<u>Teaching Philosophy</u>

I became an animation and art professor to share my love of these mediums with others. My teaching philosophy can be summed up in one simple phrase: creating works of art and learning are one in the same. Art influences our lives and impacts the world around us constantly. Animation is an extension of Art. I believe that the arts also play a crucial, and often underappreciated, role in our development. An arts education helps to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills that can help students inside and outside the classroom. Art education gives students the chance to take risks and understand that art making is a constantly evolving process. As an art professor, it is my responsibility to create a safe learning environment where the students feel comfortable to creating, exploring, failing, and learning. I believe that an art teacher is not just a giver of knowledge but a companion and a guide.

For me, teaching is a mutual exchange. The student learns the course content of a particular discipline and the instructor learns how to contextualize the content for individuals with diverse experiences and backgrounds. Improving as a teacher is a cyclical process that involves gathering information, developing means to teach various aspects of art, presenting it in fashion relevant to a particular class, receiving feedback from peers and students, and re-calibrating as needed. Some of the best teachers are those who critically look at themselves and actively seek to improve their teaching strategies through experimentation and feedback.

 For example, I've learned to attend to students' nonverbal feedback (i.e. blank stares, tense postures) to gauge understanding. Rather than just moving forward, I can ask what questions they have and give additional attention to those who need it. I've also learned to present the same information multiple ways to accommodate different learning preferences. When teaching two-point perspective, I draw out the process on the board, bring up a video for them to see other examples of the process, and experiment with different examples before they begin a project. By providing a wider range of experience, I provide more opportunities for students' to learn the material.

I have also learned to employ mutual evaluations of different projects that we complete in class. Near the end of a critique, I distribute paper for students: to reflect on what they learned about the project; to use artistic vocabulary to describe/define their own compositions as well as classmates'; to identify what they did and did not like about the project; and to provide any suggestions for improving the experience in the future. This activity allows me to assess whether students are understanding the vocabulary and the concepts we are covering. At the same time it provides me with feedback about my own work and how I can potentially improve future assignments.

My core belief about learning is that students work harder on projects that are interesting, challenging, and purposeful. I believe that students become more invested and engaged with what they are learning and creating when they can connect it to their own experiences, ideas, and interests (e.g., their culture, their community, pop culture, history).   I have found that students who make their work more personal, develop a stronger piece and want to get more involved in the project. Although their interests give them some initial energy to begin a project, students are reluctant to finish a project if they believe it is too difficult. However, learning is about trial and error. What might have worked for one project may not yield the same results for another. As an educator, I believe in fostering a safe

learning environment that values students' voices, thoughts, and ideas. By creating an environment where students feel comfortable making mistakes or even failing, I can encourage them to attempt more challenging and ambitious projects. Under the right circumstances, challenging assignments increase students' sense of achievement and their likelihood of engaging more in the future. Finally, I believe in giving assignments that will showcase students' work, not just projects that will never see the light of day. In pursuit of that goal, I help my students enter and organize small shows on campus. These may be short pop-up galleries or combined exhibitions with other classes in the Deal and Norton Galleries at High Point University. These shows make the students' want to work harder on the projects, and lets them share the work(s) with their friends, family members, and fellow students. At Forsyth tech, I work with the other professors to get first year students working with the second year students together to make short animation films. Many of the first years have never worked on teams and this not only helps build their resumes, but also their confidence, time management, and teamwork skills. At the end of the semester, I introduced the idea of showing the students' hard work in the theater. This gives them the drive to want to do their best because not only are their teachers watching, but so are their peers, friends, and parents. The look of delight that can be seen on their faces when it is on the big screen is very rewarding. Lastly, in my courses dealing with character design and digital painting, I have started the concept of having the students do a competition amongst themselves on each assignment. During the critique, whomever they as a class feels did the best on the final project gets printed and added as art in the DEA (Digital Effects and Animation) offices, hallways, and classrooms. This friendly competition pushes them and challenge themselves to create the best assignment they can. The class critiques are a great way for the students to bond, give helpful suggestions of what to work on to take their work to the next level, and become more skilled artists.

My view of how students learn parallels the design process preach to students every day. This process entails: **Inspiration** – gathering themes, looking at media, processing ideas, using personal experience, asking questions; **Design** – planning, brainstorming, accumulating research, sketching ideas, making lists of supplies, experimenting to see what works best for their creation; **Creation** - producing the work and revising; and **Presentation** – showcasing their work, critiquing the piece (critiquing their own work, listening to classmates critiques and my own), discussing what can be done to improve and push themselves further as an artist, and respond to questions. This design process helps them to become better artists by making them more thoughtful and intentional. Importantly, this process extends beyond art and can be used in other classes and disciplines.

Many of my students are non-majors and have had little-to-no exposure to art as a formal discipline. By helping them to understand art, its history and principles, I help students to gain a newfound appreciation for aspects of their world they may have never noticed before. One of the most gratifying experiences I have as an educator is learning that a student has bettered their skills with practice, wanting to explore different realms in Animation (ex: originally wanting to do anime but decides to try background artist or 3d Modeling), is continuing to create new works, or is continuing to pursue art even after my course has ended. I want to show students various possibilities of careers in Art and in the Animation Industry in my classes. So, I introduce new or different mediums and assignments, bring in art books from films, and show them as many examples and internships that I can. I believe that students become more well-rounded individuals when they authentically engage with the design process because they are fully engaged in the learning process.