

Virtual Visual Culture: Creating Art with Technology, and Cultural Knowledge Lesson Plan

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Author's Note:

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Topic and Context

A new semester was about to begin for high school students returning from winter break, it was then that I was approached by our principal to look for a curriculum for the Art class that was being offered. No teacher was hired to be the Art teacher so we had a long-term substitute to fill in for the time being. There I was no art curriculum and no certified art teacher. I began frantically looking for resources online.

I found a web page from the Minneapolis Institute of Art. There was a section that was Titled Native Art, Native Voices: A Resource for K-12 Learners. The more I researched the more intrigued I became. The lessons were researched and designed by Marlena Myles, a Native American artist and educator in Saint Paul. I looked through the entire resource and saw what a wonderful job she did. Each lesson was a representation of her culture and language. Another resource that I found was a paper written by Julie Winston titled Beyond Elements and Principals: Bringing a Visual Culture Curriculum to High School Art. That was when the wheels started turning in my head. My culture and my language could be represented in the same way M. Myles created her lessons and in combination with some of the elements from visual culture curriculum by J. Winston. Using some of the lessons from both authors I wanted to create a visual culture curriculum that would incorporate the Apache culture for students who were going to take the Art class. Before the spring semester started, the long-term substitute and I met and we collaborated together to create a syllabus to inform students and parents what the class was going to be about and the expectations to earn a credit for the semester.

As this work was being created, I started to think of ways on how to design and write curriculum that was culturally and historically responsive for our Apache students and to include 21st century skills. I did not know it at the time but the process that was taking place was also infusing Native knowledge and perspectives which is called Indigenous reframing a term defined by Laurie Eldridge. It is important that they can see themselves in the lessons that are being taught in classes because it yields high engagement. I also wanted to create a learning environment that allowed for students to explore and self-discover more about art techniques and the history of art from our perspective of Apache people.

Another important factor was that students needed to learn about how the role of art has been contributing to our present lives. In addition, students needed to learn about contemporary art and how technology is being incorporated because there is now an increasing demand for creative thinking, and problem solving. For examples, there are more and more schools that promote Science, Technology, Art, and Mathematics (STEAM). Not much is focused on the artistic skill development or transmission of artistic achievements throughout history.

As educators we have a responsibility to prepare our students with 21st century skills. It is important to remember where we come from, honor our past but to prepare for the future. We must work to discover and implement modern technology that will matter to students for their future. This type of learning will engage and support critical thinking which will result in students becoming college and career ready after they leave high school.

The intention of this curriculum is to offer students unlimited opportunities of endless and open-ended possibilities of art problems, personal themes, and to put student interest at the center of

instruction. When students are engaged in the content that is being taught, it is because the subject matter has meaning to them and that personal explorations or connection has had a strong impact on their work.

This curriculum will include a semester worth of Art 1 visual culture lessons for high school students who are in the ninth grade through the twelfth grade. It will be taught to students during the fall semester of the 2025/2026 school year during periods that the Art 1 class will be offered. Art 1 classes are offered during three periods a day and each class is 60 minutes long Monday through Thursday. There are four units and a final project in this curriculum. The curriculum will take approximately a semester to complete.

Rationale

Designing a curriculum for any art class requires having knowledge of the history of art from various societies, the techniques that are involved in creating and producing works of art and so much more. There are some models that can be followed to create a curriculum for high school class. However, there are very few art curriculums that are available for school to use or adopt for an art course. Plus, according to a research survey titled Visual Art Curricula, Art Teacher Goals, and Instructional time: Findings from an international survey (Milbrandt et al., 2015), in the minds of art teachers there has been a shift in curricular emphasis from the creation of artworks to the goals of engaging students in the creative and critical thinking.

Art courses are usually not mandatory for high school students to take as a graduation requirement and that is the case for the high school that I work at. Usually, art classes that are offered in high school are considered an elective to earn a credit for a semester or year. Most students who take an art class are there to fulfill a requirement, or the elective they wanted was filled up to capacity and probably do not have any interest in art. When I would go into an art class to do observations as an instructional coach, I would see students either sleeping, heads on the table, on their cell phones, or having a conversation with a classmate who was sitting next to them while the teacher was instructing or helping students one on one, there was very little engagement. So, while researching for curriculum that was already created or possibly creating a curriculum for art, I learned of a different type of art curriculum that that included culturally and historically responsive pedagogy and 21st century skills, it was called visual culture. This type of curriculum appealed to me because enriched introduction to art classes by including culture, history, and language that were more relevant and familiar to students who are in the class.

