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Teaching About Asia; Freeman Seminar  
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### **Unit Overview**

**Objective:** The purpose of this unit of study is to incorporate elements of East Asian art and culture into the work of my students.

**Grade Level:** 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade (activities may be adapted to meet the needs of different grade levels)

**Population:** 20 Advanced Photography Students

This group of students has already gained an extensive amount of technical photographic experience, and has mastered the 35mm camera functions, black and white film processing and darkroom operations. In their second year of photography they are prepared to delve into more creative and meaningful approaches to the medium. They typically complete two photo shoots (2 rolls of film) per quarter, which includes independently processing the film, making a contact sheet, and selecting one or more prints to make in the darkroom. Their goal is to produce clean, high quality photos to mat and include in their portfolio (which, at the end of the year should consist of a minimum of 16 pieces). In addition, a portion of class time is devoted to completing written work (both creative and research-based), providing a cross-curricular approach to photography. This group of students would likely be responsive to the inclusion of a unit on East Asian art and culture. It would provide them with meaningful insight into unique aspects of a different culture, and encourage some new approaches to their photography work.

The lessons created for this unit of study are fairly typical of all photography assignments; two include actual theme-based photo shoots with an emphasis on creativity and composition, and one is a cross-curricular lesson involving creative writing. Although this will be my first attempt to incorporate aspects of East Asian cultures, the lessons are still aligned with the designated curriculum since they are strongly grounded in the creative process and the production of artistic photography.

**Lesson #1:** Nature photos printed on handmade paper

**Grade Level:** -12<sup>th</sup> grade advanced photography  
-Papermaking can be adapted for grades 5 & up

**Length:** 3-4 weeks

**Rationale:** Expose students to aspects of Chinese culture through the introduction of Taoism, and compare our view of “nature” to that of the Chinese

**Materials:**

For paper making:

- Sponge
- Window screening
- Wood frames (same size)
- Plastic basin/ tub (large enough to immerse frame)
- Blender/ food processor (for making paper pulp)
- Staples or tacks (for tacking screen on frame)
- Cookie sheet or tray (with sides)
- Iron & ironing board (optional)
- Press bar (rectangular wooden block or book in plastic bag)
- Lightweight cotton cloth (8-10 pieces cut to frame size)
- Miscellaneous paper types (light in color & value: computer paper, construction paper, egg cartons, magazines, old cards, toilet paper, tissue paper, paper bags)
- Miscellaneous natural add-ins (twigs, grass, leaves, pine needles, flower pedals, etc.)

For Photos:

- 35mm SLR Camera
- 1 roll of 24 or 36 exposure Tmax film
- Film processing chemicals (developer, stop bath, fix)
- Negative saver page
- Darkroom chemicals (developer, stop bath, fix)
- RC photo paper
- Liquid light emulsion

**Learning Objectives:**

The student will:

- Learn about Chinese Taoism with an emphasis on the idea of man being one with nature.
- View a sampling of Chinese art that features elements of nature and the Chinese landscape.
- Learn about the art of papermaking and how it was used in traditional China.
- Learn how to make handmade paper, embedding natural particles within the paper.

- Create a photographic print on the handmade paper using a liquid light emulsion.
- Understand the value of the natural world and how it benefits our society and culture.

### **Activities:**

-Teacher introduces the idea of Chinese Taoism, emphasizing the idea of man being one with the natural world.

-A sampling of Chinese artwork is displayed, encouraging discussion about how nature appears to be represented as something of value to the Chinese people.

-Discussion leads to a comparison of how we (Americans) view the natural world. Students are asked to cite examples of how we value or neglect nature in American society. (Ideas are listed on the board within two lists: Value and Neglect)

-Students are then assigned a one roll photo shoot that aims at highlighting the beauty of the natural American landscape. It may include vast landscape photos as well as close-up shots of intriguing things found in nature. It stresses the importance of valuing the natural world rather than taking it for granted. (Students have 1-2 weeks to complete the shoot)

-While students work independently on the photo shoot, in class they will be introduced to the art of papermaking and how it was utilized in the Chinese culture. Maintaining a focus on nature, students will be asked to bring in small items found in nature (twigs, leaves, grass, pine needles, flower petals, etc.) to incorporate into their own handmade paper.

-During the next 1-2 weeks, class time will be devoted to the process of paper making. Students will work together, but will be expected to make a minimum of 3 sheets each (See attached reference worksheet for paper making instructions).

