

Carlie Antes: Teaching Philosophy

As a first-generation scholar, I believe that each student should begin their artistic education with an equal opportunity for growth and success. I continuously strive to employ a rubric that rewards critical discourse, curiosity, experimentation, and hard work—while allowing students to deconstruct and question any prior assumptions about art. In maintaining a safe, honest, and energetic atmosphere, students are able to begin approaching what can often be complex, and sometimes abstract, social and theoretical concepts—with the ultimate goal of actualizing their concerns through artistic practice. It is my intention that all students leave my class feeling confident in their abilities to use tools, work safely in a communal studio setting, solve problems, and continue developing a critical analysis of visual information.

While it is essential that beginning students learn the basic principles of art and design, it is also important that they experience the freedom to make decisions, experiment with unfamiliar media, learn through failure (as well as success), and engage with peers who can offer alternative perspectives. I encourage students to look beyond their individual interests and find significance in new approaches to thinking and making, as it is our diverse viewpoints and experiences that enrich the communal studio/classroom environment. Students are often asked to articulate and refine their ideas while working in pairs or teams during phases of project development. Early initiation of these discussions allows students to communicate their intentions and receive feedback prior to reaching critique—at which time classmates are prepared to engage in a more fruitful dialogue, having been familiarized with the projects of their peers.

I assign projects that are often left open to individual interpretation, encouraging students to prioritize idea generation and specific outcome goals. After performing introductory lectures and practical demonstrations, my role shifts primarily to one of support—providing tools, resources, feedback, and additional demonstrations—as students develop the technical skills needed for solving the problem(s) at hand. I find this approach to instruction typically results in intrinsically motivated students because they are afforded a more autonomous creative experience. Bearing in mind that there is no single measure for what constitutes ‘good’ art, I employ a rubric that ensures individual growth by prioritizing idea development, attendance/engagement, and work ethic—assessing each in addition to the specific guidelines of an assignment (i.e. craftsmanship, size requirements, material usage, interactive, etc.). Therefore, even the student who puts forward a failed experiment, but has worked through the challenges and learned from the experience, is still positioned for success in the class.

I actively nurture a culture of belonging and promote diversity by ensuring all lectures include contemporary artists from a variety of backgrounds. I want each student to be able to identify one or more artist/characteristic throughout a given lecture with which they can connect. This means that I am continually reassessing the art historical canon, and introducing artists who identify as women, mothers, persons of color, LGBTQ+, and neurodivergent—as each have been historically under-represented within the arts.

In Foundation Courses, I work to engage a diverse student body by facilitating discussions that question the binaries, terms, and value systems that can be applied to various fields of artistic study. In doing so, I introduce students to a multitude of artists and their processes—each of which address shared concerns throughout art, craft, design, and their various sub-fields. As students begin to understand the substantial overlap that stretches across seemingly disparate fields of artistic study, they also become able to recognize the useful tools, knowledge, and resources that these practices impart to one another. Therefore, when students leave my class, it is my goal that they should be able to find opportunity and appreciation in all future studio courses and artistic endeavors—while simultaneously developing their independent hierarchy of values.

In an effort to continually maintain an open line of communication, I arrange for two one-on-one meetings throughout the semester. At this time, I review with students their individual performance, grades, and attendance. During these discussions I also welcome feedback, questions, or concerns with regard to the course. Because some may not feel comfortable voicing their thoughts directly, I also offer the opportunity for students to complete an anonymous mid-term evaluation through Canvas. As an instructor, this allows me to make certain that I am addressing the needs of each student to the best of my ability and adjusting the course framework as necessary—maintaining trust and ensuring both individual and collective growth.