

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I love teaching art. I am more comfortable in the studio classroom than in most other places. The central tenet of my teaching philosophy is to stimulate personal learning so that students want to explore their interests and their expressive inclinations in the visual arts beyond the foundational level. Students who complete art courses should see connections between art and other disciplines and apply their knowledge in self-directed study and problem-solving (hopefully carrying those skills to other classes). I find it rewarding to help students learn how to talk about art and the ideas behind it. I also want my students to apply their knowledge so that they comprehend different art forms rather than simply memorize their respective characteristics. To achieve this, I use a portfolio assignment in Visual Art and the Studio (ART 001) and Introduction to Painting (ART 50) and emphasize self-evaluation and self-assessment in all my studio courses.

In my classes, the art students are required to solve design and drawing problems, or actually create their own problems and create design solutions for those problems. In Design (ART 10), students work on real-life design problems that originate from different campus and community organizations. In Drawing (ART 20), I assign open-ended assignments where students investigate media and techniques to achieve their desired aims. The design of the assignments encourages students to take an active rather than a passive approach to learning.

To foster this process-oriented studio atmosphere, I first expose students to basic tools, materials, and techniques. I, then, augment these traditional media with design software in the computer lab as an aid for compositional design and color theory. Specifically, the ART 10 class uses the computer lab during almost every class session. Assignments and exercises allow students to use Free Hand MX and Photoshop for their initial design ideas and final designs. I also assign real-life design problems that support needs in the local and campus community (logos, ads, awareness posters) for Unity Week, DUI awareness and prevention, and t-shirt designs. The studio courses have a research component as well. In ART 50, students employ library research methods and are required to present their research in class. The more advanced students in research topics courses must develop an online portfolio or blog (at blogger.com) and keep it up to date.

I use ANGEL in all courses to provide examples of student work and to store images and designs. Design students upload their concepts and finished designs to Drop Boxes to be used as exercises and as future visual resources. I also use ANGEL to supplement the course syllabi: posting assignments, resources, links, grading scales, and important course documents that might become lost in a syllabus.

The creative component in ART 001 is a portfolio that consists of a formal analysis based on a work of art students have seen in a museum or gallery. They define and analyze individual artists and their respective stylistic schools by completing a project that includes creative works, reviews of art exhibits, or a research paper. This allows students an opportunity to apply research skills and the fundamental knowledge they have learned throughout the course. Students initially work as teams in collaborative learning groups in which they research, study, and define a style of art. Besides the collaborative components, I use team-teaching so students see a definite link between writing, research, and the material that they study in Art 001.

When pushed to explain why I devote so much time to thinking about my teaching, I would have to say that I want to reconnect with the core values of my teaching philosophy and to convey those values to contemporary students. The reward has been that my students often decide to continue their work in the visual arts by entering their work in juried exhibits, by gaining admission into BFA and graduate programs, and by sending samples of independent work to me for feedback. All of this tells me that some of what I do to stimulate personal learning works. When students return late in the afternoon, wanting to discuss the work of an obscure artist whose work they have seen in a library book – that's when I know why I love teaching art.