-When the paper is finished, students will bring it into the darkroom and apply a layer of liquid light emulsion to the surface (this will allow a photo to be printed on the paper). The paper must dry and then be placed in a light proof bag to leave the safety of the darkroom (if the paper gets exposed to light, it's ruined!)

-Students will process their nature film, and make a contact sheet from all of the negatives. From viewing the contact sheet, they will each choose the best photo to print onto their "nature paper." One perfect print is required to be turned in.

### **Closure:**

-Students will write a response to these three questions:

1. How is nature significant to our world?
2. How did this project influence your ideas about nature?
3. How did learning about another culture alter your views about the world around you?

-Photos will be hung on the wall for a class critique and discussion.

### **Assessment:**

-Grades for the project will be based on class participation, completion of film and handmade paper, and overall quality of the finished photo on the handmade paper.

### **Resources:**

Hunter, Dard. Old Papermaking in China and Japan. Chillicothe: Mountain House Press, 1932.

-A collection of reproductions, taken from various antique oriental books, showing the process of papermaking in China and Japan in years gone by. Also, a number of original specimens of old Oriental papers. Great to introduce students to the history of traditional Chinese papermaking.

Little, Stephen. Taoism and the Arts of China. Berkeley: University of California Press/ Arts Institute of Chicago, 2000.

-Includes more than 150 works of art from as early as the late Zhou dynasty to the Qing dynasty. Many of the works are paintings that show the range of style and subject of the Taoist tradition. Ideal for visual reference.

Plowman, John. Papermaking Techniques Book. Cincinnati, OH: North Light Books, 2001.

-Includes a variety of techniques for creating handmade paper. Offers step by step instructions for basic approach and advanced applications.

Richardson, Maureen. Grow Your Own Paper. Bothell, WA: Martingdale, 1999.  
-Over 100 beautifully textured handmade paper recipes that make use of flower petals, seeds, leaves, herbs and grasses.

<http://www.religioustolerance.org/taoism.htm>

-Provides a general overview of Taoism including its history, belief system, and practices, the significance of yin and yang, tai chi, important Taoist texts, and links to other relevant websites.

<http://www.askasia.org/frclasrm/readings/r000005.htm>

-“Taoism or The Way” Article written by Judith A. Berling for Asia Society’s *Focus on Asian Studies*, Vol. II, No. 1, *Asian Religions*, pp. 9-11, Fall 1982. Offers a historical and contemporary overview of the beliefs and practices of Taoism.

<http://www.academictermpapers.com/abstracts/9000/09226.html>

-Explores the links of Taoism with nature, art and poetry. Considers particular works of Chinese art influenced by Taoist philosophy.

<http://www.faculty.de.gcsu.edu/dvess/ids/fap/taop.htm>

-Provides evidence of Taoism in poetry and art. Offers links for examples of Taoist related poems and works of art.

[http://www.alternativephotography.com/process\\_liquidlight.html](http://www.alternativephotography.com/process_liquidlight.html)

-Describes the process of using liquid light emulsion for printing photographs on a variety of surfaces. Makes it possible to print photos onto handmade paper.

**Lesson #2:** Aesthetic inquiry and writing haikus

**Grade Level:** 12<sup>th</sup> grade advanced photography

**Length:** 2-3 days

**Rationale:** Creating a cross-curricular writing assignment utilizing an aspect of Japanese culture

**Materials:**

- Examples of haikus and Japanese artwork
- Miscellaneous nature photographs (Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, Christopher Burkett)
- Paper
- Pen or Pencil

**Learning Objectives:**

The student will:

- Learn how poetry and art are paired in Japanese culture
- Learn about the haiku poem (structure, significance, nature as inspiration, expression of emotion, etc.)
- Attempt to write a haiku
- Understand aesthetic inquiry as applied to artwork
- Read and interpret several Japanese haikus

**Activities:**

Day 1:

-Teacher introduces the concept of “aesthetics” (emotional response to a work of art), discussing the importance of being able to creatively express one’s reaction to something of great beauty or intensity through the use of metaphors and similes (figurative language).

Example: Early morning in a neighborhood = sleeping streets

-Discussion of aesthetics leads to the introduction of Japanese poetry (specifically the haiku), which is also an expression of emotion. Discuss how poetry and art are typically paired in Japanese culture since both reveal a sensitivity to the world around us. Emphasize the relevance of nature as an inspiration for much Japanese writing.

