

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

Teaching, at its core, is an evolving practice—one shaped as much by the students in the room as by the subject being taught. Michel de Montaigne wrote that the greatest challenge in human learning lies in how we educate and raise children. This idea resonates deeply with me as an educator, as my teaching philosophy has been refined through experience across both higher education and K–12 classrooms.

My transition from graduate student to educator was rapid and transformative. After earning my MFA in Animation, I began teaching Art History at the college level shortly thereafter. This experience prompted me to reflect critically on how students learn most effectively. In the years since, I have continued to apply and refine this same teaching philosophy while teaching at the K–12 level for nearly seven years. Across all grade levels, my approach remains rooted in hands-on learning, strong visual examples, guided exploration, and trial and error. I believe students learn best when they are encouraged to think independently, take creative risks, and develop understanding through inquiry and reflection, with structured support when needed.

Whether teaching college students or K–12 learners, my goal has remained consistent: to make art and art history accessible, relevant, and meaningful. In my Art History courses, I often taught a diverse mix of majors and non-majors, many of whom entered the classroom with limited background knowledge or initial hesitation. Similarly, in K–12 settings, I encounter students with a wide range of experiences and confidence levels in the arts. In both environments, I emphasize that art is not isolated from everyday life—it surrounds us through visual culture, media, design, and storytelling. Helping students recognize these connections fosters engagement and builds visual literacy that extends beyond the classroom.

To support this understanding, I regularly incorporate contemporary and popular culture into my instruction. Drawing connections between historical art movements and familiar imagery—such as animation, film, branding, and digital media—allows students of all ages to grasp complex concepts more intuitively. By examining how artists across time communicate ideas, emotion, and meaning, students learn to analyze visual choices and consider how those choices influence perception and emotional response.

My teaching philosophy is grounded in creativity, clarity, respect, enthusiasm, communication, and encouragement. I strive to create a classroom environment where students feel supported, valued, and comfortable participating. I model curiosity and passion for the subject, openly sharing my enthusiasm for art and visual culture. Students are encouraged to ask questions, engage in discussion, and reflect critically—not only to seek answers from me, but to develop confidence in their own ideas and interpretations.

Developing critical thinking, visual literacy, and communication skills is central to my instruction at both the college and K–12 levels. Throughout my teaching career, I have worked with many students who were unfamiliar with research, critique, or formal artistic vocabulary. I provide scaffolded instruction to help students build these skills over time, whether that involves guiding younger students through creative problem-solving or supporting older students in research, writing, and presentation. While memorization of dates or terminology has its place, I prioritize transferable skills that students can apply across disciplines and in future careers.

Since moving to North Carolina, I have had the opportunity to teach a wide range of K–12 visual art courses, including drawing, design fundamentals, digital art, and three-dimensional design. I differentiate instruction to meet the diverse needs of my students, offering enrichment and additional challenges to advanced learners while providing clear structure and encouragement to those new to art-making. I emphasize critique as a constructive and essential part of artistic growth, helping students learn how to give and receive feedback in a respectful and productive manner.

Teaching visual art terminology and encouraging its consistent use is another key component of my practice. Understanding the language of art empowers students to articulate ideas, analyze work, and grow more confidently as artists. Popular culture and contemporary media continue to serve as effective tools for helping students visualize and apply concepts such as color theory, composition, symbolism, and mood.

I am especially attentive to the vulnerability many students experience when sharing their artwork. By displaying student work and fostering a supportive classroom culture, I aim to build confidence and a sense of pride in their creative achievements. Over the years, I have seen how this encouragement leads students to participate more fully and view themselves as capable artists.

What once felt like an intimidating step into teaching has become a lasting vocation. With nearly seven years of experience teaching at the K–12 level—built upon a foundation in higher education—I am committed to guiding students in developing creative confidence, critical thinking, and visual awareness. Whether working with young learners, emerging artists, or general education students, my goal remains the same: to provide students with the tools, context, and encouragement they need to engage thoughtfully with the visual world and discover their own creative potential.