There are many definitions out there about culturally responsive teaching, but as Zaretta Hammond defines it as:

an educator's ability to recognize students culture displays of learning and meaning making and respond positively and constructively with teaching moves that use cultural knowledge as a scaffold to connect what the student knows to knew concepts and content in order to promote effective information processing. All the while, the educator understands the importance of being in a relationship and having a social-emotional connection to the student in order to create a safe space for learning.

This definition encompasses all components that are needed when putting into practice culturally responsive teaching. Students must know that they are safe emotionally, intellectually, and physically within the classrooms that they are in. It is also imperative that teachers get to know their student's culture, history, and learning styles in a respectful manner.

At the high school level art teachers have the opportunity to create and modify art lessons. They can encourage students to explore art through their culture and language. For example, rather than simply learning about various drawing techniques, students can learn about themselves and who they are as a people while learning about art and how it was used by their elders before them. Many high school students who attend the high school I work at need only one fine art credit to graduate, which results in students taking the class just to fulfill a requirement and do not intend to take any classes beyond Art 1. However, this course will do more than just be a class to fulfill a requirement. It will cultivate knowledge, allow students to reflect upon who they are as community members and academic learners. The class will give students a space to learn and accept who they are through art.

When students are allowed to express who they are and are able to connect with lessons that are taught in the classroom they become highly engaged. This would allow for students to become the constructors of their knowledge. Curriculum that is designed to integrate student's culture and language encourages students to take ownership of their learning and evolve their ideas of self. The lessons taught in this way makes the lessons more personal and reflective of who they are in the space they are in. As teachers, we are to facilitate students through levels of critical thinking, allowing for self-discovery and to engage them to be culturally aware of their communities and the issues that may lie within.

As educators, we have a great responsibility to cultivate knowledge, reflect upon our lives, and be able to name our purpose for and approach to teaching and learning.

- Gholdy Muhammad

Each of us has been given unique gifts to support one another. My calling is to work in education, specifically with children. As an educator with 23 years' experience all of which has been on the Fort Apache Reservation home to the White Mountain Apache Tribe, my purpose is to contribute to the community by sharing my skills, knowledge, and wisdom. Native American communities showcase remarkable strength and resilience as survivors, granting us the power to determine our way of life. Particularly in education, it is our responsibility to shape our well-being and future.

Since childhood, I have been drawn to teaching. Understanding how individuals learn and what resonates with them captivates me endlessly. As an educator, my aim is to align with students' learning styles and help them discover their inner wisdom for a deeper comprehension. The limited knowledge I have about my tribe are speaking the language fluently, and knowledge of traditional practices for ceremonies. In the area of the visual arts, I do not have a lot of knowledge, however there are former art teachers from other schools that I have networked with, students and people from the community who will be a valuable resource so that I can grow as a learner and become well versed in the art arena.

Instructional Guide

The design of this curriculum is to integrate the White Mountain Apache Tribe's culture and history through visual culture in art to provide an understanding of the environmental context for artworks represented from 22 federally recognized tribes in Arizona. This curriculum will include art lessons for high school students that places emphasis on visual arts culture that will incorporate the elements and design while still meeting the Arizona State standards for high school proficient visual arts, world and native language, computer science, educational technology, and social studies, as well aligning to the Culturally Responsive Assessment of Indigenous School (CRAIS) Tool. The purpose of the units is to introduce students to the art making process through the lens of culture, language and history from various tribes both past and present. Subject matters covered in the curriculum will include various art techniques used by different Native American artists, historical drawings and creations from different tribes in America, portraiture of local artists, contemporary Indigenous artists and social issues that may be relevant to students in their personal lives, and/or community.

Unit 1: Essays on Native American Art from within Arizona In the first unit student will read essays on Native American Artworks which will provide information from various tribes that will foster critical thinking and discussions on social, historical, and cultural contexts. The articles will include information of tribes' culture, and the art styles they used to create basketry, bead work, pottery, and painting techniques they used along with the significante meaning behind their art designs.

Unit 2: Art Lessons Developed by Native Artists The second unit will cover art lessons developed by Native artists. Students will engage in practical art lessons that incorporate techniques and materials used by various tribes in Arizona. This will include using plants for dying their material such as different native plants that grow on the Fort Apache Reservation to get the color they want. These lessons will also incorporate science matters.

