

A good designer is a thoughtful designer. At its core, graphic/visual design is about communicating, and a designer's role is to make informed decisions that lead to successful messaging. An effective designer doesn't just consider aesthetics but every part of the message: its content, its audience, and its environment, both physical and contextual. As a design educator, I guide learners through both technical processes and critical design thinking, encouraging them to question and challenge conventional approaches. Skilled designers learn the rules in order to break them with purpose.

Every classroom forms its own unique microcosm of students, instructor, content—even physical space—all situated within the larger ecosystem of the department, institution, and the wider world. Instructors must actively read and manage these spaces to facilitate learning for all students. I take this responsibility seriously, working to earn my students' trust by creating a supportive classroom community and striving to create a learning environment that is both structured and flexible, allowing each student to thrive.

Building community within the classroom is fundamental to engaging students. I create an inclusive and dynamic space where students feel safe to experiment and push boundaries, confident that their value is not tied to the success or failure of a single project. One way I do this is by modeling the behavior I expect from them: compassion, honesty, enthusiasm, commitment, and curiosity. I encourage students to actively participate in critique and discussion, and I make sure to validate each perspective shared. For instance, during critiques, I guide students in offering constructive feedback that supports growth rather than discouraging risk-taking. Another way I foster this is through interactive, process-based learning. I work to develop in-class activities that are hands-on and experiential, giving students the opportunity to think-while-doing, and building a foundation of skills and concepts that they will build upon through the semester. A number of my projects feature requirements that students observe or record something found in the world around them. I will often begin this process with a "group walk," getting students out of the classroom and engaged with each other and the environment simultaneously. Group review of observational findings facilitates discussion, and the shared experience helps them build connections with one another. In total the exercise allows students to deeply observe design and the world around them while practicing research related to their own creative work; while simultaneously building their own classroom community.

Exposure to a broad range of perspectives, tools, and techniques is key to developing thoughtful, well-rounded designers. I emphasize learning design and design history beyond the Euro-centric model, inherently contributing to an inclusive classroom and ensuring students gain a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse traditions and innovations that shape our field. I strive to incorporate project elements that create opportunities for students to research and consider a broad range of histories and perspectives. By weaving such histories into the classroom, my assignments challenge students to engage with ideas and reflect meaningfully on their own lived experience and creative process. I help students see how design can act as a cultural and political tool, preparing them for the complexities of real-world design challenges.

Balancing predictability with variety promotes both security and growth, and is essential in creating a stable yet engaging learning environment. I provide clear timelines and expectations to help students manage their workload and stay on track. However, I also incorporate a range

of group and/or hands-on exercises, discussions, and feedback styles (small group critiques, one-on-one sessions, written reviews) to meet the diverse needs of different learners and encourage growth through experimentation. My feedback cycle is iterative and high-touch, with frequent small process deadlines which emphasize progress over perfection. This structure helps students feel supported as they explore their ideas and refine their skills.

Assessment and feedback are integral to my teaching. I begin each project with clear expectations, and utilize design rubrics that assess creativity in problem solving, conceptual thinking, and technical skill. Ongoing critiques in studio classes, whether peer or instructor led, in groups or individually, allow students to refine their work in real time. I also encourage self-reflection, asking students to assess their own process and experience, which fosters self-awareness and critical thinking. By emphasizing the importance of iteration and the role of failure in creative discovery, I reinforce the notion that growth happens through process.

As an educator, I am committed to my own professional development. I eagerly collaborate with colleagues and am always learning new technologies to stay current with the evolving landscape of the design field. I believe that staying engaged in my own learning ensures that I can better support my students' development and help them navigate the changing demands of the 21st-century design profession.

Ultimately, design is more than mastering a set of tools. It is a dynamic process of communication, cultural reflection, and critical inquiry. My goal as a teacher is to foster critical thinking, inspire self-awareness, and ignite a passion for creative exploration in my students. I want them to leave my classroom with not only the skills to succeed as designers but also the confidence to question, experiment, and engage deeply with their work and the world around them.