



Classroom Activities Freedom of Artistic Expression

Developed by Holly Williams

Today, the notion of free speech is challenged on many college campuses by both students and faculty alike.

Holly Williams, a Communication Studies instructor at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, worked with department faculty and the National Communication Association to coordinate a free speech conference titled *Finding Expression in Contested Public Spaces*. This series of activities was created as part of the conference experience to encourage students to consider the impact artistic expression has on free speech. Instructors can use this series to allow students to explore visual art, poetry, banned books, and music by exposing them to the works deemed controversial, providing them with discussion questions, and then promoting further reflection through a post-discussion or out of class activity.

For each activity below, instructors should share the First Amendment and definition of Freedom of Speech with students.

First Amendment to the US Constitution

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Freedom of Speech

The right to express information, ideas, and opinions free of government restrictions based on content and subject only to reasonable limitations.

Objectives

After completing these activities, students will be able to:

1. Describe the controversies surrounding visual art, poetry, banned books, and/or music.
2. Work individually and with others to critically analyze visual art, poetry, banned books, and/or music pieces.
3. Be critically conscious of the diversity of how art and popular culture productions both reflect and construct our culture.
4. Evaluate information before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.