



Arts-Integrative Teaching in a Tenure or Promotion Portfolio

UMS believes that experiences with the performing arts can enrich and enliven academic inquiry across all disciplines. We are committed to creating uncommon learning opportunities for students and faculty, both in and outside the classroom. One of the ways we do this is by collaborating with UM faculty members to incorporate live performance of music, theatre, or dance into their courses.

Performance in the classroom, and in a Teaching Statement

Integrating the arts into the curriculum has multiple impacts on student learning. Stated simply, this integration provides new entry points into course material and enlivens familiar routines of reading, lecture, and exams. Furthermore, it taps into a rich sequence of pedagogical premises:¹

- that the arts constitute a unique way of knowing, separate from the verbal and the mathematical.
- that this way of knowing promotes higher-order cognition, including creativity, tolerance for ambiguity, the ability to process complexity, the ability to synthesize disparate parts into a coherent whole, and other capacities that are critical for an undergraduate education.
- that these capacities, in addition to enhancing the artistic experience itself, contribute to a constellation of cognitive capacities that are activated in broad and flexible pedagogical contexts. That is, students mobilize that creativity and tolerance for ambiguity not because of a uni-directional transfer from the arts to some other knowledge domain, but because of a dialectical relationship between the arts and other domains

Given these impacts, teaching that integrates the arts into the classroom touches on many of the areas that the UM Faculty Handbook cites as important for the area of Teaching (University of Michigan Faculty Handbook 5.B). In fact, arts-integrative teaching is an effective and innovative classroom methodology and can strengthen the Teaching Statement required in faculty Tenure and Promotion portfolios.

In many units across the university, however, the decision to include the arts in the classroom may be an unconventional one; faculty may be as unaccustomed to writing about this type of teaching as committees are to reading about it. This guide is designed to demonstrate how the value of such arts-integrative teaching can be established in Tenure/Promotion portfolios. It uses the practice of incorporating performance into a course — having students attend a UMS music, theatre, or dance event outside of the classroom, and using activity-based learning strategies in the classroom — as its specific exemplar. For those faculty members assembling their portfolios, this guide provides ideas about how to narrate their arts-integrative teaching clearly and persuasively. For committee members reading a tenure or promotion portfolio, it offers an overview of how such teaching can be a powerful piece of an individual's teaching profile. This guide is based on UMS collaborations with faculty in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA); faculty in other units across the UM campus should consult with their departments for advice on adapting this guide.

NEW STANDARDS FOR INSTRUCTION

In many disciplines, incorporating performance into a syllabus may seem like a surprising choice, raising questions about how the arts are relevant to, for example, business or medicine. However, not only does teaching through the arts have both intrinsic and instrumental value (as demonstrated in the studies cited in this document), it is in line with university-wide initiatives to move toward more activity-based teaching methods. With the support of UM's Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT), many units on campus sponsor major initiatives encouraging faculty to explore teaching techniques that move beyond lecture. Arts-integrative teaching is part of a new standard for instruction in the university.

¹ For an overview of these ideas, see Judith M. Burton, Robert Horowitz, and Hal Abeles, "Learning In and Through the Arts: The Question of Transfer," *Studies in Art Education* 41, no. 2 (2000): 228-230, 253-254; James S. Catterall, "The Arts and the Transfer of Learning" in *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development*, ed. Richard J. Deasy (Washington, D.C.: GPO Arts Education Partnership, 2002), 151-157; James S. Catterall, "Conversation and Silence: Transfer of Learning Through the Arts," *Journal for Learning Through the Arts: A Research Journal on Arts Integration in Schools and Communities* 1, no. 1 (2005): 1-12; Jaye T. Darby and James S. Catterall, "The Fourth R: The Arts and Learning," *Teachers College Record* 96, no. 2 (1994): 299-328; Edward B. Fiske, ed., *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning* (Washington, D.C.: GPO President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, 1999); Vivian L Gadsden, "The Arts and Education: Knowledge Generation, Pedagogy and the Discourse of Learning," *Review of Research in Education* 32 (2008): 29-61; Jerome Kagan, "Why the Arts Matter: Six Good Reasons for Advocating the Importance of Arts in the Schools," in *Neuroeducation: Learning, Arts, and the Brain: Findings and Challenges for Educators and Researchers from the 2009 Johns Hopkins University Summit*, ed. Barbara Rich (New York: Dana Press, 2009), 29-36; Kevin F. McCarthy and others, *Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate About the Benefits of the Arts* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2004), 44-49; Marina McDougall, Bronwyn Bevan, and Robert Semper, *Art as a Way of Knowing: Report from Art as a Way of Knowing Conference, 3-4 March 2011* (San Francisco: The Exploratorium, 2012).

