity”, reflects this learner-centered approach. In their framework, three factors influence student’s creativity: (1) domain relevant factors (concept, aesthetics, technical knowledge, and product skills; (2) creative problem-solving factors (meta-cognitive learning, creatives attitudes, and creative abilities; and (3) social/environmental factors (school atmosphere, community resources, supportive classroom environment).

**Method****:** Collage is an art form characterized by pasting magazine, newspaper cuttings, photographs, and other materials together. In fashion design, collage serves as the basis of a mood board composition that is a springboard for ideas. A Seattle-based collage artist was invited to lead an inclass collage workshop. Given her location, we agreed that the workshop would be conducted via Zoom. The session was divided in the two parts described below.

(1) IDEATE: Students were tasked with creating their first collage using the concepts “homeland + obscurity”. They started by creating lists of words associated with each concept before looking for relevant images and then creating a collage. Using a document camera, students shared their process and outcomes with the guest artist and their classmates and received constructive feedback. The guest artist also shared her “homeland +obscurity” collage with the students.

(2)IDEATE + COLLABORATE: The second collage was based on a different pair of concepts. After completing it, students passed their second collage to the person sitting next to them. That person added an element to the original collage. When completed, collages were passed back to the original creators, and students shared their work using the document camera, and discussed the experience of the collaborative process in relation to their composition and the outcome.

To address the purpose of this study, a qualitative research method was devised that consisted of document analysis (i.e., student collages) and a survey consisting of three open-ended questions distribute at the end of the workshop. Data were coded and evaluated for themes.

**Results & Discussion:** A total of thirteen fashion design students, enrolled in an introductory fashion illustration course at a large Northeastern public university responded to the survey. There was one male and twelve females, either in their sophomore or junior year of college.

The instructor provided an active learning experience and classroom environment where students were empowered to create original collages. Survey participants expressed that they “learned many things such as how to incorporate self-expression” in their work. Domain relevant factors such as the concepts/ideas, aesthetics, and technical knowledge were presented so participants would understand the task. These tips were “educational and informative”, “helped relieve stress”, and were particularly useful when it came to the collaborative collage where participants “learned not to be afraid to work with others […] you can create something with further depth and perspective when collaborating.” Creative problem solving was evident through the students’ presentation of each collage and the discussion that followed it. Positive feedback from the instructor as well as the guest artist built their confidence. Finally, students felt that even though the guest artist was not able to be in class due to current “circumstances”, they would have preferred “having her in the classroom because it would lead to more participation and a better experience.”

The purpose of this study was to understand fashion design students’ perceptions of an inclass workshop delivered via Zoom. Overall, student participants acknowledged that the use of video conferencing software enabled them to learn new approaches to the practice of collage. Future research could include a pre-post survey of perceived student self-efficacy of their creative ability in relation to collage-making.

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