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## **My Philosophy**

Throughout my 12+ years of working as a designer, I have had the opportunity to appreciate all of the knowledge and skills I gained during my academic career. I was fortunate to have great teachers and mentors. However, I have also had the opportunity to identify and reflect on the gaps in my knowledge and the areas that needed strengthening. These reflections are what drive my desire to be an educator and teach new generations of designers. I strive to be the educator that I wish I would have had as a student. One that contributes to the development of not only the skills, but also the philosophies and mindset that will allow students to become strong designers.

## **My Goal as an Educator**

Overall, I seek to create enthusiasm and help students find joy in each project they undertake, showing them the power of design and the meaningful impact their work can make in the world. As students move through the program and evolve as designers, so does my goal.

**Exploration:** With first year students, my goal is to get to know them and find out, or sometimes help them discover, what their interests are, what aspect of design they are most passionate about and where their strengths and talents lie.

**Development:** With second and third year students, I make sure they continue to explore their design goals and follow their passion, while crafting and refining their core design skills.

**Application:** With upper level students, my mission is to help them apply their skills to mold themselves into the designers they want to be and find their place and purpose in the design industry. I challenge their talent and imagination to push them to create work that's beyond their expectations.

## **How I Run my Classroom**

I believe that a hands-on classroom environment is most conducive to learning. Therefore, I try to keep my lectures to a minimum. Rather, I foster a collaborative learning environment by having round-table discussions that seek to engage students. I incorporate a lot of class exercises into my teaching to help students develop their critical and conceptual thinking as a group. The whiteboard is a key tool for this, and I use it during exercises and discussions as a vehicle for us to learn from each other's way of thinking and develop what I like to call a "shared mind", which is vital to developing problem solving skills.



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I run my classroom like a studio, where I hold the dual role of mentor and creative director. This allows me to share my knowledge while giving students industry perspective and professional experience that will prepare them for the future. In this studio-like environment, students learn about accountability, meeting deadlines, taking direction and giving and receiving feedback. It is extremely important that students become comfortable talking about their work. Because of this, I incorporate several one-on-one and group critiques into each assigned project.

I assess student work on an individual basis, which is why I place such an emphasis on getting to know a student's abilities. Understanding individual strengths and weaknesses allows me to set my expectations for each student and gauge their progress. I also take into account how well they take direction, how much effort they put into their work, and if and how they incorporated instructor and peer feedback into their final product.

### **What Makes a Strong Designer**

In addition to developing a strong set of core design skills, there are a few essential lessons every design student should learn prior to graduating. I incorporate these into my teaching, stressing their importance to all of my students. They include:

**Integrity:** Embracing our personal “ingredients” to produce authentic work.

**Fearlessness:** Believing in our ideas and trusting our gut when it comes to design.

**Meaning:** Having a reason behind all design decisions in order to answer the “WHY?”.

**Collaboration:** Diverse points of view coming together as a “shared mind” yield strong and innovative solutions.

**Design Thinking:** Applying empathy and mindfulness in the way we approach problem solving.

**Breadcrumbs:** Cleverly engaging the viewer by providing a continuous design experience that tells a story and evokes emotion.