

Of all the readings we have done so far, this week's readings seem to be resonating with me the most. Patty Bode's chapter, *The Circulatory System of Oil Contamination, Visual Culture, and Amazon Indigenous Life*, describes an incredible life and learning experience that inspires me to change my teaching practice to provide such meaningful learning experiences for my students. This is my first semester in the UF Masters in Art Education Program, and the last class I took really got me contemplating how as teachers we can take learning cues from our students and allow them the floor to teach others and us about the life experiences that they are experts in. As a teacher at an international boarding school, I am trying to create more opportunities in my classroom for my students to speak about their cultures and educate all of us in the class as a promotion of racial tolerance, multiculturalism, and the development and ownership of cultural identity. As Patty Bode questions with the conclusion of her article, "How might art teachers inspire their students—and art students inspire their teachers—to view their global world as more interconnected and ultimately more changeable?" (p. 277).

I felt a personal connection with the chapter, "Beyond Visual Literacy Competencies: Teaching and Learning Art with Technology in the Global Age," by Ching-Chiu Lin. Sometimes, when reading the assigned weekly articles, I feel a disconnect between my teaching practice *reality* and the theoretical teaching practices researched and published in education journals. I know I am a good art teacher, but I begin to have doubts that the education I provide is sufficient because I don't have separate units that focus specifically on visual culture or this or that. It's definitely being taught and learned in my classroom, but not in the same parameters and constructs advised by many art education theorists. When reading Lin's chapter, I felt at ease. Much of my curriculum is based on the teaching and development of visual literacy, but like the three teachers in the case study, prior to reading this article I probably wouldn't have thrown out the coin phrase, "visual literacy." I would use related terms such as *language of art; speaking, communicating, and reading through visual imagery; interpreting, sensing, symbolism, metaphor, and simile*-- all which are terms that refer to literacy. All of my projects are formed on the basis of creating a visual statement and being conceptual, while simultaneously exploring and applying the formal elements and principles of art and design in the creation and understanding of composition, but like Lin describes, the education I provide is holistic; it cannot be quantified or segregated from the rest of my teaching approach as, "particular skill sets and guidelines that must be followed, delivered, and evaluated," (p.200). The discussion created by Lin allowed me to identify and understand the positive influences of the holistic educational experience I am to provide for my students in each of my classes. At the same time, I have a greater awareness and ideas of how to make sure I am addressing visual literacy in my curriculum and the importance of the development and continued learning of visual literacy in becoming and surviving as a global citizen immersed in technology that continues to develop, evolve, and change.

After this week's readings, I am definitely contemplating ways to address visual literacy and also exploring visual culture to teach about political and social issues in a way that seems unbiased and allows the students to decipher meanings on their own. When reading the chapter, *Never Again: A (K)night with Ben*," by Wanda B. Knight, I was constantly thinking of how I could apply her suggestions in teaching about ethnocentrism, nationalism, race relations and stereotypes, propaganda, and human rights atrocities in my classroom. These are difficult enough topics to discuss with a class full of Americans, but how do I go about creating an awareness and providing critical inquiry when I have students from all over the Western and Eastern world? How do I address these issues when my students, practically adults, have extremely diverse cultural backgrounds? I can open my students' eyes to issues like genocide, but I have to tread carefully and do my research before engaging my students in political conversations. For example, I showed my students a video of Tibetan Monks making sand mandalas and was very careful and aware of how I discussed Tibet to my class that is predominantly Chinese. In order to promote critically thinking and inquiry about the social issues discussed by Knight, I need to first create an

environment that is based on respect, racial tolerance, and openness and willingness to learn and think beyond one's racial and cultural identity. Without the promotion and expectations of this behavior throughout the rest of the school, this is a difficult and sometimes daunting task to perform in my classroom. The conversations and inquiry promoted by Knight are important, but without the support and properly cultivated environment, these sorts of discussions have the potential to be volatile and cause harm, especially with a diverse and culturally sensitive body of students. The authors this week have got me thinking though, and that is definitely a great start!