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WORD ON THE STREET: Instilling a Relationship between Art and Community

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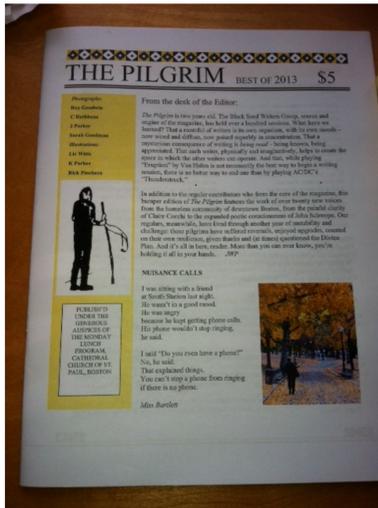


WORD ON THE STREET: Instilling a Relationship between Art and Community

Joyce Peseroff, English Department, College of Liberal Arts

Summary

The project “Word on the Street” will be integrated into *ENGL 210: Introduction to Creative Writing*. Beginning as a pilot in one course section in Spring 2014, the course will partner with the Black Seed Writers’ Workshop, a group of homeless writers supported by the Cathedral Church of St. Paul’s Wednesday Lunch Program. Professor Joyce Peseroff and Master of Fine Arts graduate student Teaching Assistants (TA) will participate in the Civic Engagement Scholars Initiative (CESI) to build capacity for course redesign, implementation, assessment, and scholarship.



Approaches and Methods

- Students learn the skills of responding to the work of others through writing letters and by co-creating works of poetry and fiction to be read by others throughout the city.
- Professor Peseroff serves as support and liaison between MFA TA instructor and community partner.
- Community partner suggests best practices for reaching community members – through broadsides, chapbooks, single or group readings, or other methods of disseminating art
- At an end-of-the-semester lunch and gathering, common writing prompts will provide material for a group reading where members from each workshop will have the opportunity to share their work with one another.
- Results of pilot will be evaluated through students’ written self-assessments and TA documented observations of pilot and traditional sections.
- Incorporate changes into future courses.

Student Involvement

Student Type: Undergraduate and graduate
Number of Students Involved: 11
Number of Hours Contributed per Student: 20-25 hours
Graduate Student Roles:
 Lewis Feuer, ENG 210 TA;
 Mariya Deykute, MFA Graduate Assistant;
 Peter Picetti, MFA Graduate Assistant
Undergraduate Student Roles:
 Corresponding with Black Seed Writers

Partnership Information

Reverend Cristina Rathbone,
 Cathedral Church of St. Paul

 James Parker,
 Black Seed Writers’ Workshop

Goals and Objectives

- Increase student engagement by extending audience for their creative work
- Support students with pursuing, developing, and understanding the relationship between art and community to encourage them to become lifelong learners/practitioners
- Further community awareness of the presence of UMass Boston students and the pleasures of being surprised by art

Results/Impacts

- Students have completed one part of a writing exchange with the Black Seed writers' group.
- Also, spurred by a moving presentation and reading from James Parker (director of the Black Seed writers' group) and Garret Jordan (a member of the group), discussion has focused on the importance of creating a space in which to write and the sense of change and empowerment that can bring to one's life.

“...I was drawn into his writing by his use of descriptive language. I enjoyed how his story was in one setting, which was on a sidewalk, and without leaving that sidewalk he was able to take me on a journey through some of his experiences both "good and bad.”

–Student (While discussing written responses to the Black Seed writers' work)