

**Adopted: 2-3-19**

## **551 CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN STUDENT WORK POLICY**

### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to recognize that building trusting relationships through clear and honest communication about potentially controversial issues in student work is the responsibility of all instructors and students at The Studio School.

The faculty and School administration handles all controversial matters on an individual basis with regard to content, intended purpose and audience. Presentations, performances, screenings and critiques in class and only for other students are viewed differently than work intended for sharing in public showcases, exhibitions, presentations, performances, or screenings (gallery events) with a larger audience.

The Studio School seeks to balance First Amendment obligations against other concerns such as maintaining the integrity of the educational program, meeting state education requirements, respecting the judgments of professional staff, and addressing deeply-held beliefs in students and the community.

All student work displayed or presented for public viewing at gallery events, while not censored according to absolute criteria, must approach potentially controversial issues with sensitivity. Such consideration is not made with the intent to inhibit student work. Rather, we are making every effort we can to be aware of and respect the sensitivities of the community and audience that we, as a public school, serve.

### **II. CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES**

The issues and topics that may be considered controversial and must be handled with empathy and sensitivity in all student work, whether or not they are intended for public viewing, include but are not limited to: gender, race, age, ability, ethnicity, sex and sexuality, nudity, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, violence, religion, philosophical/cultural difference between individuals or groups, profane language and politics.

### **III. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

- A. All student work needs to be submitted for inclusion in gallery events exactly as it is to be showcased.
- B. If a work is considered by faculty and/or School administration too controversial to share publicly at The Studio School gallery event, the student will be given the opportunity to alter their work prior to sharing it with a public audience in order to be included in the event. However, after this alteration, any reversion to the original version, as well as further additions, revisions or changes to works of a potentially controversial nature during the gallery event opening reception/celebration is prohibited

and may result in termination of the event. Further consequences may include student written apologies and community service.

- C. In all student work, reference to or depiction of specific current students, alumni students, current or past students' parent(s)/guardian(s), and current or past staff or administration of the The Studio School could potentially be viewed as harassment, and therefore are not allowed unless written permission is given.
- D. Clothing appropriate for public situations, including shoes, must be worn at all gallery events, both on and off campus, unless specific, written permission for an alternative is given from the Dean of Students and/or Executive Director prior to the event.
- E. The review of student work for public viewing shall be determined by Policy 550 Gallery Policies, Section VI.

## **IV. COMMUNICATION**

All Studio School faculty will ask students to explain their use of potentially controversial content and their intended purpose in doing so in order to evaluate the appropriateness of their work for sharing with specific audiences.

Statements and program notes that address creative, conceptual, artistic and aesthetic choices made throughout the evolution of an artwork are a necessary part of showcasing all work shared publicly at gallery events, and are especially imperative and required when presenting work that contains controversial issues to any audience.

In a public school setting, handling controversial issues is seen by the public as the responsibility of the Instructors and Administrators of The Studio School. However, it is also the students' responsibility to address the consequences of presenting such material, and, when possible, to handle directly any comments from audience members within reason.

## **V. STUDENT WORK AND LEARNING GUIDELINES**

- A. Studio Work and Learning Guidelines:
  - 1. For all student work included in on-site and off-site school-sponsored gallery events:
    - a. Consideration must be given to the wide audience that views products displayed. Criteria considered when determining the appropriateness of a work for public exhibition include audience, artistic intent, context, concept, and presentation.
    - b. Students must be aware that many issues they choose to explore in their work may be of a sensitive or controversial nature to audience members or fellow class members. Our student

- body has varying levels of comfort in viewing works that investigate potentially controversial topics, and varying levels of comfort in voicing their concerns about those topics.
- c. All work presented at gallery events must be accompanied by a statement. Clarification is especially important when the intent of the creator of the work is to challenge social perceptions.
  - d. Photographic nudity and explicit depiction of sexual acts in verbal description or written and visual imagery will not be displayed publicly, and may also not be represented in the classrooms or labs regardless of whether it is exhibited or not.
  - e. Content in web-based graphics and artwork used in promotion of or during Studio School gallery events must conform to current School guidelines represented in policy and the Student and Family Handbook.
  - f. Student work displayed or presented for public viewing at gallery events will not be censored according to absolute criteria, and all topics are open for discussion and possibly for appropriate and sensitive presentation, but occasionally, an alternative venue may be sought for student work deemed creatively and educationally valid, but inappropriate for the more general audience at Studio School events.
  - g. It is important for students to evaluate the appropriateness of their own work for specific audiences, but Studio School faculty and administrators will make final decisions about the appropriateness of all student work for public exhibition based on their perception of the work in regard to pedagogical, developmental and ethical concerns.
  - h. Each article of student work has a separate existence and what is potentially objectionable in one piece may be appropriate in another, so each piece of student work will be considered for appropriateness on an individual basis.
2. The following philosophies guide all aesthetic and creative exploration in Studio School classes:
- a. Studio School Instructors aim to promote understanding, a sense of safety, and a sense of community with regard to student- or adult-generated material that addresses potentially controversial and/or sensitive topics.
  - b. A liberal approach to subject matter in the studios and classrooms is the norm, and the forum for creative process is defined as: wide debate, exploration, experimentation and dialogue within appropriate boundaries. The classroom is a marketplace of ideas where wide exposure to a robust exchange of ideas seeks to discover truth out of a multitude of perspectives.
  - c. In all classes, integrity of intent, serious/rigorous exploration of topics, encouragement of creative thought, risk-taking, contextualization, and problem solving are emphasized.
  - d. Process is different from product and presentation. Students may explore concepts in their process work within reason.
  - e. The artist is constantly called upon to authenticate creative direction. In creative exploration the challenge is constantly to refine and redefine work and direction.

