

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

The education of oneself is the greatest endeavor anyone can embark on. As a student, I have focused my life on learning and my education. As a teacher I have learned more than I ever did as a student. Learning is embedded in human nature and teachers are the ultimate learners. The responsibility of a teacher or professor is not just to teach but also to facilitate and create a positive learning environment. Learning is a process that differs for each person. No two people learn the same way. The teacher can only support and guide his/her students in their own learning endeavor.

Having a strong foundation is the only way you can build and grow. I stress the importance of basic skills and techniques in all my students before engaging them in more complex problems. Starting strong in fundamentals allows students to express themselves in whatever way they wish to, without barriers or unsurpassable obstacles. After both the student and I are confident in their fundamentals, I encourage experimentation. I think experimentation in visual elements and process is the key to an artist's growth and the growth of the medium. Though I stress the ideas of traditional printmaking, I encourage the use of modern tools and new techniques to aid in the creative process. My goal is an active and fun learning environment where students build on what they already know and feel free to expand their knowledge. The better learning environment that is created, the more successful the art and the students will be.

One aspect of teaching that I have learned is that each student is an individual with different needs and abilities. In this day of budgets and bean counting, students often get dissolved into numbers that can be processed and categorized. It is impossible to teach a number, especially in the arts. Having smaller class sizes makes it possible for the teacher to have one-on-one interactions with all of his/her students. Students in the arts all have varying abilities and talents. They each learn at different paces and in different methods. The great thing about teaching art is that you can structure the class to benefit each individual student. I structure my classes around ideas and elements instead of specific assignments or textbooks. I allow enough flexibility and openness so that the student with little ability can learn and be as interested as the student with greater ability, especially in introduction classes where there is so much disparity. I take the time to get to know my students so I can be most effective in helping them learn. In the end, I am there for the students, to facilitate a positive learning environment. That environment must be relaxed and open to discussion, communication, and creativity. A large part of that is helping students deal with failure. Students often learn more in a failure that they do in a success. I encourage all my students to learn what was successful and not successful in all their work. I want them to create something, learn from it, and apply that knowledge to their next piece. They need to keep building on their experiences to better themselves and their work. I try to stress effort and improvement over letter grades to promote real learning.

To conclude, I want to say that teaching comes down to passion, in and out of the classroom. Teaching and learning should be fun and entertaining. There is a lot of work that goes into being a teacher and a facilitator of a positive learning environment. The payoff comes through helping just one person learn something they didn't know before. Effective teaching is caring about your students, flexibility, a sense of humor, mentoring, knowing your subject, communication, and above all else, it is truly loving what you do.