The Center for the Advancement of Teaching (CAT) seeks to promote excellence in teaching and the scholarship of teaching at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. In partnership with faculty, staff, students, as well as other centers on campus, CAT works to provide continuing education and professional development and to enhance the culture of teaching at John Jay.

**TEACHING INNOVATION SERIES**

This is a short brochure highlighting some of the exciting things that are going on in—and outside of—the classrooms here at the College. It is our hope that this brochure sheds light on some of the powerful teaching and learning that is being done here at John Jay. We also hope this short publication will be a draw for prospective faculty and students who are considering John Jay as a place to teach and learn.

**Professor Chitra Raghavan, (Psychology)**

*Experiencing Gaze: Engaging Students with the Hindu/Buddhist Arts in New York and Bali*

Engagement with the arts provides a gateway to the development of lifelong resources. Courses that emphasize the aesthetic experiences of learning promote a holistic approach to education that transcends boundaries across disciplines, thus enhancing students’ abilities to access connected ways of knowing. To this end, each summer, I lead an interdisciplinary psychology study abroad program in Bali, Indonesia. The program was designed to introduce students to a) theoretical debates on whether psychology of the self is universal or culturally specific; b) how Balinese arts and aesthetics are central to the construction of the Balinese self; and c) how engagement with arts can be a lifelong endeavor. To increase engagement with the arts and better assess student outcomes for the Bali 2014 program, students attended a pre-trip class session at the Rubin Museum of Art in New York City, followed by an independent visit to the Agung Rai Museum of Art (ARMA) while studying abroad in Bali.

With support from John Jay College’s Faculty-Student Engagement Fund, the pre-trip class allowed 14 students to experience Hindu/Buddhist art through a guest lecture and a private tour of the museum by a Rubin art historian, Laura Lombard followed by class discussion over a meal at the Rubin café lounge. Students completed a museum gaze and drawing activity, and a reaction paper. The purpose of the class was to encourage students to explore the arts in and outside of museums, understand the function of arts in daily life, and foster discussion of the Hindu/Buddhist cosmos before departure.
To prepare for the Rubin trip, students read an article on “Seeing the Sacred” through gaze from Diana Eck’s book *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*, and an article on place-making and the urban design of Balinese towns. During the class, Laura Lombard gave an introductory lecture on gaze, and then escorted the students to the Shrine Room to discuss expressions of the secular and sacred in art. Ideas of the secular and sacred were used means to describe and demystify the ways in which the Balinese construct their villages.

After the lecture, student pairs explored the Rubin Museum and completed a Museum Gaze and Drawing Activity Worksheet. Students chose an object in the Rubin Museum and wrote about 1) why they chose that object; 2) how the object makes them feel; and 3) how they experienced the “gaze” of the object. The worksheet also had space for the students to create a drawing of the artwork, or a piece of the artwork. Students enjoyed this activity, reporting the experience of positive emotions when engaging with and drawing the object of their choice, including calmness, connectedness, and gratitude, while often connecting the object to their personal lives. The integration of a drawing assignment within the Rubin Museum served as a means to help the students actively “look” at art in a new and deeper way.

Lastly, as a homework assignment, students were asked to complete a reaction paper about their experience at the Rubin Museum and their understanding of the function of arts in society. This assignment, alongside the Museum Gaze and Drawing Activity, served as a means to understand student’s existing relationship with the arts and comfort or awareness of museums as a place of learning, prior to departure.

The pre-trip class provided students with a framework to appreciate and engage with Balinese arts, as reflected in their visits to the Agung Rai Museum of Art (ARMA) while studying abroad in Ubud, Bali. Students visited the ARMA independently or in small groups, and completed a final reaction paper about their experiences. Students were asked to reflect on visiting the ARMA independently, and how this differed from their pre-trip class experience at the Rubin Museum. This assignment allowed for assessment in changes in students’ level of engagement and comfort visiting a museum and engaging with the arts independently. Students’ analyses of their engagement with the arts at the ARMA were strikingly more sophisticated—students not only felt more confident in their independent visits, but also reported changes in their experience of gaze and the ways they viewed and interacted with the arts in Bali, often referring to knowledge obtained during the pre-trip classes as facilitating cultural awareness.

Overall, the pre-trip class session at the Rubin Museum had an impactful priming effect on student experiences of the arts in Bali. And together, these two activities facilitated students’ self-awareness and analysis of their own growth within the context of the arts.
**Professor Heath Brown, (Public Management)**

*Experiential Learning Opportunities in North Hall, PAD 700, Introduction to Public Administration*

Getting students to work on collective problems, particularly in small groups, is often strained by a lack of common experience. Graduate students in Public Administration vary so greatly in terms of the types of offices they work and intern in, where they have been in the past, and where they aspire to in the future.