- f. Institutions reflect that our lives are a series of decisions about what information we can accept and what does not fit with our life, cultural view and world-view.
  - g. An artist cannot ask an audience to accept work without taking responsibility for the ideas and concepts put forth in the work. An artist finds venues to show work by presenting it, contextualizing it and authenticating it.
  - h. The overall intention is that students and adults, from within a sense of shared community and safety, will handle conversations about and depictions of potentially controversial issues with empathy, courage, compassion and open sensitivity.
  - i. Integrity of intent in student work, whether displayed for public viewing or not, will always elicit instructor support. If student work is determined to be inappropriate for audiences at Studio School sponsored events, other venues for presentation may be explored when appropriate and available.
- B. Liberal Arts Work and Learning Guidelines:
1. Fostering creative work of all kinds is the hallmark of the Liberal Arts curriculum at The Studio School. Projects and creative work help students learn and to assess in learning.
  2. We value both individual voice and community health, risk taking and responsibility, trouble making and speaking truth to power, yet we understand that student work can often be challenging to the viewer, especially if the viewer has not been a part of the class where the work was generated. So it is important for students to use their critical thinking skills and to consider message, audience and purpose when making creative choices and creating work for their Liberal Arts classes.
  3. Students must recognize, also, that when work is to be shown in a public place, the audience must be especially carefully considered. Ultimately, the Instructor and/or School Administration will determine what is appropriate in either setting; the laboratory of the classroom or the viewing space of the Gallery/performance/presentation area.
  4. There are a number of considerations we expect students to take into account when creating work for their Liberal Arts classes; each student is encouraged to speak his or her truth while also being sensitive and responsible for artistic and creative choices around cultural appropriation, representations of marginalized individuals and groups, the objectification of individuals, gratuitous sex, drugs and violence, and respect for differing points of view. In particular, depictions of drug or alcohol use, sex and gratuitous or excessive nudity are not permitted.
- C. Health and Wellness Work and Learning Guidelines:
1. Movement Fundamentals and Touch
    - a. The body is the essential instrument in the teaching of movement related to Health and Wellness and Performance Art. Touch has been a traditional method of teaching in movement in order to facilitate learning through the kinesthetic and tactile channels. The Instructor in this class will use touch on occasion to help facilitate alignment, quality of movement or other

curricular outcomes. If a student has an issue with this method of teaching please contact the instructor immediately so he or she may find some alternatives.

- b. Sometimes in movement-related activities we expect students to have body contact with another student. This touch may range from a simple handhold to full body partnering. Please be aware that in class the instructor will use safety guidelines and methods to incrementally achieve results. If a student feels that the partnering or touching is uncomfortable on any level, please talk to the instructor. Students have a right to a physically and emotionally safe place for movement exploration.
2. Movement and Controversial Issues
    - a. Health and Wellness Instructors encourage expression and experimentation in the active classroom. It is a laboratory to explore new thoughts and ideas, to create a new voice and way of creating for students as a kinesthetic learner and mover. However, when students produce works in a public venue we have different concerns and expectations. We are a publicly funded institution with many different audiences. Therefore there are certain controversial areas that we need to be aware of and treat with respect and empathy in all public performances or presentations. These include but are not exclusive to the issues outlined above in Section II. Any work produced by the Health and Wellness Department in a public venue will be subject to the instructor's and school administration's discretion on these subjects.
    - b. As the Health and Wellness faculty, our responsibilities as producers are infinite and varied. Our responsibilities to the students include creating a safe atmosphere for all movers, maintaining a high standard of excellence both in choreography and performance, encouraging creativity within the classroom and during gallery events. Our responsibilities to our audience include creating a safe atmosphere for all members, being empathetic to the diverse constitution of our audience and being aware of our role as a publicly funded institution.
    - c. There are certain non-negotiable areas for the Health and Wellness department. There will be no nudity in any artistic performance, ephemeral or recorded, that is produced at The Studio School. There are many reasons for this rule and questions about it should be directed to Health and Wellness Instructors.
    - d. Health and Wellness Instructors and/or School Administrators make final decisions as to the appropriateness of any student work and performance material for public presentation based on the instructors' and administrators' perception of the works' defensibility with regard to pedagogical, developmental and ethical concerns.



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**STUDENT ACCEPTANCE OF THE CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN STUDENT WORK POLICY**

I have read and understand the Controversial Issues in Student Work Policy of The Studio School, and I agree to abide by the guidelines stated in the policy. I understand the consequences if I do not follow the guidelines stated in the policy.

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Student Name (print clearly)

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Date

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Student Signature