

DIF Conference Proposal

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Recognizing ourselves and each other through art journaling

Provide information about yourself and any co-authors

I am a lecturer in the Department of Writing and Linguistics at Georgia Southern University where I also co-direct the Georgia Southern Writing Project. Over the last 9 years, I've taught a range of writing courses at GSU, Ogeechee Technical College, and the University of Maine and facilitated writing workshops for writers from elementary school through adulthood. I've been art journaling around Statesboro for about a year and gave a talk about it in October 2016 through TEDxGeorgiaSouthernU.

Brief description (30 to 60 words)

One of the best ways to connect with others is to create and share with them. Using art journaling practices, we will reflect on our identities, create art based on those identities, and take a gallery walk to observe and appreciate the diversity of identifications in the room. We'll then brainstorm ways this kind of activity could be meaningfully used in clubs, classrooms, or other groups to foster empathy, celebrate diversity, and encourage connection.

Summary (under 250 words)

The benefits of journaling have long been established. Combining journaling practices with expressive arts allows us to engage participants of different learning styles, personalities, and comfort levels. In my local art journaling workshops, I have developed a way of sharing this method (a method that began as my personal approach to understanding myself) with a variety of different groups. I've worked with middle schoolers, high schoolers, adults interested in holistic health, breast cancer survivors, and young professionals seeking connection. In each group we stick to the same basic rules to maintain healthy participation, nurture our safe space, and respect all participants and their art. In this workshop, I will start by sharing the basic rules (positive feedback, culture of respect, safe space) and then inviting participants to respond to prompts both through writing and expressive art.

The focus on this particular workshop will be on the ways we identify. I'll ask participants to start with one thing they identify as and to do some reflective writing on that identity. In presenting this prompt, I will remind participants to disclose only what they feel comfortable disclosing. Though when talking about how we identify we often think race, sexuality, gender, we also identify as daughters, friends, teachers, geeks, etc. This activity will be revealing no matter what identifications participants choose to reflect on, as long as they choose an identity they hold.

We'll use participants reflective writing to springboard our expressive arts, each person creating a piece of visual art that represents that one chosen aspect of their identity. A gallery walk will allow us to check in on each other's visual art while still allowing them to keep their writing private, if they so choose. After our gallery walk, we'll take time to debrief. A discussion of how we could use this workshop or one like it to encourage sharing, empathy, and community will give us a ready-to-use takeaway in our continued social efforts.

Learning Outcomes (at least 3)

Connect with others through writing and expressive arts

Attempt an art journaling spread

Practice one approach to collaborative creation

Brainstorm ways to use expressive arts and sharing in our local communities

Keywords

Identity, Identification, Expressive Arts, Art Journal, Writing Workshop, Writing Community, Diversity