

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Underlying the numerous concerns in teaching is the need for constant assessment. Critical analysis and response, along with evaluation and critiquing, are the foundation for all self-evaluation practices, as teaching itself is very much rhetorical. My goal is not to render generic knowledge to students; it is to influence students individually. I believe a personalized educational experience for each student creates an environment that is more positive and lends to higher success rates. The ability to recognize new challenges, adapt, and reflect is important to be successful in and out of the classroom. I hope to produce polished individuals who critically engage with a variety of challenges both academically and artistically, apply their own strategies, and complete their goals. Being an effective educator requires balance, which is an ongoing effort.

I believe in providing my students with a host of practical, traditional, and non-traditional skills so they will be well equipped in their efforts. From design sense and proper tool usage to material waste control, I attempt to introduce many facets of art education, while demonstrating various art practices. I find that responsible art making processes help students to be mindful of their surroundings and expand the elements of a well-rounded education that will serve them for future career aspirations. Regardless of the subject, adaptive learning is the bottom line. Students need to be as versatile as possible, and good hand skills in tangible object creation can only provide practicality to digital design skills and vice versa.

Once again, balance is key. In the studio, we constantly evaluate our processes and reflect on accomplishments. This discourse fosters a community that requires the students to be actively involved with their fellow classmates and instructor. This model provides a sense of group communication, or cohort-style education, and allows the students to move beyond the “teacher as a guide” mentality. I encourage student progression in learning to identify with the self-responsibility and drive required to be a professional artist. No student can learn every aspect of a subject in one term, but my hope is that by being an active participant of this small community, it will connect them to a larger one in their future careers.

Processes rooted in mixed materials foster a strong use of design and material understanding. In the process of teaching both two-dimensional and three-dimensional design foundations, regardless of material or medium, I find one successful approach is using verbal and visual trigger questions rooted in synectics. I then work with my students on their idea creation habits and developing that idea by using a design process of research, develop, maquette, fabricate, critique and reflect. This basic timeline helps my students brainstorm their next move.

At Hocking College, which is a community/technical college, I have two years to prepare graduates for an associate degree and integration into the professional job market, or a four-year institution. It is my goal to graduate them with a high level of skills, self-development, and knowledge of the power of critical response. Many of our students have continued to four-year institutions, some with scholarships. Other students have continued by working for galleries/museums, apprenticing for other artists, and some have gone into business for themselves. In our success stories, alumni have said that the skills, portfolio and body of work they produced while at Hocking College prepared them for their next steps.