

## Teaching Philosophy

My teaching is grounded in my professional experience as an artist and craftsman. Contemporary sculpture is an inherently interdisciplinary process, necessitating the exploration of both form and content, a conceptually driven practice no longer bound to a specific media or tradition. Consequently, I see the sculpture studio as an incubator of ideas, a laboratory for the experimentation and realization of dimensional, visual expression. Within this learning environment, I am more than just a professor; I am a mentor, facilitator, role model, and collaborator.

Art cannot exist in a vacuum. It needs input, and input implies a diversity of ideas, perspectives, and experience. Through visiting artist interactions, slide lectures, field trips, readings, and in-class discussions, I expose my students to the variety of art being produced today. By fostering an atmosphere of intellectual and artistic curiosity, I further task my students to think critically about their product as well as their process, thus developing an awareness of not only how something is made, but why as well. Believing that their conceptual development is as important as their acquisition of technical skills, students in my classes develop and refine critical-thinking, problem-solving, and self-assessment skills, in addition to learning tools and techniques. A significant part of this rests in helping them to learn how to ask meaningful questions of themselves, our society, and the world we live in – questions that often times do not have definitive answers. My job is not to provide answers to these questions, but to help them to understand what makes a good question in the first place. Then, together, we can think through the issues from a variety of informed perspectives before formulating a response.

I am responsive to my students' needs, tailoring my pedagogical approach to fit their level of experience, all the while holding them to a high standard. I do this because I respect my students and their potential. Many do not yet realize what they are capable of. Establishing and maintaining high standards challenges students to push themselves beyond their limits, unlocking hidden talents and creative potential. These high expectations also serve to convey my commitment to their success, the implication being that I take it seriously and they should be prepared to do the same. Through it all, I instill in my students an appreciation for craftsmanship because learning to take the time to make something well is an important lesson that is applicable to every other aspect of their lives.

Understanding that creativity thrives best in a supportive environment, I endeavor to make my students' experiences positive and personally rewarding. I engineer my assignments to be challenging yet accessible, maintain open office hours, and make myself regularly available for studio assistance. I take an interest in their lives, goals, and achievements, and work hard to build relationships of trust and mutual respect. This connection is crucial in the studio setting, where constructive criticism is essential for personal and professional growth. When the students realize that I am just as invested in their success as they are, they are more receptive to my criticism and are less likely to turn a deaf ear or throw a defensive posture.

My syllabi clearly outline all of my expectations. I believe these well-organized documents demonstrate a commitment on my part to enhance student learning by stating clear educational goals, the methods used to achieve those objectives, and the means to evaluate their success. I revise my courses regularly and am not afraid to try out new ideas or innovative approaches, swapping out less effective assignments for ones more closely aligned to my curricular goals or that may reflect advancements in the field. Of course, the most effective way to demonstrate these expectations is by continuing to be active professionally. As a professor who is also a practicing professional artist, I can speak intimately to issues that affect my students with an insight that can only come from firsthand experience.