

*Paul Croce: The Way I Teach*

I believe students learn best when they can think about the material for themselves; of course this requires enough information to be able to interpret and find more. I'll give background presentations to inform and suggest themes and ask students to bring their readings of texts. In addition, use active-learning approaches, including evaluations of images, films, and music, small-group discussion, role-playing, debates, student presentations, field trips, guest speakers, required talking points, and essay writing to prepare for class discussion and for longer writing.

This is a mixture of traditional and contemporary pedagogy, of information learning and active learning. The combination is a little like the standard practice of many science classes, which have laboratory days to complement and apply the material learned in lecture and reading. The difference is that the lab experiences are almost every day in my classes, and we need very little equipment—American Studies and History courses are laboratories of the mind and of applied experience. I find that this “hybrid” pedagogy to be effective because it addresses the simultaneous need that students have for learning the material, for appreciation of the lived experience of the ideas at hand, and for finding a way to evaluate the learning experiences for assessing their emerging values.