In our introductory course, we ask students to think about government reform and how to identify, measure, and solve public problems. One of the techniques is called SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats). With so many student backgrounds, it is hard to work together on applying theory or this type of analysis to practice: often students will fall back on a relativistic approach (“maybe that is a strength (S) of your organization, but not my organization”) that does not advance learning or collective understanding.

This semester, I used our building (North Hall) as an opportunity to solve this problem and apply SWOT analysis. I broke students up into small groups (4-5 students) and sent them off to critique North Hall as a government agency. At first, I think they thought they were in trouble and I was sending them to the principal’s office. I assured them that they were encouraged to go wherever they could in the building that was not a private space or locked.

For around 20 minutes, they explored different floors of the building, found offices that I had never even heard about, and developed a collective list of SWOT. Each group then presented their SWOT analysis that other groups could fully understand because they had just experienced the same (or nearly the same) government space (North Hall). The shared experience took the theory of SWOT analysis and made it very practical, but also more than just a solitary exercise. It also allowed for a deeper understanding of the theory, because the details were not just abstract. Needless to say, students found a lot of Ws in North Hall, particularly when they compared it to the new building across the street.

I think this type of exercise connected the Public Administration students to their own learning environment in a way that focusing on a distant federal agency, for example, would not have. By rooting their application of SWOT analysis in the building, and by allowing them to experience the observation together, they learned (1) how to apply a public administration methodology, (2) how to work in a group setting, and (3) how to collect observational data. These are all key learning outcomes for students in public administration. I think this is particularly important for graduate students at John Jay, because they often feel alienated from their space, since they often arrive late in the evening and depart shortly after class ends. Encouraging them to explore the space, I hope, connected them to their academic home in a way that they may not have previously.

If you would like to submit an example of your teaching innovations, please contact CAT at cat@jjay.cuny.edu
Although I am a member of the Department of Philosophy, I occasionally teach an Introduction to Literature course. I find that unlike teaching biology or law, teaching literature (like philosophy) raises the very question of what the discipline is (and is not) and, most importantly, demonstrates that there are very fluid boundaries when it comes to such distinctions.

In preparation for the first day of class, I assemble a number of different “texts” from a range of printed media. I include traditional literary examples (passages from novels, plays, or poetry, each on its own sheet of paper), as well as nontraditional items, such as an advertisement, an informational brochure, a train schedule, a musical score, or a photograph. Sometimes the traditional examples come from my own syllabus, but they do not need to be.

During the first class, I put my students into small groups and distribute one example to each group. I ask each group to decide whether its item is a work of literature, and why. While all students must contribute to the discussion, one student in each group must take notes and another student must report to the class. I announce a set amount of time to arrive at a response and a rationale.

Once the groups are ready, I reconvene the class and collect the examples. I Project each example in the front of the room as the student reporter offers the group’s position, analysis, and defense. For each example, establish a dialogue between yourself, the group, and the rest of the class: What criteria did the group use to determine whether its example is a work of literature? Does the rest of the class agree with these criteria and with the group’s position? Extrapolate to larger questions: Are the criteria used to define “literature” static or fluid? If the former, who defines these criteria and what are they? If the latter, can’t anything potentially count as “literature?” Where, and how, do you draw the lines? What are the implications of all this for someone taking a “literature” course?

This exercise works very well on the first day of class. Students do not expect to be confronted with such a question—one they often assume is predefined but quickly discover is much more open and complicated. However, the nature of the exercise allows them to explore the topic lightheartedly and build a sense of teamwork. They quickly get to know each other’s personalities by the way each student responds to the question (aesthetically “conservative” students are likely to argue against the photograph or train schedule as literature, while more aesthetically “liberal” students are likely to argue for it), so it also works well as an icebreaker exercise. (Indeed, I always include a photograph—in which I am pictured—as one of the examples. During group discussion, I choose this example last and use it to segue into an informal introduction of myself to the class. They realize that their professor is a person, too!)

“What is ‘Literature?’” is particularly suited to introductory classes, and works with syllabi that include primarily canonical texts, non-canonical texts, or a mixture of both. (Including excerpts from both canonical and non-canonical texts in the examples you give out can help students think about gradations of “literary” status even among the works they decide count as “literature.”) I typically begin the exercise by stating, “This is a literature class, but what is ‘literature?’” This helps students realize that unlike many other disciplines (psychology, accounting, medicine, law), the very definition (and discipline) of “literature” is up for discussion. This recognition is eye-opening and empowering: students understand that they have the power to question the status and value of everything they will read during the semester and that this is crucial to any literature course. In short, it prepares (and excites) them for the challenges to come.