

*In such a mediated world, imagination itself must be regarded as a social practice.*

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Education is a project of communication, a critical collaboration between students, faculty, the institution, and the community. In the art studio we work to question our most basic assumptions of the way things are, and to develop new possibilities for communication and engagement with the larger culture. This, according to Susan Sontag, is the relevance of art--to oppose the common understanding of our fate. This means developing an understanding of how visual language functions, then guiding students as they develop an awareness of the critical imagination, a place to push language and culture towards new possibilities.

In my classes, I provide a structure in which students become fluent in visual language, proficient in skills and processes, and passionate interpreters of the language in their work and contemporary culture. Ultimately, I lead students to an art-making practice that will question our most basic assumptions of the way things are, and develop new possibilities for communication and engagement with the larger culture.

The courses I design are cumulative with a spiraling curriculum. In the first rung of the spiral, core visual and audio components are isolated and explored for their specific qualities. Projects encourage proficiency with skills and techniques while students develop ways to talk about their work and their classmates' work. Critiques begin with classmates describing the visual components of the work and how it speaks to them as viewers. I ask them to use vocabulary from the assignments to describe what they see, and what they believe was the desired affect.

The second rung of the spiraling course involves critical reading to engage students in contemporary issues affecting their work. Students begin to use the basic audiovisual components to communicate content through their particular subject. In critiques I ask the students to analyze their classmates' ability to convey content as a result of their creative decision making.

In the third rung, assignments guide students toward a personalized experimentation with the subject/content relationship through their specific application of the core course concepts. By this time students begin to know each other very well and respect the individual qualities of each one. It is a great joy to watch as students push one another and then experience excitement when classmates make breakthroughs in their work.

In a typical class period students review each other's work. They articulate their understanding of concepts from the previous week, and see how a diverse audience receives their work. Demonstrations introduce or extend skills and techniques in digital media. A theory segment provides an historical context for the week's assignment including examples of core concepts in art history.

Teaching is one of the rawest practices in which to participate. Students want to learn, they want to know, and they have a natural desire to rebel and transform the current status quo. My job is to fuel their critical imagination, the creative mind prepared with knowledge. Students view old ideas in a new light, yet with grounding in contemporary culture and lived experience. To participate in teaching is, for me, to participate in the transformation of culture.