

The Teaching of Art and Literature at Cedarville University

Cedarville University exists to offer an education marked by excellence and grounded in biblical truth. The College of Arts and Sciences, helps to serve that mission by teaching students, both majors and non-majors within each discipline, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of art and literature throughout history.

The College of Arts and Sciences has the responsibility to present divergent philosophies and points of views representing the range of human experience and opinion; this should not be interpreted as endorsement of such views and philosophies. By so doing, we aim to increase each student's appreciation of the beauty of art and literature, and thereby increase each student's awareness of the seminal works and ideas which have shaped the foundation of civilization and continue to exert influence on it, not just those artists and works that are deemed safe or non-threatening or in perfect harmony with the Christian faith. Thus, we hope to help the University produce educated, committed followers of Christ who, rather than retreating from contemporary culture, will be prepared to engage it articulately and confidently.

The alternative of filtering work to only those pieces expressing complete agreement with the community's doctrinal and philosophical positions would not only prove untenable, but would create a body of work impotent to speak beyond what the viewer already holds to be true. Thus, we believe the benefits of viewing art and reading literature outweigh the risks, even at risk of controversy.

We want our students to talk knowledgeably about art and literature as well as carry the testimony of Jesus Christ with them as they do so. We want graduates to be salt and light in graduate schools, office spaces, and reading groups, *in the world but not of it*. We want men and women shaped by a Cedarville education to be marked not by their fear of culture, but by their critiques of and contributions to culture.

Teaching Art at Cedarville University

The Department of Art, Design, and Theatre routinely mounts exhibitions of student, faculty, and visiting artist's work within gallery space on Cedarville's campus. As in the study of historical and contemporary forms of artistic expression, not every one of these works placed on display will reflect the Biblical philosophy of either the University or our constituency. The subjective and personal nature of art mean that while department faculty employ discretion in selecting work for display, an exhibited work may at some point prove controversial or even offensive to one or more within the university community. This potentiality is regrettable, and yet ultimately necessary in order to expose students to an art that enriches and enlarges our world by introducing voices, visions, and experiences outside our own.

In considering specifically the human form in the study of art, there are two disciplines that need to be addressed: *the references to the human form in art history and humanities; and, the study of the human form in studio art.*

The study of the nude form is essential to provide a comprehensive study of the history of art and humanities. From prehistory the human form has been an expression for ideal proportion, human philosophy and religious beliefs, and human emotion and vulnerability.

In choosing images for studies in art history and humanities, the professor should exercise discernment. Whether the subject is classical sculpture or contemporary expressions of the human form, the subject can be taught comprehensively without including images that are expressly offensive. Recognizing that a limited number of students may find any level of nudity offensive or a stumbling block, alternative study may be recommended.

Within the studio, the process of learning to draw is sequential, deliberate, and necessitates an understanding of perception.

In an introductory drawing class there are a number of subjects and objectives that must be covered within the given timeframe which include the function and beauty of line, indicating form through use of light, shade and perspective, strengthening composition, and developing a repertoire of media use. To learn these principles, traditional subject matter including still-life, landscape, architecture, and the human form are presented to challenge the student, as well as to provide a springboard for developing creative interpretation in more advanced courses and subsequent professional careers.

Within upper level art education, figure drawing is often taught as a separate course. In order to develop a complete understanding of the human form, it is vital the drawing student builds complexity sequentially. The student begins with skeletal studies, progresses to the muscular system, moves to the nude model, and then logically to the clothed/draped form. It is only from this deliberate sequence that the student gains command and confidence in portraying the human form. The end purpose of such studies is not, as is often perceived, the production of erotic art, but rather an understanding of the body that is foundational to convincing representation.

Within figure drawing and painting classes at Cedarville, it is recommended that the student study as closely as possible to the above sequence. However, in deference to Cedarville students, faculty members, and our constituency, we choose not to draw or paint from the nude model. Rather, when studio curriculum includes the study of the human form, models wear sports clothing (running clothes, swimwear, or leotards). The class and models are handled professionally and with an academic approach to the subject. As a component of a figure drawing unit, professors may ask students to reproduce master drawings of the figure.

If a career choice such as illustration, sculpture, or portrait painting necessitates a command of the human form, it is recommended that the student work with the nude figure outside the university either while enrolled at Cedarville or as part of adult or graduate study.

We recognize the human form as God's highest form in creation, wonderfully made, and should be treated with respect, dignity, and as a means of realizing the beauty inherent in that creation.

Teaching Literature at Cedarville University

Cedarville University exists to offer an education marked by excellence and grounded in biblical truth. The Department of English, Literature, and Modern Languages helps to serve that mission by teaching students, both majors and non-majors, how to read literature well. In our general education courses, we focus on canonical texts in drama, poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction from Western and non-Western literature. By so doing, we aim to increase each student's appreciation of the beauty of the written word and increase each student's awareness of the seminal writers, works, and ideas which have shaped the foundation of civilization and continue to exert influence on it. Thus, we hope to help the University produce educated, committed followers of Christ who, rather than retreating from contemporary culture, will be prepared to engage it articulately and confidently.

The department's approach to literature means that our students will read an array of writers and works, not just those writers and works that are deemed safe or non-threatening or in perfect harmony with the Christian faith. In taking this approach, we agree with Dr. Leland Ryken, a leading voice in the Christian integration of faith and literature, who wrote, "As Christian readers we are free to approve part of a work without endorsing all of it, and conversely we can disagree with part of it without devaluing it entirely. On all of these matters, the record of Christians is not as good as one would wish" (30-31). In short, we are trying to do our part to improve on the record. We want students to be salt and light in graduate schools or office spaces or reading groups, in the world but not of it. We want our graduates to talk knowledgeably about literature and carry the testimony of Jesus Christ with them as they do so. We want them to contribute to cultural conversations, not fear them. And equally important, we want our graduates to be lifelong readers for whom great literature will be a renewable source of wisdom, beauty, and pleasure, book after book, writer after writer, for the rest of their lives.

Ryken, Leland. "Thinking Christianly About Literature." The Christian Imagination: The Practice of Faith in Literature and Writing. Ed. Leland Ryken. Colorado Springs: Shaw Books, 2002. 23-34.