Picturing America: Principled Dissent and Democratic Practice
Teacher Training Conference

Presented by the University of Washington's Goodlad Institute for Educational Renewal
and supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities

For middle-and high-school American history and Social Studies teachers
at participating "Picturing America" schools

Wednesday and Thursday, July 21 and 22, 2010, with final session Saturday, November 6, 2010
(three full days, clock hours or academic credit available)

Sessions will be held at the University of Washington Bothell and the Seattle Art Museum

Taught by Linda Watts, Professor, American Studies, University of Washington Bothell; Tamara Moats, History faculty, the Bush School, Seattle and former UW Henry Art Gallery Curator of Education; Susan Casteras, Professor, Art History, University of Washington, Seattle; and Bridget Nowlin, Curator and adjunct instructor, Cornish College of the Arts, Seattle and former Henry Art Gallery Associate Educator.

This conference gives a stipend to all accepted teachers. There is a fee to take the program for credit.

For more information, or to receive an application, email picturingamerica@uwb.edu

Applications received by June 18th will be given priority; final deadline is July 1st
Introduction:

Picturing America, an exciting new initiative from the National Endowment for the Humanities, brings masterpieces of American art into classrooms and libraries nationwide. Through this innovative program, students and citizens gain a deeper appreciation of our country’s history and character through the study and understanding of art.

Our teacher training program, Picturing America: Principled Dissent and Democratic Practice provides professional development for teachers of American history to learn to integrate the study of Picturing America images into academic subjects. Employing a dynamic academic and teaching partnership with the Seattle Art Museum, our project elaborates on Picturing America’s democracy theme and focuses on the concept of principled dissent as a core democratic value. This theme, combined with visual thinking methods of exploring art works, will help teachers link Picturing America’s masterpieces to their history curriculum, content standards, and individual responsibilities to promote civic, democratic participation. We will innovatively use the Picturing America images to explore and illustrate such historical concepts as freedom, equality, and inclusion.

It has been said that the United States had its origins in dissent. The concept of principled dissent is a unifying thread running through many key texts in American history, literature, and artistic expression. Throughout the nation’s history, there have been struggles to achieve a fit balance between the interests of the individual and of the state. Rosa Parks, the African-American woman who peacefully resisted segregated passenger seating on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, is a contemporary example of the principled dissent-- someone who, guided by a deeply-felt conviction, expresses an unpopular opinion regardless of the personal consequence of doing so.

Rather than depicting democracy exclusively as an ideal or a concept, an emphasis on principled dissent helps teachers and students alike to envision democracy as a set of practices. These practices inform daily living as well as electoral politics. In this way, the curricular content comes to life through its links to decision-making and action. Such an approach has strong appeal for middle school and high school students (who are, themselves, negotiating choices based on personal convictions).

Using the study of art as a catalyst for learning in academic subjects, this professional development initiative helps educators become knowledgeable about American art and effective in teaching American history using Picturing America images. While learning to discuss art and connect it to other subjects, we will focus on developing deep understanding of the democratic character essential for renewing and sustaining American democracy. A signature feature of this effort is the focus on art and principled dissent as a lens through which to view key curricular concepts such as liberty, equality, and informed citizenship.
Program:

The program is a two-day summer conference with a third follow-up day in the fall. In the summer section, participants will hear presentations on principled dissent in American history and the relationship of history to history painting; learn the Visual Thinking Strategies method (VTS) to explore art; and develop a multiple-lesson instructional unit to use in their classrooms. They will implement these units in their schools and return in November to present their experiences. The purpose is to enhance teaching innovation and curriculum and to help participants become influential teacher leaders who can advocate for greater curricular emphasis on the combination of art and civic concepts.

Our teaching team features an exciting mix of museum and classroom educators. This program is sponsored by the University of Washington Bothell and is administered through the Goodlad Institute for Educational Renewal.

The NEH’s *Picturing America* School Collaboration Projects affirms the importance of incorporating art into the core school curriculum. Inspired by *Picturing America*, we have designed our project based on visual art’s critical aesthetic, intellectual, and creative place in core curriculum. Our project integrates learning about the selected masterpieces with how they convey the story of America—its events, people, conflicts, triumphs, diversity, ideals and democratic accomplishments—and uses this imagery to teach individual and collective responsibility for preserving a thriving democracy. Our project takes an interdisciplinary approach to how American art both reflects and shapes our social history, especially the civic concepts and principles underlying our democracy.

In the current climate, with its renewed popular interest in participatory democracy, youth stand poised to join national discussions. It is timely, then, that teachers have available to them compelling strategies for engaging students in civil and content-rich discourse about matters of consequence. This emphasis on principled dissent will help teachers and students to envision democracy as a set of practices conducted in daily living. Our curricular content comes to life through its links to decision-making and action. With this focus on both art and principled dissent, our conference will be an exciting and attractive opportunity for teachers, offering new approaches for teaching American history and democracy.

Visual art offers multiple ways of sensing, understanding, and learning that enhances and deepens conventional academic approaches. It stimulates the viewer to think in new ways and opens fresh pathways in the mind for understanding. Using art to illustrate and explore history is a new and important innovation in education, especially in the study of American history and democratic principles. This is at the core of our project. We will use Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) to deepen discussion of art, while building critical and creative thinking skills. Because of the VTS emphasis on multiple perspectives and respectful debate, its dialogue is a model of the democratic process, and can be used to analyze historical objects and primary documents.