



Classes with class

by Lydia Berzsenyi

Many students feel that the closest culture comes to the classroom is the group of dancing frogs perched on top of Harrington Classroom Building.

However, anyone who takes this cynical attitude has just not opened the right doors. There are numerous courses at Texas A&M University designed to broaden the cultural horizons of the students.

Whether you are interested in art, music, drama, film or dance, A&M can launch you on an exploration into the fine arts world. With classes being taught both for credit through University departments and for fun through MSC University Plus, the opportunities for becoming cultured are limitless.

In addition to its courses in basic design and architectural history, the Department of Environmental Design also offers classes in art history, drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics, metal smithing and crafts.

These classes offer the opportunity to become reflective, get dirty, have fun and learn something about art, all at the same time. After taking some of these art classes, you just might be

able to visit the famous museums of the world and make a knowledgeable comment on the exhibits.

Joe Hutchinson, a professor in the College of Architecture and Environmental Design, says enrollment in his classes has steadily increased through the years.

He says that the students who have taken his classes in art history have told him later that they learned to appreciate art and were definitely the better for it.

"Everyone needs art," Hutchinson says. "Art is a kind of benchmark. It lets us know who we are and where we are. There is no better record of man."

Now, perhaps you've found that you're just not artistically talented. Perhaps you would rather lend your ear to the musical genre.

In this case, A&M also offers a variety of courses designed to enlighten students musically. Offered by the Department of Philosophy and Humanities, the music program presently consists music appreciation, music theory and American music survey classes.

Franz Krager, one of the three

instructors in the program, says that his classes are aimed at educating students in the intricacies of the music world—the composers, the theory, the history and the forms of expression.

He says that once his students know what to listen for and why certain things happen in music, they can get much more out of a performance than can a casual observer.

"A little music knowledge is necessary for any well-rounded person," Krager says.

Once again, maybe you're becoming a little skeptical. You might be saying, "I have a terrible ear. My mother won't even let me sing in church. I just don't think I'm interested in music."

If this situation sounds familiar to you, maybe you'd prefer to find culture on the screen or stage.

The Department of English offers two classes in film, in which students watch movies and then discuss aspects of film-making. The classes cover theory, major movements, representative works and film genres.

Culture on the stage is represented

by the Department of Speech Communications and Theatre Arts, which offers classes dealing with everything from the techniques of acting and directing to the designing of sets and costumes.

One final excuse you might have for not broadening your cultural horizons is that you just don't have the time or the room in your schedule to take a class. Well, don't think you can escape so easily.

University Plus, headquartered in the basement of the Memorial Student Center, offers at a minimal cost several mini-courses, taught at night by students and members of the community. This is a relaxing way to learn something new without having to worry about grades or high-pressure deadlines.

The program attempts to fill the student body's cultural void with classes such as Wine Appreciation, Ballroom Dancing and Appalachian Basket Weaving.

So now what can you say? There really is no excuse for avoiding culture in the classroom, for beyond those dancing frogs lies a panorama of opportunity.