PERFORMANCE AND RISK

In disciplines far from the arts, the choice to integrate performance into a course can feel risky. Not only might such arts-integrative teaching raise questions about how it serves a professional trajectory, it may also lead to new pedagogical ground. For many faculty, including performance in a course is a new experience that involves using unfamiliar classroom modalities and carries with it a measure of unpredictability in the outcome. As a result, faculty often find that they must adapt and improvise; they must relinquish a bit of control — a risky proposition in itself.

In fact, the sense of risk that comes from including a performance in a syllabus is good for teaching; it is an indicator of willingness to grow as a teacher, to try unfamiliar or unconventional methods. As such, it can be featured effectively in a Teaching Statement. One LSA Dean notes that, “It’s a good thing to talk about risk-taking in a Teaching Statement,” and that she is interested in reading about what hasn’t worked in the classroom as well as what has. “It’s okay to talk about struggle; it’s fine to talk about failure. ‘This didn’t work, and here’s how it shaped my teaching.’ Own the risk, own what happened, and tell about that growth in your Teaching Statement.”

GROWTH

In other words, the risk that instructors assume by including performance in their courses contributes to their growth as teachers, regardless of how successful they consider the experience. As such, performance in the classroom can figure prominently in a description of an instructor’s growth trajectory. Instructors can also connect their use of performance directly to their teaching philosophies and to examples of specific instructional strategies — key components in a Teaching Statement.

For example, encouraging a more engaged, less passive approach to knowledge acquisition might be a cornerstone of one instructor’s teaching philosophy. In her Teaching Statement, she could describe how she decided to take her class to a UMS play, how she had students initiate research into the play’s history and connect that to themes of the course, how a visiting artist co-taught a class in preparation for the performance, or how students created a panel discussion based on the experience. These specific examples of active, experiential, arts-integrative teaching methods become evidence of her willingness to depart from conventional classroom procedures. By using them, she not only better implements her teaching philosophy, she also actively expands her teaching profile.

Regardless of whether an instructor continues to use performance in class or considers it a “one-off,” the experience can underpin a powerful account of his or her professional development. Perhaps some of the instructional methods are successful and will be used again while others need tweaking or may be discarded.

Perhaps the experience of co-teaching with a visiting artist is uncomfortable, but exposes an instructor to novel strategies or a different teaching style that is employed again or adapted. Perhaps performance is now regularly incorporated into teaching and has become an integral part of the syllabus. This experimentation with unfamiliar teaching methods becomes part of one’s trajectory of growth and can be featured in a Teaching Statement. An account of the experience is most effective when it identifies the ways in which instructional methods or style have been affected, and describes how the individual emerges as a different teacher.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING METHODS

UMS encourages instructors to support their visit to the theater with writing, discussion, and hands-on or creative activities in the classroom — activities that promote reflection, synthesis, and collaboration.

Researchers note that it can be difficult to ascertain whether the positive effects of arts-integrative teaching come from the arts themselves or from the active, engaged methods used in the classrooms being studied. UMS encourages instructors to support their visit to the theater with writing, discussion, and hands-on or creative

activities in the classroom — activities that promote reflection, synthesis, and collaboration. An instructor can highlight the effectiveness of these teaching methods with clear narration in a Teaching Statement as well as with documentation. This might include, for example, video of classroom activities, examples of students’ creative work, or written feedback from students at mid-term and/or end of term.

INITIATIVE

The decision to integrate performance into a syllabus also demonstrates initiative — to improve teaching and to go beyond the traditional boundaries of the classroom. It is a proactive step toward better implementing a teaching philosophy. Reaching out to and collaborating with UMS to incorporate performance into a course represents a purposeful investment in one’s teaching, just as participation in a CRLT seminar does. Furthermore, it often results in new course design.

