

Teaching Philosophy

Learning is transformative when students are asked not simply to acquire knowledge, but to **apply, question, test, reflect on, and use it to make meaningful decisions**. In design education, my goal is to move beyond teaching students how to make something visually successful and help them understand why they make particular choices, whom those choices affect, how to evaluate whether those choices work, and how to keep learning as the tools, technologies, and expectations of the profession change.

Innovative design practices should be grounded in research. I encourage students to explore emerging technologies, methods, and forms of communication, but they should not pursue innovation for novelty alone. Research helps students understand people, identify meaningful problems, question assumptions, and evaluate whether a design solution works. I want students to experiment while also explaining, supporting, and evaluating their decisions.

Design is an iterative process: research a problem, develop ideas, test possibilities, evaluate what works, and revise. **Learning works much the same way.** I structure courses around cycles of inquiry, making, critique, reflection, and revision so that students learn through experience rather than simply receiving information. Early in a course, I provide structure through demonstrations, examples, milestones, research methods, and frequent feedback. As students develop knowledge and confidence, I gradually shift responsibility to them. This progression continues into advanced courses such as BFA Design Thesis and Design Portfolio, where students define problems, conduct research, establish processes, defend decisions, respond critically to feedback, and take ownership of their work.

This progression has shaped the way I have revised my teaching over time. I use low-stakes milestones, process-based assessment, peer and individual critique, and opportunities for revision because I want assessment to contribute to learning rather than measure its conclusion. Critique is particularly important because students learn to articulate intentions, listen to perspectives different from their own, evaluate work against objectives rather than personal preference, and determine which feedback should influence the next iteration. The ability to evaluate, adapt, and revise is more valuable than arriving at a successful solution on the first attempt.

Students learn most deeply when they understand that their work matters beyond the classroom. Through **Community Integrated Education, the National Student Advertising Competition (NSAC), professional organizations, competitions, industry engagement, studio visits, and community partnerships**, I create opportunities for students to work within authentic constraints and for real audiences. They conduct research, communicate with clients and stakeholders, collaborate with peers, present ideas, respond to feedback, manage uncertainty, and see their work enter the world. These experiences turn lessons about audience, communication, responsibility, and professionalism into lived experience.

These experiences also change my role as an educator. I see myself less as someone who provides students with answers and more as someone who helps them **ask better questions**. Individual mentorship is central to my teaching. Students enter the classroom with different abilities, experiences, interests, and confidence levels. High expectations matter, but so does providing students with the guidance they need to reach them. My role is to recognize when a student needs structure, encouragement, challenge, or space to discover what they can do independently.

My teaching has become increasingly informed by research into **human-centered design, psychology, perception, behavior, accessibility, neuroscience, and emerging technologies**. I translate this research into innovative design practices and learning experiences that connect theory with making. These areas help students recognize that design is not simply the arrangement of visual elements; it shapes attention, understanding, memory, emotion, behavior, and experience. Research, prototyping, usability testing, observation, and reflection give students ways to support design decisions with evidence rather than relying solely on intuition.

This research-informed approach also creates space for innovation. I encourage students to investigate new forms of interaction, emerging technologies, interdisciplinary methods, and unconventional solutions while continually asking **why** a particular approach is appropriate and **what evidence supports it**. Innovation and rigor are not competing goals. Some of the most meaningful innovation occurs when curiosity and experimentation are combined with research, critical thinking, and a deep understanding of human needs.

Design education must continually evolve. Throughout my teaching career, the profession has expanded from primarily print-based communication to include responsive web design, UX/UI, interactive experiences, accessibility, 3D and immersive environments, and artificial intelligence. I continually study emerging practices through research, professional development,

conferences, certifications, professional practice, and engagement with the design community, then determine what belongs in the classroom. I do not introduce technology simply because it is new. I ask what it lets students investigate, how it changes the design process, what evidence supports its use, and what ethical or professional questions it raises.

Artificial intelligence has made this distinction especially important. Students need opportunities to experiment with emerging tools while also examining authorship, bias, ethics, originality, and human agency. The more capable our technologies become, the more important critical thinking becomes. **Tools will continue to change; the ability to research, question, evaluate, communicate, and learn cannot become obsolete.**

Experiential learning has taught me that education also extends beyond an individual course. Mentoring students through professional organizations, NSAC, competitions, portfolio reviews, research, and industry opportunities allows students to practice leadership, collaboration, communication, and professional responsibility in ways that cannot always be replicated through an assignment. These experiences help students see themselves not simply as design majors completing coursework, but as designers contributing to professional and community conversations.

My teaching follows the same iterative, research-informed model I ask students to practice. I review student work, assessment results, course evaluations, peer observations, developments in research and professional practice, and changes within the discipline, then decide what should change the next time I teach a course. Over time, this reflection has led me to restructure critiques, introduce clearer milestones, strengthen research and process documentation, revise assessment methods, expand community and industry engagement, integrate accessibility and user-centered methodologies, and introduce emerging technologies and innovative practices when they meaningfully advance student learning.

Ultimately, I do not expect students to leave my courses knowing everything they will need during their careers. That would be impossible in a discipline that changes as rapidly as design. Instead, I want them to leave knowing **how to learn**: how to research an unfamiliar problem, seek perspectives beyond their own, question assumptions, experiment without knowing the outcome, accept and evaluate criticism, use evidence to make decisions, adapt when something does not work, and continue developing their knowledge independently.

If students leave my classroom more curious than when they entered, more willing to question assumptions, more confident navigating uncertainty, more capable of **innovating from a**

foundation of research, more thoughtful about the people affected by their work, and more capable of directing their own learning, then I have prepared them for something larger than their first design job. **I have prepared them to continue becoming designers who learn, adapt, and lead. That is the outcome I work toward in every course.**