Unit 3: Artist Interviews and Cultural Exploration Unit three will cover contemporary local Apache artists through interviews, gaining insight into their artistic practices, cultural heritage, and the role of art in their communities. Students will create a podcast for the interview and they will draw a portraiture of each presenter for a project.

Unit 4: Environmental Context and Art Interpretation In the fourth unit, students will analyze selections that provide environmental context for Native American artworks, focusing on relationship between nature, land, and Native cultural expression.

Final Project: The final project, students will synthesize from all units by creating an original artwork inspired by local Apache artistic tradition and creating an app to display their artwork by choosing the type of technique they will use such as sketching, mural style, digital art, oil painting. Along with this project, students will work collaboratively with students who are in the advance Apache language class to interpret their work in written and spoken Apache language. They will record a video or voice recording that will be attached to the art work.

Students will be allowed to find relevance and make connections in their art creations by incorporating what they know about their culture, background, and their community so that it may extend beyond the classroom environment. It is hoped that through this curriculum students will choose to find relevance and meaning from the images, techniques, and history that are covered in this curriculum and incorporate them into their own creations.

Teaching Plan

Lesson Plan

Unit:	Unit 4: Environmental Context and Art Interpretation
Subject:	Art - Visual Culture, History, Environmental Science, English
Grade Level(s):	9 th , 10 th , 11 th , 12 th
Time Requirement:	Two weeks of 60-minute class periods
School Year:	Fall Semester of 2025 – 26 SY
Standards:	<p>HS Proficient Visual Art Standards</p> <p>Creating 2. Organize and Develop Artistic Ideas and Work a. Engage in making works of art or design both spontaneously and deliberately (e.g., using elements and principles of modern art, applying artistic norms of diverse cultures, addressing social issues in contemporary art).</p> <p>Connecting 10. Synthesize and Relate Knowledge and Personal Experience to Make Art a. Document the process of developing ideas that reflect group concerns from early stages to fully elaborate ideas.</p>
Learning Targets:	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn how to use digital art program • Learn about “doodling” • Change historical periods through color and trends
Objective:	<p>Students will be able to:</p> <p>Identity: Students will learn about the White Mountain Apache Tribe’s history</p> <p>Skills: Students will learn how to interpret historical information through visual art</p> <p>Intellect: Students will learn about the importance of the White Mountain Apache Water rights and how it will affect their lives</p> <p>Critically: Students will learn about the importance of water rights and how water rights is an environmental issue</p> <p>Joy: Students will learn how water plays an important part in all of our lives and the benefits of it</p>
Essential Question(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does art help us understand the lives of people of different times, places, and cultures? • How is art used to impact the views of a society? How does art preserve aspects of life?
Materials:	Laptop Google draw or other online drawing program

	<p>Markers Pencils Paint Paint brushes Fort Apache Scout Newspaper SPEICAL EDITION vol. 01 number 1 October 15, 2021</p>
<p>Procedure:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will read a p. 140 – 142 and 206 from Indigenous Ingenuity by Deidre Havrelock and Edward Kay and respond to questions in the book by recording their answers in their notebook. 2. Students will look through the Apache Scout Issue and take observable notes from the photographs and diagrams that are depicted in the issue. 3. Students will pick one period of time from the time line and research that time period by going online and searching for more information. 4. A Guest speaker will come in to speak to the class to give some information about the history of the water rights – the Manager of White Mountain Apache Tribe Hydrology & Water Resource Program. Students will take notes and ask questions of the speaker. 5. Students will pick one experience from the previous days and sketch that experience and express what they learners using images. 6. Students will learn how to use the digital art program by following the teacher’s instruction and they will have time to explore the program on their own. 7. Students will use the digital art program to draw images to create a visual time line of the history of the White Mountain Apache Water Rights. They use the Canva platform to create their project. 8. Turn in their art through Microsoft Office 360
<p>Assessment:</p>	<p>Students will create a visual time line of the history of our tribe water rights (drawing, painting, digital art, etc.) Students will independently read an article on “A Brief History of the Tribe’s Water Rights” and respond to task Students will recall what they learned about the tribe’s water rights on a formative assessment exit ticket. Students will create a poster or digital video of the benefits of the tribe’s water rights based on the article Moving Forward with the Rural Water System in the Fort Apache Scout Newspaper.</p>

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