In addition, bringing students into the theater and performance into the classroom is evidence of attention to the development of the whole person, going beyond basic expectations of the course. It provides students with an experience that is relevant to a particular discipline but exceeds its boundaries, contributing to the broader undergraduate mission.

PLANNING — FOR STUDENT EVALUATIONS

You can strengthen the account of your arts-integrative teaching with evidence from your student evaluations (also known as “student ratings of instruction” and “course evaluations”) — with ratings numbers, and with student narratives that speak to the benefits of your expanded teaching style. Some faculty, however, have reservations about venturing outside their area of expertise, or they fear that their students’ performance experience will fall flat and that their ratings numbers will drop because of something beyond their control.

There is indeed an element of the unknown inherent in live performance; unlike a reading assignment, even a familiar piece of music, theatre, or dance may unfold in unpredictable ways. Ideally, your students are energized and inspired by the performance; however, this particular show might not relate to your course material in the way you had envisioned, or it might not “land” for them. Likewise, some students may be uncomfortable with new instructional methods you use to support the performance.

Although these circumstances are certainly possible, the surest way to garner positive student responses is by creating a positive learning experience around the performance, one that directly addresses its nature and its role in your class. Just as you do with the rest of your course, you begin with a clear learning goal — a reason for including performance in the first place — and approach that goal with purposeful, pedagogically sound activities and assignments. Critically, because there is an element beyond your control, let students in on the mechanics of that process. Be transparent about how you are contextualizing the performance within your curriculum and what your intentions are for the experience. Acknowledge that there is a measure of adventure and risk involved in all live performance, including any performance-based teaching strategies you bring into the classroom. Listen and respond to student expectations.

When the time comes for course evaluations, review with students the importance of their feedback, and how it is most constructive when it addresses your instructional style and methods. Clarify exactly what it is they are evaluating, perhaps referring back to your conversations about the performance. Be explicit about the feedback you seek, and encourage students to be specific in their responses. Finally, keep student evaluations in perspective. Performance is only one element among many in your fifteen-week course, and as one senior professor notes, “You tried this thing once; it’s not going to destroy your numbers.” Furthermore, UMS Faculty Fellows whose students found a performance confusing, or just didn’t like it, report that students nonetheless consider the experience a positive one and are glad they went.

RELEVANCE

The value of arts-integrative teaching is further evident in its connections to broader discourses within the university. The use of performance in the classroom resonates with important campus-wide conversations and, in many cases, employs overlapping language and methodologies. When this overlap is highlighted in an instructor’s description of teaching philosophy and methods, the result is a stronger Teaching Statement that demonstrates the broader relevance of arts-integrative teaching.

- Innovative Teaching and the Third Century Initiative. The skills and strategies mobilized around performance are precisely the ones addressed in the Third Century Initiative’s statement on “Intensifying Student Learning” (<http://thirdcentury.umich.edu/student-learning/>). An instructor can make a strong case that his or her teaching enhances learning according to the terms of this initiative.
- Active learning, Engaged learning, Experiential learning. Performance — and the classroom activities that enhance the performance experience — are embodied, experiential, and multi-modal learning experiences rather than ones carried out passively or in abstraction. As such, they share many of the characteristics of “active learning,” a CRLT-recommended classroom strategy whereby students learn by doing. Similarly, depending on what classroom activities are incorporated around the performance, arts-integrative teaching may overlap with “engaged learning” and “experiential learning” strategies. CRLT’s webpage on Teaching Strategies (<http://www.crlt.umich.edu/resources/teaching-strategies>) provides the specifics of each, and can help substantiate an account of arts-integrative teaching.
- Interdisciplinarity. Often, integrating performance into a course entails trying theories and methodologies from another discipline, or inviting experts from across campus to co-teach a class session. Instructors whose experience has been strongly informed by this aspect of arts-integrative teaching might frame their Teaching Statements in terms of interdisciplinarity, which the university highly values.

GO FURTHER

Supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, UMS offers Course Development Grants to faculty from all disciplines who feature UMS programs in their instructional design (<http://ums.org/education/university-programs/>). Grantees receive a salary supplement, course development funds, curricular support from UMS Education and Community Engagement Staff, and special consideration for interactions with UMS visiting and teaching artists (subject to artist availability). UMS Course Development Grants further promote instructors' growth, and the associated stipend can be cited as an award in a Tenure/Promotion portfolio.