

MUSEUM-BASED PEDAGOGY ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES

Museums can foster learning in all disciplines, from the arts and humanities to the social and natural sciences. Assignments based on Tang exhibitions or objects from the permanent collection can:

- **Re-energize a class.** Changing location and doing something that students might not be expecting tends to raise levels of attentiveness, curiosity, and critical engagement.
- **Develop awareness of learning styles.** Visual objects encode and convey meaning in distinctive ways. Learning through visual observation differs from learning through reading, listening to a lecture, quantitative reasoning, or hands-on experimentation. At the same time, all disciplines visualize knowledge in some way and many require strong observational skills. Object-based assignments foster visual acuity and interdisciplinary thinking. They also deepen students' understanding of the methodologies and cognitive styles emphasized by particular disciplines.
- **Model learning habits.** When assignments reach beyond their usual disciplinary and pedagogical norms, students see instructors become learners. This enables faculty to model valuable habits such as intellectual and creative risk-taking, willingness to struggle with unfamiliar material, and an appetite for lifelong learning.
- **Foster community & cultural engagement.** Museums aspire to be inclusive, but some students may feel that they welcome only people with certain backgrounds or expertise. A class session at a museum can strengthen students' sense of belonging on campus and inspire future engagement with cultural institutions.

There are numerous ways to teach with collections and exhibitions, including many that do *not* require specialized knowledge about art or artists. *The instructor's pedagogical goals are the starting point!* Identify the kinds of knowledge and skills that you want to develop, then talk with one of the contact people listed below about how the Tang can facilitate your students' learning.

Object-based study can support:

- Exploration of a particular **subject matter or theme** such as social identities, the human body, mathematical relationships, technology, the environment, or cultural practices like sports or travel;
- **Creative practices** in writing, music, dance, or theater;
- Cultivation of **basic skills** such as visual observation, language proficiency, teamwork, oral presentation, or discussion facilitation.

In addition, the physical and operational aspects of a museum can support the study of subjects such as architectural or exhibition design, marketing, fundraising, or educational programming.

For examples of how Skidmore faculty have taught with the Tang, visit <https://tang.skidmore.edu/education/for-faculty>.

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