

## Pratt Integrative Courses

### Assignment Brainstorms & Examples

[Updated, February 2017—Amir Parsa]

The assignments listed below are examples and structural ‘containers’ that do not depend on specific subject matter and thus could be adopted for different types of content. Here, I also provide an example of a topic throughout (i.e. ‘Travel-making’ in my potential PIC course), but, again, I do believe that the general concept of the assignment could be adapted to include any content. What we can share then, as general ideas for assignments to adapt/transform for various instructors, are the ideas underlying the assignment and how they address the competencies of the rubric.

➤ Assignment #1: **Re-Make**: The Work Transformed

Students will choose one particular work or project they have already made (in first two years) and transform the work to create different experiences. The series of transformations will be founded potentially upon THREE types of actions: 1/a focus on the ACTUAL DOMAINS OF THE INTEGRATIVE RUBRIC: i.e. affecting the work by explicitly making connections to non-academic knowledge, explicitly transferring skills from other domains etc. 2/a focus on OPERATIONS upon different parameters of the work that transforms the work in significant ways and 3/by activities and engagements that allow the artist to rethink processes and products, such as visits to museums and galleries, thought experiments, eccentric research methods, readings etc. . *(Both 2 and 3 also are indirectly connected to the domains of the rubric.)* Students: will be able to reconsider an already created work through multiple angles, all of which generate a reflection upon the effects of PIC outcomes; will gain insights into the mediums in which they work; will gain theoretical/historical awareness and its effect on the creation of work; will understand cross-disciplinary influence and inspiration; and, ultimately, explicitly engage with the competencies of the integrative learning rubric to transform and remake their work in a way that illustrates the effect of the rubric’s ‘actions’.

➤ Assignment #2: **Excavation**

Students explore various components of a minimum of two content-specific projects (for example, ‘Travel-Making’ projects).. The objective of this ‘EXCAVATION’ assignment is to introduce the various parameters and different structures of essentially similar undertakings (in our example, travel and making) from different geographic locations, historical epochs and cultural groups. Parameters of the travel experience (the mode of travel, duration, expanses covered etc.) along with parameters of the making (medium, scale, material, personal and historical context) will be examined and compared. In addition, students will also examine the context in which the actual project itself was presented/analyzed. That is, they will critique the rationale behind and the parameters related to the conservation and presentation/exhibition of the work as well—i.e. a Chinese scroll recounting a mythical tale behind glass at the Metropolitan Museum, or an early film documenting early migration screened at an experimental movie house, or manuscript/books depicting a personal journey in various tones and available in mass market

spaces or only at the archives of a given library. One of the 'excavations' will be done individually, the other will be done by a group of students.

This assignment generates an exploration of the various practices and environments in which such works are presented. Different sites will also be proposed. In addition to museums, libraries and galleries, students could explore such projects online and in contemporary settings. They will do multiple such excavations and compare the various offerings, which will allow an understanding of the standard fare, along with unique and innovative offerings in various settings.

This will allow students to reflect upon the various ways the same type of endeavor has been approached from multiple disciplines and perspectives, at different times and in different spaces. In turn, they will see how each of these projects 'fused' different disciplines and experiences, transferred knowledge/skills—the domains of the PIC outcomes. Thus, it allows them, through the excavation, to a/analyze how the PIC competencies have been put into action and b/generate the same type of action in creating their own future work.

➤ Assignment #3a and 3b: Fusions and Interactions

This assignment allows students to fashion *their own* content-specific project—i.e. travel-making on a route of their choice in NYC. In our example, the route could be their usual route, or a route concocted for the course that includes trains, boats, cars, bikes. Within this assignment, they will be engaged in both >depicting through any number of visual/representational manner their trip, and >choosing writing genres and methods that have a rationale within the project overall (allowing them to explore variations on outcomes 4 in the PIC outcomes). Throughout, they will be reflecting on the various operations at work in their choices, their approaches, their automatisms, their own poetics and politics. Beyond the depictions and the writings and the fusion of these elements (which we will analyze and discuss), they will be querying and critiquing, making and reflecting on their positions—literal and figurative. They will consider the myriad choices they make, the angles that they select, the ways that they fuse the visual and the textual, the choices they make in material, scale, and other parameters of their work. They will also be interviewing and conversing with a limited number of people, and in turn, they will reflect on the methods of conversations, the choices of subjects, the ways their interactions impacted themselves, the people and community they interacted with, the environment and the social context. These will allow an in-depth exploration of the modalities of research and learning.

