

Teaching Philosophy

People often ask me “When teaching, what are the most important things you want your students to walk away with?” I have spent much time thinking about this question and this is my answer.

I would like my students to realize their importance within the creative class and the significance in contributing economically and innovatively to the larger society. I also make my students aware that interactive art and games have a tremendous ability to communicate to a larger audience and this gives them great power and with this power there is great responsibility. I teach them that concept is the compass for art produced in an interactive and game medium, that entertainment and conceptual depth are not mutually exclusive and that art can change the world.

In order to have a significant impact, the makers of the next generation of interactive art and games will need a combination of practical skills and self awareness.

First, the students need useful skills to insure the success of any project. They are pushed to discover what skills they have to contribute when the time comes to put “rubber to the road” and build a piece of work. They are asked to answer the question, “What tasks can you complete to bring the planned piece into reality?” Additionally, the ability to listen to each other, solve problems creatively, think critically and utilize planning strategies for project management is also taught. They are taught to work iteratively and identify achievable goals to ensure their project’s success. I also encourage them to discover the power of teamwork and balance this power with the joy and freedom of working independently. Working independently goes hand in hand with teamwork.

Second, I foster self awareness and help them become familiar with their creative identity. One of the tactics I use to help the students recognize their creative identity and impetus is to discuss game design approaches. Specifically I introduce the theories of ludology, narratology and my own theory that I have been calling conceptualism. The students are asked to examine their own views and identify what their perception of how a game should be made and why. They are asked to define games and interactive media, compare the two and this is discussed in the classroom. As a result they begin to understand themselves by recognizing their own motivations and perceptions when compared with those of their fellow students. Every student I have taught has had a moment of brilliance when they revealed to me a beginning of their greatness. I spend considerable time pointing out their personal contribution and creative identity so that they begin to see themselves in a new light. It is important to me that they discover that they can be much more than cubicle jockeys. I endeavor to form creative professionals who will be able to marshal the resources they have within to make their contributions count conceptually and economically.

In conclusion, it is my hope that my students be the leaders of the next generation of the interactive and game industry. I work to show them a path to artistic maturity and help them gain control of their medium. I have noticed that as the students grow into who they will become they begin to join the dialogue. When the conversation has two participants and their path to innovative and economic contribution becomes clear, the groundwork for making a significant impact is complete. The amalgam of skill and self knowledge gives the students the foundation not just to survive, but to thrive and lead.