



## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

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### CONCEPT OF LEARNING & TEACHING:

I believe learning challenges preconceived ideas and provides foundational framework for further exploration. A successful learning situation is one that raises as many questions as it answers, creating a productive conversation between teacher and students. It reveals assumptions and requires the learner to go beyond them. In graphic design, mastery happens when a solution cannot be improved upon because it addresses all facets of the problem. In order to effectively problem-solve, the students must have the skills or frame-work on which to work. This frame-work includes aspects such as typography, history of design, and an expanded visual vocabulary.

I see my role as a teacher as primarily threefold: 1) passing on knowledge and equipping the students with the skills necessary for success in design 2) showing the students how to go beyond the basics, enabling them to think creatively and originally in the application of said knowledge and skills, and 3) stressing to the students the importance of becoming life-long learners, to continue to seek knowledge long after they leave the classroom.

### GOALS FOR STUDENTS:

As a design educator, I have five main goals for my students. I explore these below, along with proposed methods and examples for attaining said goals.

1. First and foremost, students will increase their aptitude for critical thinking and problem solving. I encourage students to go beyond their initial solution, which is usually based on an initial reaction or a preconception. The solution might be valid, but is it the best solution? Without a thoughtful and critical look at all the possible solutions, initial ideas usually are not the best ones. The first part of any project should be research and then sketching, with a minimum number of mandatory sketches evaluated in teacher and/or peer critiques before moving on to the next stage of design.
2. Students will develop a deeper understanding of the history of design and expand their visual vocabulary. My goal is not to simply give students a series of unconnected assignments based on graphic design applications (e.g. posters, album covers, annual reports, corporate marks, packaging, advertisements or similar projects for students to accumulate as portfolio pieces). These activities are important and do produce bodies of work for the student, but they must be couched in a larger aim like emphasizing typography for one assignment or creative idea-generation for another assignment or a specific historical style for yet another.
3. Students will gain an awareness of the business of design, including deadlines, production and client relations. I believe that a graphic design education, at a minimum, requires student



understanding of the field in practice. This understanding is usually gained through the development of projects within the curriculum that work with real-world clients and take them through the design process from conception to production and finally to presentation to the client. Additionally, practicing design professionals would be invited to speak to the class to share their experience and advice.

4. Students will learn the specific technology and software skills to operate effectively. Design should always begin with concept, but concept must be executed well to be effective. This mandates a proficiency in the tools used to create final products, like the Adobe Creative Suite. I would use in-class software demonstrations in conjunction with out-of-class tutorials to build software skills. Learning would culminate in utilizing the software to execute a solid concept in response to an assigned project.
5. Students will be exposed to the concept of the designer's role in society as an agent for positive change. From a holistic standpoint, I feel it is vital that the students understand the power of design to create change and their responsibility to use that power well. Historical examples would be cited in class, and students given the opportunity to choose a cause or organization for which to create a piece of visual communication.

### INTERACTION WITH STUDENTS

The way I interact with students is dependent on the particular class and maturity of the students. Initially, I feel it's important to establish myself as an authority both in the classroom and in the subject matter, for this is the foundation for respect between the student and teacher. Once this mutual respect is established, there is opportunity to create camaraderie with the students in the classroom. Throughout, I aim to inspire passion about graphic design and the student's role in society as a designer.

In addition to in-class interaction, mentoring is a crucial part of the teacher/student relationship that takes place largely outside of the classroom in one-on-one advising sessions. I believe that in advising students, though weaknesses should not be ignored, strengths-based curriculum should be the emphasis. If a student excels in illustrative design, coursework should focus on building upon and reinforcing that strength. At the same time, there is a minimum understanding of all design basics that should be mastered. In advising students, I would keep this dialectic in mind as I helped guide them in course selection.

### ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

I feel grades are an important tool in helping students assess their progress and mastery of the subject. Student work evaluation should be based upon the development of the underlying ideas (concept), effectiveness of their realization (technique), and on the quality of the project itself (form).



Critiques are an integral part of the design learning experience, where students would not only hear my feedback but also that of their peers. These sessions are not inquisitions, but rather tools for the designer to ask questions and gain critical insight to how others perceive their work. Critiques are held mid-project to assess progress and address any red flags or road blocks to the student's approach and then held again after the final presentation of the work. Students receive written feedback from me after each critique in addition to a numerical grade.

As class participation and awareness of work outside one's own is essential to learning, I would reserve the right to adjust final class grade based upon individual attendance and contributions to class critiques. Additionally, I allow students to resubmit work that they have improved upon for consideration of a higher grade. However, because deadlines are such a crucial part of being a graphic designer, resubmitted work cannot merit higher than a B+.

#### CONTINUING GROWTH

Professional growth is invaluable, both as an educator and as a designer. As an educator, attendance/participation in conferences plays an important role in continued development of teaching techniques and best practices. As a designer, I grow by continuing my own design business outside of my teaching responsibilities. Working as an active professional helps me keep my finger on the pulse of the design world and informs my teaching. Also, membership in organizations such as AIGA gives me numerous growth opportunities in addition to participation in local arts organizations.