

STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Rondall Reynoso

"The function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason, but with no morals... We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character--that is the goal of true education. The complete education gives one not only power of concentration, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

"The secret of education is respecting the pupil." -Ralph Waldo Emerson

As I have developed and defined my teaching philosophy through years of reflective teaching, I have come to value the two quotes above as resonating deeply with my growing convictions about teaching. I have been privileged, since 2007, to share my life with students. That is, in fact, how I view teaching. The experiences of my life, education, teaching, scholarship, and artistic production shape who I am as a person and an instructor. I am not a prophet standing behind the authority of the lectern bloviating to the disinterested masses. I am a fellow learner sharing the insights, knowledge, passion, and wisdom I have struggled to acquire with my classroom community.

I believe that dialogue and student input create the most dynamic and effective classes. Whether in a seminar, studio class, or lecture course, I encourage students to thoughtfully engage the subject matter and each other's ideas. Through my mixed racial heritage and my experiences living in locations as diverse as New York City, small town Louisiana, and rural California, I have learned that people view the world differently and that these varied perspectives enrich the classroom. The respectful relationship I develop with students pays dividends. On several occasions, former students have expressed that one of the things they appreciated most about my courses was the freedom to disagree with me. Interestingly, this very freedom engenders greater receptivity to and appreciation of the insights and analysis I share in class. My classes are challenging with a significant workload and high standards but students are more open to such an approach when they are shown respect. Further, this relationship is reciprocal. I challenge my students and am challenged by them.

Mastering technical skills taught in a studio class and assimilating a body of knowledge taught in art history or aesthetics courses are both foundational and require appropriate assessment. However, as important as the rote is, deeper application and analysis is indispensable for artistic and academic growth. In the studio, it is essential for the student to learn how to see. The student needs to look carefully and see what is there and not what they assume to be there. In essence, they are learning to see beyond their preconceptions. This approach is equally as valid for drawing a still life as it is in a seminar course. Training the eye is, in fact, training the mind—learning to ask questions and seek the answers. In a studio course, this is accomplished through artistic production while in another course it is accomplished through prose or examinations—two sets of tools for the same end.

I facilitate this two-fold learning by encouraging students to bring questions and answers to the classroom community. In a studio course, this is typically done in the critiques. Students have asked more nuanced questions of the broad problem which the assignment introduced and have formed conclusions in the shape of an artistic project. During the critique, I direct the class in discussion of both the successful and the problematic elements of the solution. In a seminar, I ask students to form questions or comments about the readings which are then used to guide classroom discussion.

In lecture courses, students deliver presentations or lead class discussions on areas of their own inquiry relevant to the course subject matter. In all these cases, the students invest both intellectually and emotionally in the subject matter which heightens their learning potential. Further, they gain both my insights and the insights of their classmates.

I have found that this collaborative approach to education invigorates both my students and me. Motivated students, just as motivated professors, are able to gain as much from the class as they put in.