

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

A single candle can light thousands, and its life will not be shortened, nor its radiance depleted.
-Buddha

I see teaching as a collaborative role, one in which my primary responsibility is creating an environment that promotes student development while resisting traditional hierarchical relationships between teacher and student. In this environment there is not one teacher in the classroom, but four. As the first teacher, I draw on accumulated knowledge to establish a class structure that will set the students on their path. The second teacher is the work of other artists shared with the class through readings and slide lectures. The third teacher is the student's peers who offer feedback and insight. The fourth, and most important teacher is the student, who has agency over how much or how little they learn. It is my job, as the first teacher, to cultivate an environment of openness so that the student feels safe enough to allow all of the teachers (including themselves) to help them learn.

The practice of art expands perception and transports the mind to a creative place that engages parts of the brain not typically used in more traditional academic fields. The creative and problem solving strategies learned through art making can be applied across artistic disciplines and even beyond "art" itself. My goal is to get each student to a place where—regardless of whether they continue making art for the rest of their lives or never take an art class again—they will always be artists. When they have completed my course they will have a set of tools to approach their work in new and creative ways, whether it's sculpture, video-making, anthropology, or particle physics. This is achieved by balancing skill activities with lectures, readings, and discussions that connect the skills they learn to other genres of art and academic inquiry.

In a broader view, my courses encourage students to consider discourses regarding the place of visual art within the framework of post-secondary education. Through the concept of "creative response" to readings, students engage with traditionally academic material in innovative ways. While one part of the brain processes written information through the act of reading, and verbal information through class discussion, the "creative response" encourages students to find connections and insight beyond the modes of thinking which are most familiar.

An important facet of my course design is an individualized system for evaluating student's progress in order to accommodate the varying levels of experience and genre interests of each class. Beginning students are asked to use a grading rubric I designed to evaluate their performance at the end of each project. Advanced students set their own goals and standards of achievement that are tailored to their individual interests. These goals and evaluations, along with class participation and timely completion of projects, ultimately determine a student's final grade.