*Assignment 3a asks students to engage in a limited route and engage in the renderings and writings: observations, descriptions, reflections, personal essays etc. Tools and forms will be provided to guide and aid students in their reflections and work.*

*Assignment 3b asks students to undertake the same route, but choose a different medium, different writing approaches and techniques, and a different modality of juxtapositions and fusion of the two. They will also be responding to the parameters at work differently. We will then compare the variations on the two assignments and what they reveal about the choices, the approaches etc.*

➤ Assignment #4: Collaboration(s)

Assignment 4 also constitutes variations on assignment number 3, (i.e. the travel/making experience, in our example). In this case, a different 'travel' path and mode is chosen, and the assignment must be done *in collaboration* with other students. The groups will be formed based on various methods. The makings and writings will again be from a variety of perspectives, and the mediums and genres used also different from assignment 3. Renderings and writings: observations, descriptions, reflections, personal essays etc. DIFFERENT number of people—similar trip.

Assignment #4 will be compared to assignment 3a and 3b. All three are variations on the same itinerary/method and will allow students to compare and contrast their experiences and choices, and the implications for the type of project they created, all while reflecting upon the PIC outcomes, which can be highlighted within the comparative framework.

➤ Assignment #5: Comparisons and Curation

Subsequent to assignment 4, the group will collectively gather the works done in assignments 3 and assignment 4 and begin the process of conceiving the curation of these works into a 'whole'—*a container that allows individual projects as well as the collaborative work done in assignment 4 to cohabit that space*. Students will work together to make the curatorial decisions and also construct/produce a prototype of this 'container'. Their discussions and debates around the type of work necessary to hold and present the assignments, along with the construction of the work will lead to the discussion and practice of teamwork and the type of collective work that the works can engender—along with the poetics and politics of the choice of the object and the modality of its presentation, topics that students will have thought about throughout their assignments. This container can be an exhibition, a website, a short film, a book, a scroll, or any number of works. This assignment will constitute a grand comparative framework in which all the fields of the PIC rubric can be discussed and reflected upon, especially in the various ways they were put into action.

### Culminating Projects

This is the student's proposal and work on the final project. Students integrate their learning from the earlier assignments, along with the methods, approaches, and research they have undertaken. This assignment can also be done in collaboration. (There must be a rationale given for the choice of doing the individual or collaborative work.) This project is a more amplified and deliberate version of the earlier assignments, although they can also integrate their previous work into the final piece. Here, students are encouraged to connect their personal poetics and interests, along with their research, with specific problems and issues, and propose solutions, something they will also have thought about in their smaller assignments. They will also have to effectively select and develop examples of life experiences to illuminate concepts/theories/frameworks (in our example, of 'travel/making') and infuse their own poetics. They will also be encouraged to incorporate new directions and approaches and skills gained from other fields and seek out and follow through in untested directions. Their choices of medium, material, methods, writing genres, and the manner in which these are melded will have to demonstrate a synthesis and fusion with a rationale, along with a reason-for-being with the

overall form, content, structure and style of the work. The final projects could be akin to those listed below, or an entire new type of project. Examples:

*FINAL Curation: exhibition/performance etc.*

A student's final piece could be the curation of a show, with pieces from willing participants in the course or from friends/others outside. The curated show as final project would have to put into play the various elements of the integrative learning rubric. The container itself (where the curation happens) could be a book, a film, an online piece, a curated exhibition, a performance, or a unique fusion. This is a more developed version of assignment 5, so students will have had some exposure to it. Here too, students will be encouraged to seek out and incorporate new directions and approaches. Throughout, we will also have students track their work, their drafts and their learning.

*FINAL Artwork/Design Piece—Book/Scroll/Film/Performance/NewForm etc.*

The final project could actually be one designed project or artwork. Student would in this case have discussed their piece with the instructor(s) and fashioned a piece that would integrate the various dimensions of integrative learning. Here, by definition, we can't say what that piece is, as it will be developed by the student. It will be tending toward a new form/genre, and could really span any type of artwork or design piece—from painting to 'social practice' piece to relational piece to a film to a socially engaged design product.

*FINAL Social/Community project*

Another type of culminating project could be one that is the creation of a type of social/community project. Here, as in the artwork, the exact nature will depend on the student's research and interests, but the point will be to integrate the various PIC outcomes, and put into action the competencies of the integrated learning rubric.