-Explain the structure of a haiku- 3 unrhymed lines, 1<sup>st</sup> with five syllables, 2<sup>nd</sup> with seven, 3<sup>rd</sup> with five. Traditionally they contain nature imagery as well as philosophical comments about life. Often personification is used to stress certain meanings and emotions.

-Examples of haikus are presented. (May be accompanied by artwork) Each is read aloud by a student volunteer, and is then broken down by the class as a whole. Also discuss the mood created by each haiku.

Day 2:

-Students will pair up and randomly select a nature or landscape photograph (provided by the teacher – may include artwork by Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, Christopher Burkett, etc.)

-As a pair, the students will generate a list or chart of imagery, emotions, and relevant details that reflect their selected photograph. They will attempt to translate their details into creative language to utilize within a poem. They will eliminate the unnecessary information and begin to compose an effective haiku to accompany their chosen photograph.

Day 3-4:

Matching/ Guessing Game:

-All of the photos are hung on the wall or bulletin boards. The haikus that were written about the photos are read aloud by the people who wrote them, allowing time for the class to consider the imagery and mood conveyed. The students view the selection of photos while listening to the poem and attempt to pair the poem with its photo. Each student independently writes down the photo they think goes with each haiku.

-After all the poems have been read aloud, students are given a set of post-its with which they number according to the order the haikus were read (1-10?). Each student then approaches the wall and places the numbers next to the photos they believe correspond with the haikus.

-The haikus are then read again and the accompanying photo is revealed. As the class makes note of how many people chose correctly a brief discussion should develop about how the mood and imagery were effectively conveyed through the language used in the poems.

**Follow up Assignment:** Students will be expected to write an effective haiku based on one of their own photographs (preferably the nature photo on handmade paper, done in the previous lesson)

**Assessment:**

Class Activity: Grades will be based on class participation, cooperation with a partner, and following guidelines of writing an effective haiku.

Personal Haiku: Will be graded according to appropriate structure, use of figurative language, mood conveyed, creativity, and appropriate for the selected photograph.

**Resources:**

Alinder, James and Szarkouski, John. Ansel Adams: Classic Images. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1985.

-Provides a broad selection of nature photographs by Ansel Adams. Great visuals for writing haikus.

Danly, Susan. Edward Weston: A Legacy. London: Merrell, 2003.  
-Contains beautifully reproduced photographs by Weston, many of which demonstrate the intrigue of the natural world. Excellent resource for visuals that may inspire the writing of haikus.

Delay, Nelly. The Art and Culture of Japan. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999.  
-Briefly touches on all aspects of Japanese art and culture  
-Excellent reference to gain basic knowledge about traditional Japan.

Frost, Robert. Seasons/ Robert Frost: poems selected by Edward Connery Lathem: with photographs by Christopher Burkett. New York: MJF Brooks, 1996.  
-Although this is a book of Robert Frost poems, the photographs by Christopher Burkett are ideal inspirational images to encourage the writing of haikus. Use the photos!

Washington, Peter. Haiku. New York: Knopf, 2003.  
-This book brings together hundreds of haiku by the Japanese Masters - Basho, Issa, Buson, Shiki - with superb examples from nineteenth and twentieth century writers.

<http://web-japan.org/museum/menu.html>  
"The Virtual Museum of Japanese Arts"  
-Describes and displays examples of different types of Japanese Art including fine art, crafts, performing arts, etc. Helpful to brush up on general knowledge.

<http://www.toyomasu.com/haiku/howtowritehaiku>  
-"Haiku For People"-this site provides information on the basics of writing a haiku poem, and offers several examples of haikus from both the old masters and modern poets.

<http://teacher2b.com/creative/haiku.htm>

-This website offers suggestions for teaching a unit on haikus. Several examples of haikus from Harold Tran Stewart's 'A Net of Fireflies' are represented, serving as excellent tools for teaching.

<http://www.dcate.net/Japanese Poetry/history.html>

-Provides a general overview of different styles of Japanese poetry including Haiku, Tanka and Renga.

<http://home.clara.net/pka/haiku/haiku.htm>

-Basic site that describes the structure and purpose of haiku, cites examples and offers helpful hints at writing haikus.

### **Lesson #3:** Life and Culture Photo Triptych

**Grade Level:** 12<sup>th</sup> grade advanced photography

**Length:** 3–5 weeks

**Rationale:** Exposing students to Korean painting to demonstrate how environment, lifestyle and culture can be clearly represented through a work of art.

