

Columbia Tests New Approach To Humanities

Students Form First-Hand
Opinions of Books, Art;

Study of Criticism Cut
Colleges/Columbia

Students learn more from reading great books than from studying summaries or criticisms, Herbert E. Hawkes, dean of Columbia College, said yesterday in a report on five years of tests given to Columbia freshmen in a prescribed course in humanities. The second year of the course, in which emphasis is placed on first-hand acquaintance with music and art, with historical treatment and "appreciation" made secondary, also has been found successful, according to Dean Hawkes.

"Our whole effort is to eliminate predigested opinions," he said. "The students are induced to listen to and observe for themselves the great monuments of the Western tradition in music and art. The conclusions they reach are of less importance than the training they receive through direct examination and discussion. But the method will remain and may be transferred from college courses to other monuments with which the student will come into contact throughout the rest of his life."

Most freshmen at Columbia find the reading assignments in the first year of humanities extremely heavy. Between September and June, large doses of nearly every important writer from Homer and Plato to Dante and Shakespeare are administered. Tests and instructors' comments enable the dean's office to discover in ample time the students who have deficient reading or study habits, Dean Hawkes pointed out. These students receive special assistance.

The first-hand-acquaintance method in humanities has been so successful that the staff of the course in contemporary civilization has prepared a revision of reading assignments, Dean Hawkes announced.

Several innovations to facilitate instruction in the humanities course are being used this year for the first time. The College Study provides tables where students may listen to records of the musical assignments with earphones so as not to disturb those who may be reading, and pictures will be provided for preparation of the work in fine arts.