

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

GOALS

As an educator, my goal is to guide my design students' development in the areas of design systems, critical thinking, problem-solving, concept development, and visual storytelling. Teaching fundamental design skills that give students the ability to communicate clearly through visual messaging supports their success as future design professionals. Technology, media, trends and social interaction are always changing and growing, but when we help produce students that have a strong sense of the relationship between content and context, they can master any tool, medium or complex design challenge successfully.

PROCESS

My design pedagogy is both process and learner-centered, and emphasizes design principles, language and creative problem solving. I also support the organic ideation of sketching before working digitally, as well as the use of process books to allow each individual the freedom of discovery within the parameters for each project. When evaluating student work, giving the process as much consideration as the finished project helps nurture and grow their individual skills and strengths. This supports a learner-centered approach that creates student ownership and helps build confidence while fostering the chosen methods of each student. Taking into account diverse student learning styles, my student interaction throughout the design process is both written and verbal, as well as individual and group-based. This promotes the students' ability to effectively communicate their visual solutions to their instructors, peers, clients and other professionals.

BUILDING BLOCKS

In order to solve complicated design challenges, students need a foundation of design history in the context of social influences, design theory, current design philosophy and exposure to as much design as possible. This, paired with their own diverse experiences and vision, creates the building blocks for success. I work to integrate this into my classes with both historical reference and open discussions about what we see as both good and bad design, and why. This allows students to grow their design vocabulary and have a voice without the emotional attachment of it being their own work. This also builds trust and confidence when they speak about their own work, as well of the work of their peers.

PRACTICE

Students are required to gain an understanding of professional practice and develop skills they will need to be successful in a design career. Emphasis on best business practices, client relations, environmental consciousness, print production, and adherence to deadlines will be integrated into each assignment. This includes developing a curriculum that includes real-world projects backed by practicing professionals that share their experiences with students and give feedback.

STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS

As students develop skills for creating visual solutions, emphasis on the development of greater strategic business solutions should be introduced. Working with other departments and others with different contributing skill sets exposes them to real world situations where designers, copywriters, engineers, motion graphics/animators, videographers, photographers and other professionals work together to create fully integrated creative solutions for their clients. This builds understanding, collaboration and communication skills across design platforms and helps the student become more adaptable to new demands.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

As a graduate of a 100% online based MFA program, I believe that, given the tools, LMS system and administrative support, we can offer our students online learning opportunities that are of equal quality to that of a traditional classroom/studio setting. There is a greater level of time commitment on behalf of both the teacher and the student as well as self-motivation for successful outcomes. That being said, when we are fully committed as educators to the idea of distance education, it opens up possibilities for high rates of interaction and critical design thinking among a very diverse group of students and faculty. The flexibility of online programs creates greater opportunities for graphic design students who are not normally able to enroll in traditional programs.

CONTINUED GROWTH

I am dedicated to being a life-long learner in teaching and my professional design career. I continue to practice design, finding opportunities along the way to learn new technologies and best design practices. I also attend design education conferences, seek out mentorships from experienced educators, and continue to facilitate a design educators' resource blog to help support my own growth. I instill the idea of life-long learning in my students by being open to what they teach me and acknowledge that learning with them.