**Purpose:** Encourage students to examine their own environment and lifestyle, and create a photo triptych representative of their own culture.

#### **Materials:**

- Miscellaneous samples of Korean genre paintings (see resources)
- One roll of 24 or 36 exposure Tmax Film
- 35mm SLR camera
- Film processing chemicals (developer, stop bath, fix)
- Negative saver pages
- Darkroom chemicals (developer, stop bath, fix)
- RC photo paper
- Mat Board

#### **Learning Objectives:**

The student will:

- Gain an understanding of Korean life and culture by examining genre paintings from the Choson dynasty.



- Learn that art is often a visual record representing the lifestyle of different cultures throughout history.
- Explore significant aspects of their own modern day American culture, and consider how to create a visual representation of the typical American lifestyle (allows for many different interpretations and variables)
- Compare and contrast elements of American culture to that of traditional Korea.
- Complete a documentary style photo shoot (three consecutive photos- triptych) illustrating American life.

### **Activities:**

#### Day 1:

- Students will break into groups of 3-4, and each group will be given a different example of a traditional Korean genre painting (paintings representing the daily life of the common people during the Choson dynasty 1392-1910) Groups will be instructed to write down observations about traditional Korean culture as interpreted through the artwork. Questions may include reference to their environment, clothing, work, male-female interaction and activities, climate, etc.
- Groups will present their findings to the class by showing the paintings and discussing their observations.

#### Day 2:

- Teacher will lead the class in a discussion about the aspects of Korean culture that were evident in the paintings, stressing how artwork is a valuable reference to learning about different cultures and time periods.

-Discussion leads to the exploration of aspects of modern day American culture. The class is asked to compare/ contrast traditional Korean life with that of modern day America.

-Teacher presents a photo shoot assignment to the class (1 roll), requesting that the students create a triptych (a consecutive series of three images to be pieced together side by side that create one single scene. The triptych should follow the example of the Korean genre paintings, however, should represent American life and culture. Each student is expected to consider environment, activities, food, work, clothing, trends, male-female relations, and age-specific situations.

-Students prepare for the shoot by brainstorming and listing ideas, with the outlined expectations in mind.

-Students have 1-2 weeks outside of class to complete the photo shoot, and an additional 2-3 weeks in class to process film, make a contact sheet, print the series of photos and mount on a mat board.

**Closure:** Students will individually present their final photo triptych by discussing how they chose to represent American life. The class will participate in an informal critique, responding to each of the works, making note of differences and similarities among the photos. Students will complete a written response to each of the following questions:

1. How did exploring the Korean genre paintings help you prepare for this assignment?
2. If someone 500 years from now was viewing the collection of photos produced by the class, what would they learn about our culture?
3. What did you learn by completing this project?

**Assessment:** Final photos will be graded based on print quality (focus, exposure, contrast, cleanliness, composition), creativity, and effective representation of American culture.

**Adaptation:** This project could be altered to accommodate other grades or classes by having students use disposable cameras and having the photos printed at a photo finishing store.

**Resources:**

Vos, Ken. Korean Painting: a selection of eighteenth to early twentieth century painting from the collection of Cho Won-Kyung. London: Bamboo Publishing, 1992.  
-Provides visual references of Korean paintings.

Za-Young Zo, U Fan Lee, translated by John Bester. Traditional Korean Painting: A Lost Art Rediscovered. Tokyo; New York: Kodansha International, 1990.  
-Oversize volume contains 156 color reproductions of Korean paintings of the Choson period (1392-1910). Essays provide background information about the mystical and folk roots of the works. Great resource for visuals.

Facts about Korea. Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym, 2003.  
-A useful sourcebook that briefly examines the history, people, culture, customs, and other aspects of Korea.

<http://www.askasia.org/Korea/r12.html>

-Influences of belief on Korean Art  
-Provides a brief historical overview of Korean painting. Emphasizes China's influence, influence from religious beliefs, and transition from landscape painting to genre painting.

[http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/kgnr/hd\\_kgnr.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/kgnr/hd_kgnr.htm)

-Work and leisure: Eighteenth century genre painting in Korea  
-Offers a brief history of Korean genre painting, highlighting the work of specific painters of the time.

<http://www.ktnet.co.kr/enghome/culture.culture.html>

-A general site that offers various information about Korean life and culture. Relevant information includes Korean folklore, clothing, food and housing, family system, Korean moral philosophy, symbols, and Korean faith.