

Pam DeCius

The Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence is proud to highlight Pamela DeCius, whose teaching brings art, culture, and everyday experience together in ways that spark curiosity and connection.

One of her most engaging classroom experiences came through a collaboration between her ART 110HM course and Janis Prince's SOC 334: Sex and Gender. Together, students analyzed images from Jean Kilbourne's *Killing Us Softly* through a media literacy lens. Approaching the same material from different perspectives created space for deeper meaning-making. Because ads are something students encounter daily, they were immediately invested—"I have never seen so many hands in the air." It's a moment she continues to recreate each semester, with new perspectives emerging every time.

That same responsiveness shapes how she adapts in the moment. During a lesson analyzing self-portraits of female Renaissance painters, she realized students were struggling to connect with the historical context. So she pivoted—asking students to pull out their phones, select a favorite selfie, pair up, and analyze each other's images. That shift made the concept immediate and personal, helping students move from a distant time period to something they have intimate experience with. As she notes, "doing this exercise early on really helps me get to know each of my students better—what they see, what's important to them and how they feel about themselves and the world around them."

Pamela's work is driven by helping students recognize that art is not separate from their lives. She finds the greatest joy in watching students realize they are already making aesthetic choices and engaging with art every day—"seeing that light in their eyes... is just—the best." That impact often extends beyond the classroom, as former students share photos of art and architecture they encounter after graduation, excited that they now truly see what's around them.

Her current interests include exploring the work of female architect Julia Morgan, with the hope of one day building a course that brings students to experience that work firsthand. She also values interdisciplinary collaboration, including recent work with Dr. Cheryl Kozina on gamification in online learning, emphasizing how much overlap exists across fields and how much is gained through shared perspectives.

Her guiding words reflect her approach to teaching and learning:

**"The best teachers are those who show you where to look, but don't tell you what to see."
—Alexandra K. Trenfor**