

Scott R. McMaster- Teaching Philosophy

Visual culture is and always has been an integral part of human society. This is evident 20,000 years ago in the cave paintings of Lascaux, which depict the lives of our ancestors, tell stories and display an interpretation of their world at that time. This ability to conceptualize outside of our immediate reality allowed for tremendous cognitive growth, communication skills to develop which lead to trade and commerce and ultimately allowed us to evolve and progress into societies.

Although photography has existed less than 200 years, paling in comparison to the legendary cave paintings, it is almost omnipresent and now saturates our daily lives with imagery that pierces both public and private spheres, often blurring them seamlessly. Still and moving images have chronicled both everyday life and crucial turning points in human history and continue to do so. The image is, and has been, a tool of propaganda, contributed to the overthrow of governments, brought freedom to nations, determined the success and failure of politicians, corporations and celebrities the world over, as well as being a source of fascination, testimony of culture and evidence of the sheer beauty, elusiveness and immensity of our world. Today, the ubiquity and variety of media tools available to capture, edit and disseminate imagery is astounding, as are the implications for understanding how we produce, consume and share said imagery in a globalized online context. During the course of my teaching I wish to transform students from casual or passive consumers and creators of visual images into active producers, critical thinkers and careful, visually literate consumers of visual and media culture.

Essential to adult learning and development is an engaging environment where students can be motivated, challenged and evolve as individuals. In addition to providing students with the fundamental theoretical and technical skills and tools necessary to achieve the desired course outcomes, I also want to instill confidence, self-awareness and trust. I believe in constructivist, collaborative and student-centered approaches to learning and teaching and feel there is much to be gained each time one enters a classroom, on both sides of the equation. In addition I want students to become creative, self-directed learners drawing from their experiences to express opinions, reflect and guide themselves along the path of their own development.

I have been very fortunate to have taught and interacted nationally and internationally with students from all over the world and this diversity, whether in a workshop, classroom or informal discussion is a great strength to open up our preconceived notions, pose new questions and better comprehend the complexity and multifaceted nature of our cultures, biases and place in the world.

Although I will lead group discussions I think each student also has the potential skills of both teacher and leader, which is why after covering new concepts and technical skills I like students to pair up and review or discuss the topics and brainstorm or mind map, to challenge, build upon or possibly take the lesson in a new direction. Essential to our group discussions will be constructive and critical discourse about the history, culture and politics of art, media and culture as well as the underlying meaning of the artworks, articles or media we consume, how they fit into various frictional theoretical and methodological paradigms and how they impact our daily lives. Part of that discourse will come from selected readings and research, additionally students will also write their own artists'/producers' statements or statements of purpose, to reflect deeply on their understanding, ambitions and critical reasoning with regards to media production/consumption. To begin to analyze and employ self-reflexivity is a difficult but vital part of being an artist, educator or critical media professional.

Assessment in my courses is both summative and formative and can take many forms; online portfolios, presentations, creative works and research projects. Projects are based on individual interests and according to the specific curricular goals or technical proficiencies required. Clear objectives, examples, demonstrations as well as student-developed measurements help to instill personal responsibility and value the learner's input in a shift towards student-centered pedagogy. Beyond mastery of certain media competences I look for change, willingness to experiment and fail and the ability for students to realize their bias, critically reflect and conceptualize in an independent and productive fashion.

Each semester I enter a classroom and know that I will finish having added more to my understanding of teaching and learning. Essential to being an effective teacher is to be a life-long learner and consummate student as well, realizing that one is never at the pinnacle of their skills is a humbling but crucial realization. This is why feedback from students, peers and colleagues is invaluable to evolve as a teacher in addition to participation in conferences or exhibitions and hearing multiple perspectives on familiar and new topics. Upgrading one's skills and training on new technologies is also part of my professional development and personal interest, discovering new ways with which to merge, cross over or elicit transmedia production are particularly fascinating. Each class, each semester brings anticipation for who I will meet and excitement for they will accomplish.

Above all I want to equip my students with the visual acuity and practical skills to take their knowledge of image culture from the classroom and find it validated in their everyday lives in real world applications, to help them become successful and adaptive artists, educators and professionals in our technology driven age of information.