

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

“The highest function of the teacher consists not so much in imparting knowledge as in stimulating the pupil in its love and pursuit”

- Henri Amiel

My philosophy of teaching continues to evolve with each new group of students I encounter. The guiding principle, however, that remains constant is my belief in the importance of a strong understanding of art and how it relates to us in our modern world.

I believe that knowledge of the ancient world and the history of art is one of the most important components of a greater understanding of our rapidly changing world and our place within it. To understand who we are as a species, how we have evolved over the centuries and millennia, to make us better human beings and members of our society, is best done by examining the creations and evidence we have left behind.

I approach each course with a series of goals, which are also the key components of my teaching: to train the mind to observe the evidence, to ask the right questions and to think effectively. I strive to provide my students with a broad understanding of “how” and “why” instead of just “when” and “who”. Students are thus introduced to the intellectual skills that are necessary to understand and develop a visual language, to solve complex visual problems. This way, I aim to instill a desire to look at art, to develop good observational skills, and to recognize their responses to what they are observing. I find the experience of looking at, responding to, and communicating ideas about our world imperative in our development as critical thinkers.

I use many strategies to keep students engaged. For example, I carefully organize my presentations and ensure that all of the images I present are of the highest quality. I also like to incorporate film screenings by using well-produced documentaries to complement the lectures. And whenever relevant, I use objects from the University’s Numismatic Collection to accompany the teaching material. Ancient material culture is not easy to access in Alberta, and for the majority of my students, the Nickle Galleries’ coin collection is the first and only opportunity to engage directly with objects made and held by the ancient people we study. It is always a thrill to see how the coins bring the material to life and how they amaze and inspire my students. In this way, I can provide the relevant cultural and historical background in the limited time that is available. By incorporating different media into my lectures, I feel I am offering students the possibility to fully immerse themselves into the arts and times examined in the classes.

Furthermore, I explore the subject matter by creating an active and open learning environment where investigations and curiosities are embraced and fostered. Students are encouraged to ask questions, which leads them to adopt analytical thinking and promotes problem-solving skills. Another teaching goal is to help students see the connections between various concepts

and how the information they gain in one lecture informs the one that follows. Or similarly, how different courses and topics connect and complement each other. When students see the links between these concepts, they are more likely to continue making these connections outside the classroom.

I strive to be a self-reflective teacher and a problem solver, and am constantly looking for ways to improve and advance my knowledge. By following the newest best practices related to teaching techniques and learning philosophies, I find areas in my approach that can be updated, enhanced and expanded. For example, I tirelessly seek new ways to make the material appeal even more to the students' curiosity, to make better use of class time, and to introduce new instructional tools that further recognize diverse learning styles. I believe that my teaching skills should continuously improve, and I consistently work towards this goal.

Love of learning was the initial reason that led me to pursue my teaching profession, where I promptly became aware of the tremendous responsibility my role held. Every day I work hard to be the best teacher my students and my community needs and desires. With that understanding, the privilege to teach continues to be an enormous source of personal reward and inspiration.