

Interdisciplinary Engagement in Human Diversity and Evolution Proposal for Enhancing Excellence through Interdisciplinary Experiential Engagement

Abstract:

The Departments of Biology and Anthropology have long realized the opportunities that can result from interdisciplinary collaboration between their departments. This project is designed to explore the potential of this collaboration in several areas starting with the concrete outcome of an interdisciplinary, cross-listed advanced seminar and laboratory class. The course, Human Diversity and Evolution, will focus on the study of human diversity within the frameworks of evolutionary and anthropological theories and as applied to current scholarly and public debates in areas such as gender and sexuality, race, forensics, education, and genomics and medicine.

Through this experiential learning course both biology and anthropology majors will discover how different disciplinary approaches to the subject are distinct and can inform one another. Students will become aware of how researchers' particular cultural and disciplinary lenses affect their approach to scientific inquiry. In the lab, students will learn the basic methods used by both disciplines to study human diversity and evolution through modern human anatomy (anthropometrics and forensic anthropology), genetics and molecular biology, and the fossil record. They will analyze scientific literature in both fields, and design projects in collaborative, interdisciplinary teams to investigate relevant topics in human diversity and evolution using biological and anthropological methods and theory. By exploring the differences in the social norms of two academic disciplines, students will gain insight into how their enculturation as scholars and citizens affects not only the methods they use but their accepted paradigms, the very questions that they ask, and their interpretations of the data.

Interdisciplinary Museum Studies Proposal for Enhancing Excellence through Interdisciplinary Experiential Engagement

Abstract:

This proposal represents a three-way collaboration among faculty and staff in Art History, Anthropology and the Fleming Museum. The primary objective of the project is to provide intensive experiential training in museum work to advanced students in both Art History and Anthropology. This objective will be achieved through a pair of linked seminar classes in which students will develop skills in a range of museum practices and produce a joint exhibition utilizing objects from the Fleming collection. The exhibit, which students will plan, curate and execute under the supervision of Profs. Di Dio (Art History) and Dickinson (Anthropology) will offer both Anthropological and Art Historical perspectives on a single theme explored in both seminars. A secondary objective is to provide training for faculty in using Fleming resources in their teaching. Expected outcomes of both of these components is the development of a set of flexible resources allowing faculty teaching courses at all levels to use Fleming on-view collections and exhibitions to support the development of visual literacy, and a sense of historicity and multicultural perspectives on works of art and ethnographic objects.