

I am an enthusiastic and steadfast believer in education. I think this goes hand-in-hand with the boundless curiosity about the world that graphic designers need to possess to truly enjoy the discipline. My thirst for knowledge and ideas is unquenchable, often leading me down paths and trails into unknown territory—this is just one reason I am excited about pursuing a career in teaching graphic design. I hope my work and ideas will inspire my students, and that in turn, their work and ideas will inspire me, creating a feedback loop. The connections and insights that occur in a collaborative studio atmosphere can be both meaningful and powerful—I strongly advocate this type of engagement.

As a teacher, I will expect diligence and excellence from my students. I believe it is my task to help them become capable writers and speakers as well as designers, and to help them develop strong critical thinking skills. Not only do I want to prepare them for their careers in design (be it working for a firm, starting their own freelance business, or going on to graduate school), but I also want to instill in them a passion and enthusiasm for the discipline as a whole. I believe exposing students to many different voices, methods, techniques, design examples and relevant historical context is an important part of their education. Furthermore, teaching students how to discover and articulate **THEIR** problem (the elements and facets that most interest them) in a given design problem will help them succeed as designers long after the novelty of working with clients has worn off.

I plan to approach my classroom as a collaborative expert—engaging and challenging my students to frame their own opinions about their work, the work of their peers, and the work of professionals. I believe teaching students how to articulately discuss design work is extremely important. I hope to facilitate and foster an open studio atmosphere in the classroom to help students share with and learn from each other—creating the conditions for collaborative creative work. However, while my expertise in graphic design is significant, I understand that being an expert in this field is something one must continuously work toward—my design education and professional development will never really be finished.

Assessment of design students' work can be tricky (the perceived subjectivity of aesthetics is always an issue)—but I believe the use of engaging project briefs, reflective writing assignments, rigorous critiques and critical assessment, and open discussions about content and technique can create an environment in which students are set up for success. I plan to present clear rubrics for the expectations of the course and projects at the beginning of each semester, giving the students a clear and articulated road map to follow. Furthermore, I hope to facilitate an open, flexible and positive relationship with my students, encouraging them to discuss problems with me early on when they arise. I believe consistent and frequent feedback supports students in an essential way in the beginning stages of their design education.

I also believe that technology is an obvious and trusted companion for the graphic design educator—not only is it necessary for the students to master (along with fundamental hand skills, an understanding of where our craft has come from, and core theoretical concepts)—but it is a ubiquitous part of young peoples' lives. The savvy educator will harness the power of the internet, online class components like blogs and forums, and the affordances of chat software to not only engage students but to also speak their high-tech language. As an enthusiast of new technology and software, I hope to use current tools in experimental and innovative ways in the studio classroom, continually pushing my expertise to evolve as modes and mediums evolve.

No two students are alike—I plan to treat each of my students as an individual. By helping them discover what kind of learner they are, I hope to equip my students with the tools and abilities required to be lifelong learners. These techniques will help them in their design careers—allowing them to step into the needs of various kinds of clients, and to fully embrace the nuances of complex self-initiated projects. By promoting various types of reflective and active elements and activities in my courses, I hope to create an educational experience that is inclusive and effective. I also believe that experimentation and thinking through making can be a valuable part of a student’s process—by encouraging students to try on different methods of working, I plan to help them find a process that allows them to both think through the problem at hand and effectively make in an iterative and consistent way.

Finally, I am a firm believer in the power of interdisciplinarity. Design can be connected to everything else in the world in many different ways—content is not just a meaningless malleable element to be contained within a striking design. I plan to encourage my students to find connections to design within their other courses, and other interests and hobbies outside of school. By promoting the importance of comprehending context and audience, I hope to help my students understand that great design generally starts with the content and finds a way to effectively (efficiently, delightfully, powerfully) communicate that content to someone else. I believe that today’s designers are often just one expert on a panel of many experts. Part of this changing role is to know how to work with others from very different backgrounds and disciplines. I plan to present my students with projects that ask them to alternatively create their own content (based on a main idea or premise), and to receive or extract content from an “outside” source. Furthermore, thoughtful research and rigorous analysis should also be a part of the beginning stages of a student’s process. I hope that this method will equip my students with the ability to work with clients and companies, and to successfully create self-initiated work—whether they are working one-on-one with a single client, or are part of a large interdisciplinary team.