

“I never realized WHY art was so valuable,” says a student. “The material is so interesting, or maybe he just makes it so. He inspires. He makes a large class feel intimate because he doesn’t just lecture, he entertains.”

Diana DePardo-Minsky, Assistant Professor, Art and Architectural History, Bard College

Diana DePardo-Minsky, a professor of art and architectural history at Bard College, loves Rome with its infinitely interesting and eternally complex mix of art and history, and aims to inspire a similar passion in her students.

This “dynamic and intelligent” lover of the Eternal City (one student calls her “practically frightening in her excitement”) encourages students to trust their instincts when they analyze either visual or verbal information and to take pride in their work through clear articulation of their ideas whether written or spoken. She is committed to primary sources, both textual and material: “Firsthand experience—if possible involving actual handling—connects the past to the present, emphasizing relevance.” She makes the material come alive to the students through enthusiasm and immersion; when they cannot visit the works they are studying, she shows them images that she took so she “can choreograph the experience of a piece as it unfolds over time in space.” She also enhances secondary texts on the political, theological, or intellectual context of a commission with primary sources so that students understand the art within its culture and how that culture connects to their own. “She has a great way of sequencing the information she gives you in just the right way so you really absorb it,” says a student.

Whenever possible, she immerses her students in the culture they are studying, which is a treat for students in classes such as Ancient Roman Art and Architecture, Italian Renaissance Architecture, and Villas of the Hudson Valley. She incorporates anecdotes about favorite professors and other colleagues into her teaching, “so that, when my students read texts, these authors appear as individuals, and they too can feel part of a continuum of comprehension.” Most significantly, “I impress upon my students the importance of refining their work into something that they can be proud of, into a work of art worthy of the subject at hand.” She often crafts research projects in conjunction with students

to allow their personal interests to inform their topics, and she supplements lectures with relevant field trips, films, or food “to keep learning fun—since it is fun.” “She truly is a pearl...kind and passionate, she will do all it takes to make you love and learn what she is teaching,” says a student.