

## OVERVIEW OF THE KIT

# Creativity and Aging Through the Lens of Film

## Overview

This curriculum kit provides college professors with the materials and background information for engaging students in a dynamic and constructivist process of learning how older adults remain creative as they age. It uses film clips as a means to explore five themes relating to creativity and aging:

**Mentoring** – Transmitting wisdom from elders to younger people;

**Music** – Engaging with music in later life as performer, composer, conductor or critic;

**Preserving Cultural Tradition** – Passing on lineage traditions to the next generations;

**Relationships** – Relating to others and to one's own aging process;

**Service** – Committing to community service as a lifetime discipline.

These materials were developed for use in gerontology/aging studies and psychology courses, but they can also be used in other disciplines including anthropology, sociology, film, music, and communications.

In addition to questioning social views related to creativity and aging this curriculum invites students to ask critical questions relating to media literacy. Students are invited to consider both the content and the form of media-constructed messages. Documentary and feature film clips become a means to engage visual and auditory learners who might traditionally be less inclined to participate in class discussion.

Following an initial pilot of this curriculum one Introduction to Aging Studies professor affirmed the viability of this intent: "The students responded enthusiastically and were quick to offer their opinions and views about the film clips. Despite the fact that I had never done anything like this in the classroom before, the discussion was easy to facilitate using the tools you provided...I heard from students who have never contributed to class discussions in the past."

## Linden Center For Creativity and Aging

This curriculum is the result of a collaboration between Project Look Sharp and the Gerontology Institute, both programs of the Division of Interdisciplinary and International Studies (DIIS) at Ithaca College. The Linden Center for Creativity and Aging exists within the Gerontology Institute of Ithaca College to encourage research, creative expression, model programs, student internships, and public education on creativity in the late stages of the life course.

While focusing on the arts, the Center is built on the premise that an aging society brings opportunities for innovation in many academic disciplines. Thus it will support work on creativity across all disciplines of the college with particular emphasis on emerging areas of knowledge. The Linden Center seeks to serve as a nationally visible academic resource for addressing the relationship between aging and creativity and the opportunities that creativity among older persons provides to individuals, communities, and society.

**OVERVIEW OF THE KIT**

# Media Literacy and Democratic Citizenship

The founders of the United States articulated the need for a literate citizenship as core to the development of a deep and enduring democracy. We live in an age when the most influential messages about pressing social issues and events are delivered through mass media, such as television, magazines and the Internet. Most students use the Internet as their primary source of information, yet few have any formal training in assessing the credibility of information in web sites. It is essential to the success of our democracy that young people consciously and consistently analyze and evaluate media messages. They need to be taught to seek out current, accurate, and credible sources of information; they need to understand the influence of media messages on their understanding of the world; and they need training in identifying and using various techniques for communicating messages in different media forms. Without these critical skills, we risk losing the diversity and freedom of thought that underpins a culture of true democracy.

## **Collective Reading of Media Messages**

This curriculum is based on the classroom practice of collective reading, in which the teacher leads the class through the process of decoding images, sounds and text as a way of developing a range of critical thinking skills while teaching core knowledge. This constructivist approach encourages the development of moral reasoning as students clarify their own interpretations, listen to the analyses of their peers, and discuss ethical issues. Decoding of the documents in this curriculum will help train students to distinguish fact from opinion, analyze point of view and identify bias, interpret

historical documents, and use evidence to back up a thesis. The classroom decoding process is particularly effective in involving students who rarely share their opinions about print-based material, including students with reading disabilities, visual learners, and students for whom English is a second language. The teacher should consider calling on students or going around the room to ensure participation by all students in the collective reading process.

## **Encouraging Multiple Readings**

Although the Teacher Guides for each lesson include possible answers to the questions, the teacher should encourage multiple readings and a diversity of responses for most of the questions posed. It is important that students give evidence in the document to explain their conclusions. Occasionally a question has only one right answer (e.g., “who created this video?”), and students should learn to distinguish between objective and subjective questions. The suggested answers given in the scripts are intended to reflect typical responses that address key historical and media literacy concepts and information. However, it is important that students recognize that all people do not interpret media messages the same way. Depending upon each reader’s background, including life experience, age, gender, race, culture, or political views, he or she may have very different interpretations of a particular text. The collective reading experience provides the opportunity to explore these differences and discuss the important concept that readers interpret messages through their own lenses.

**Reading Bias**

A major theme of these materials is the recognition that all media messages come from a particular point of view and have a bias that reflects the intent and perspective of the producer and sponsor. With these materials, teachers can train students to recognize bias and point of view. The teacher should encourage students to ask critical questions about any media messages encountered inside or outside the classroom using the *Key Questions To Ask When Analyzing Media Messages* found at [www.projectlooksharp.org](http://www.projectlooksharp.org).

**Bias in this Curriculum and in the Classroom**

This series of lessons, like all media, also has a point of view and a bias. As professors use the lessons, they may identify opinionated language, selective facts, missing information, and many other subjective decisions that went into constructing this view of history. The same questions the curriculum applies to other documents can be applied to this media construction: Who produced this curriculum for what purpose and what is its bias? Professors and students could and should be asking critical questions about the editorial choices that went into constructing these lessons. When using these materials professors will make their own decisions of what to include and to edit, what questions to use and what issues to avoid. All of these decisions, both by the creators and users of the curriculum, will influence the view that students receive. Professors should encourage students to thoughtfully analyze and discuss the stories, the perspectives, and the biases celebrated and criticized within our own classrooms. Those skills and practices are core to an educated democratic citizenship.

**Additional Resources**

For more information about media decoding download these documents from the project Look Sharp web site:

- *Key Questions to Ask When Analyzing Media Messages*
- *Core Principles for Media Literacy Education*

Also, a general guide for document decoding appears in the Sources and Resources section this kit titled: *Tips for Decoding Media Documents*.

**Fair Use of Media Documents**

The classroom critique of political and cultural documents such as these film excerpts is essential to the development of core literacy skills in our media saturated democracy. To enable educators to fulfill the mission of teaching these core civic objectives, Project Look Sharp has created media literacy integration curricula using a variety of different media documents for critical analysis in the classroom.

The documents in this curriculum are presented for the purpose of direct critique and are solely to be used in an educational setting.

For more information about fair use in Media Literacy Education, go to the Media Education Lab at Temple University at [www.mediaeducationlab.com](http://www.mediaeducationlab.com).