# Arts and Society

Class activities

## ****Introduction****

This is a list of some class activities that relate to the work students have done online beforehand. The online tasks have already specific feedback to guide students’ independent learning but teachers might want to give them an opportunity to ask in class any questions related to those tasks.

The activities suggested here focus mainly on the responses students have posted in forums and walls. They require internet connection in the classroom. Most of them take around 10 minutes.

In addition to these activities, the online tasks include many images that can also be considered in class. For instance, teachers can draw students’ attention to aspects of the art and society represented in those images.

## What is art? What is society?

Task 1

Activity 1.1: Discussion on the concept of art (groups of 3)

Students have recorded people’s responses to the question “What is art?” in an online forum. During your lesson, go to the forum and select and read some of the postings to initiate a discussion on their own opinions about art. You can also link these responses to the previous online question where they had to find examples of art.

Task 2

Activity 2.1: Reflection on social values (pair work)

During this class search on the internet for the advertising campaign of the HSBC. They refer to themselves as “The World’s Local Bank”. The company JWT produced for them in 2008 a series of adverts on the theme of “Different values” which show the same image with different interpretations (usually a single word) depending on a point of view.

Divide the class in pairs and suggest one of these ads to each pair. Students need to think of an additional value (word) that could be appropriate to the image. Each pair will explain their decision to the rest of the class.

## Semiotics

Task 3

Activity 3.1: Semiotic analysis of ads (groups of 3)

In this online task, students have posted some ads on a wall. During your lesson, go to the wall and analyse the sample ad you posted on the wall, and then ask them to work in trios and discuss their ads.

Activity 3.2: Examples of values (groups of 3)

In this session students could work on the differences between different values. This activity could serve as a link to the next topic on Marxism.

Show on a slide the following concepts and ask students to work in small groups to think of one example of each type of value. Once they have their examples ready, complete together the table below.

* Use-value (qualitative aspect): “The utility of a thing makes it a use-value. […] A commodity, such as iron, corn, or a diamond, is therefore, so far as it is a material thing, a use-value, something useful” (Marx, Capital, Chapter 1)
* Exchange-value (quantitative aspect): the amount of commodities something can be exchanged for (Marx, Capital, Chapter 1)
* Sign-value (essential constituent of the commodity and consumption in the consumer society): the expression and mark of style, prestige, luxury, power, etc. (Baudrillard , 1994)

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Use-value** | **Exchange-value** | **Sign-value** |
| Iron | Book >DVD | Celebrity autograph |
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Task 4

Activity 4.1: Comparison of art forms with nudity (plenary)

In this online task, students have posted on a wall examples of nude male bodies in art. During your lesson, remind them of Berger’s distinction between nakedness and nudity. Go to the wall and study together their examples of male nudity in art and how perception of the nude body could be different depending on the art form. For instance, you can discuss if nudity in paintings or sculptures is different to nudity in the performing arts.

Task 5

Activity 5.1: Reflection on meaning, language and identity (small groups)

In this class, students can be divided in three small groups and be invited to discuss responses to some key questions on the following problems as expressed in Sigmund Freud’s *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Give one of these problems to each group who would need to provide answers to each question.

Problem of Meaning:

* How is meaning constructed?
* Who constructs meaning? Who has power to do so?
* How does it circulate? For what purposes?

Problem of Language

* How is language limiting?
* What does it enable?
* Who owns discourse? How is it used?

Problem of Identity

* What is a subject? What power does s/he have?
* How does a subject construct her identity?
* How is identity contested?

## Capitalism, Marxism and art

Task 6

Activity 6.1: Discussion on alienation in art (plenary)

In this class you can open a discussion asking the following questions: Is one alienated from one’s creative/artistic labour power? What role does being an artist play in being or not being alienated?

Task 7

Activity 7.1: Discussion on art and the marketplace (small groups)

In this online task, students have posted on a wall examples of artworks that utilise the capitalist marketplace. During your lesson, go to the wall and first, explain the work you posted on the wall as an example of how the artist considers the market to sell his/her work. Then ask students to discuss in small groups their own examples.

## Bodies and protest

Task 8

Activity 8.1: Discussion on protests in art (plenary)

In this online task, students have posted on a wall examples of dance pieces or films about protests. During your lesson, go to the wall and ask some volunteer students to provide information about the artist they chose and explain the artwork they posted on the wall as an example of a protest. Then, study together the types of protests evidenced on all the examples.

Task 9

Activity 9.1: Brainstorming on street art (plenary)

This activity aims at testing students awareness of street art. First ask students about street artists and works they know about. Then go, for instance, to the Street Art pages from *Time Out London* (available at: <http://www.timeout.com/london/street-art/>) and expose students to different artists. You can focus the discussion on specific themes and styles.

Activity 9.2: Examples of breaking the structure of the city (small groups)

In this online task, students have posted on a wall examples of Bansky street art. During your lesson, go to the wall and ask some volunteer students to explain the piece they posted on the wall. Then, in small groups, ask students to discuss examples of dance works or films that interrupt or illustrate an interruption of the flow and capitalist ideological structure of the city.

## The arts during times of crisis

Task 10

Activity 10.1: Discussion on problems and artistic solutions (small groups)

In this online task, students have responded to some questions in a forum. Present a current global issue to the class. In small groups ask them to come up with an artistic solution that could help draw attention to the problem.

## Wrap up session

Activity 11.1: Discussion on socially informed art (small groups)

Students have been asked to prepare themselves for an in class discussion on the possibility of making socially informed art in a world that discourages critical, independent thought . Divide the class in small groups and ask students to produce a list of possible obstacles for art to express critical thoughts about society’s problems.

Activity 11.2: Artistic proposals for social change (small groups)

Ask students to work in groups and negotiate and propose creative strategies that could galvanize their generation to think about how they want to help change the world through the arts.