

THE INTERNATIONAL CLASSROOM



OCAD's Internationalization Plan identifies a need to introduce "an international, intercultural or global dimension into course content and materials and into teaching and learning methods"(2009). Increasingly, OCAD faculty are working to include international content in their curriculum, by including material about "non-Western" artists and designers, art and design movements, and social movements and theories. This international content helps students from diverse backgrounds to feel their experience is valued and that they are an integral part of the class, but just as importantly, it enriches learning for all students and faculty.

With our very diverse classrooms, you can often draw on your students themselves as a resource, by encouraging them to contribute knowledge from their own cultures. The faculty stories on this page give examples of the rich results this kind of assignment can yield. At the same time there is a balance to be struck between encouraging students to draw on their own experiences for their assignments and making them feel that they are expected, exclusively, to contribute something from their "home country," to serve as "cultural ambassadors." As the student story on this page points out, some students who are new to Canada may be particularly interested in researching Canadian topics. It's also important, of course, for students to feel that international content is an integral part of the course and not simply a token curiosity.

STUDENT STORY

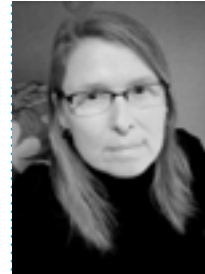


Personally, I would wish that instructors get rid of their Eurocentric mind and focus on other parts of the world because it's very important now especially in Canada

– it's a multicultural society. But with a lot of professors, their knowledge is only based on European history or European art history. Even those talking about film history mostly focus on the American industry and French New Wave. Professors, mostly when I talk about Asian philosophies or Asian history they have no idea – mostly they will only say they appreciate it, but not really spend time on it. They like it, because that's what they expect, they wish someone can do a different piece. Because I'm Chinese they're expecting to see something different from me. Because of my appearance they're not expecting I'll do a lot of Western art style. They wish to see something about your city or your country. At the beginning I did a lot of that in first year and second year and then later, I started changing my topic based on Canadian society.

Zheng Yun Lu, *Integrated Media*

FACULTY STORIES



A few years ago I taught a course called Images and Practices of Technology. Students from many programs in the university registered in the class.

This mix – with industrial design, advertising, integrated media, drawing and painting, and photography students engaging in a common dialogue – created a rich and discursive atmosphere. One of the colloquia focused on "Technology Through a Post-colonial Lens." An assignment intended to expand this topic required students to research and present technological innovations prior to 1500 CE. This parameter dissuaded students from relying on the Renaissance and its attendant scientific advancements. What occurred was something I had not anticipated. Students who do not necessarily see themselves reflected in the curriculum presented inventions from their own cultures. The presentations made the point that many of the technologies we presume to be Western in origin are not. Also, ESL students were able to feel comfortable with their presentations, since they were contributing

new knowledge to the class. This project enlightened all of us in attendance to our own assumptions regarding Western technological progress and the problems with history texts that are not inclusive.

Caroline Langill, *Liberal Studies*



In our [MAAD] Thesis class we encourage students to look at their own history and research that background. This year we have several

students who are looking at their childhood and the particularity of that place. From farming in China in a very rural, old farming set up, to being a child in a Chinese school and focusing on the red ties that all the children wore as part of the school uniform throughout China, to living in the very dense city of Hong Kong and growing up in a high rise. Each of these aspects is further researched in their Thesis Review Statement.

Beth Alber, *Design*

DIVERSITY IN THE STUDIO/CLASSROOM:

A Message from Jane Ngobia,
Director, Diversity and Equity Initiatives

In the recent past, universities have become more accessible to more than the “traditional mainstream students.” As a result, a common debate revolves around how best to enroll, educate, retain, and graduate students from historically underrepresented groups. At the same time universities are striving to diversify the student body to produce graduates who will have mutual understanding and respect for different cultures and who can live and work in a global environment.

Data from Statistics Canada show that immigration is growing exponentially, and Ontario and Toronto in particular will receive a majority of the new immigrants. By 2017, 51% of the total population in Toronto will be “visible minority.” Considering these facts, OCAD will welcome more and more diverse students in classrooms and studios. Research tells us that the unfortunate reality is once they are on campus, many students from underrepresented groups report that they are treated as outsiders and they describe having encountered subtle forms of bias. Students talk about discrimination in not being acknowledged or in small everyday slights in which they perceive that their value and perspective is not appreciated or respected.

Our challenge is to make every individual student’s experience in our class/studio at OCAD a positive one and to ensure that diverse voices are heard. We can do this first by recognizing any biases or stereotypes we may have ourselves absorbed, by being sensitive to terminology, names, gestures and jokes, and by rectifying any language patterns or case examples that exclude or demean any group(s). It’s important also to introduce discussions of diversity in our studios and classrooms to get a sense of how students feel about the inclusivity of the climate we have created.

But beyond these efforts at self-reflection and vigilance, we can engage in deliberate efforts to transform our teaching and learning, to embrace diversity, to see the classroom as a microcosm of the wider world, and to situate the acceptance of diversity as integral to the achievement of academic excellence. As teachers we can engage diverse student voices as a learning resource in class discussions, multicultural group work, students as guest speakers, and students as cultural resources. By empowering students to share their experiences and art we enrich each other’s imagination and learning experiences.

