

Lesson 2

What is Your Professional Problem?

Problems with Professionalism

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OVERVIEW

Students may have this preconceived notion that the road to their future profession is a straight path from their undergraduate education to their desired field. The other preconceived idea is that once students get to their desired profession, everything will run smoothly. This lesson is designed to help students understand there is no one path to their desired profession, that they may still have professional problems that will arise when they enter into their desired profession, and that those problems may even emulate the same challenges they experience as a student. This lesson also helps students understand the tension between maintaining a sense of self and the desire to engage in their desired profession fully.

MATERIALS

1. [The Jam #7: “Is Hell Others? The Artist Within and Without Society” video](#)

ACTIVITIES

FOCUSED FREE-WRITE

Ask students to respond to the following questions.

Think about the challenges you face as a student. Then think about the challenges you foresee yourself facing in the professional world. How will you get to your future profession? Are there any links between your student problems and your future professional problems?

Note that there are a few options for this exercise:

1. This may be kept personal in their journals to be used solely in their time capsule.
2. You may choose to ask students to record their responses on a discussion board, on flip-grip as a video response, Jamboard, or other platform.
3. In addition to #2, you may also wish to have students respond to other students' responses. For this variation you would set a deadline for the initial response. After that deadline you would set a deadline for students to respond to their peers.

Note: You should use student responses as an opportunity to create future lessons for your students. For example, if a student or a group of students discuss how they do not believe they can be a leader in their future profession because they are too shy and have difficulty advocating for themselves, you can invite alumni or other speakers who can address that specific professional problem.

WATCH: [CONTENT WARNING: SELF HARM] FROM THE JAM #7: "IS HELL OTHERS? THE ARTIST WITHIN AND WITHOUT SOCIETY"

Specifically, watch [Simon's Rock alum Nay's response to their professional problem \(16:25- 20:50\)](#). Then, [their response to alum Pyae's questions \(41:45-47:50\)](#).

FOCUSED FREE-WRITE

What was Nay's professional problem? How has their professional problem changed over time? What stood out to you the most in Nay's initial response? What stood out to you the most in this response? What do you think about Nay's point about the link between freedom, white supremacy, and the hegemony of professionalism in the United States of America?

Video Lecture Opportunity: There were so many insights Nay discussed which you may want to help students unpack in an online lecture:

1. Interrogating what freedom is in regards to artistry; what is the difference between surviving and thriving on your artistry in a capitalist society?
2. Is there such a thing as ethical capitalism? How does it apply to art, success in the arts, and how it is framed without sustainability?
3. There is a necessity to define the worth of your work.
4. The idea that materialism, rules, and regulations do not define your worth
5. Who gets to decide your worth?
6. Tension between running a business and polishing your craft
7. Freedom not fear: believing and doubting the importance of fear being perceived not as a failure

8. Who are you creating for?
9. Success should be defined by the individual, not by societal norms.

WATCH: *FROM THE JAM #7: "IS HELL OTHERS? THE ARTIST WITHIN AND WITHOUT SOCIETY"*

Specifically, watch [Simon's Rock alum Sara Katzoff's response to her professional problem \(28:00-31:58\)](#).

FOCUSED FREE-WRITE

Ask students to respond to the video by answering the following questions:

1. What was Sara's professional problem?
2. What stood out to you the most in Sara's response?
3. How were these two professional problems similar or different from your own?
4. Does it help shape your thinking about the challenges you face as a student?
5. Does it help shape your thinking about the challenges you may face as a future professional in your chosen field?
6. Sara commented on the tension between self-sustainability and the drive to be a productive member of society. Do you agree or disagree and why? How do you think this dynamic affects America's workforce culture?