

Scott R. McMaster: Teaching Statement

Visual literacy is essential for global citizenship in the 21st century and art and visual culture have always been integral to human society, as evidenced by the 20,000-year-old cave paintings of Lascaux. This ability to conceptualize beyond our immediate reality allowed for tremendous cognitive growth, leading to trade, commerce, and ultimately the evolution of societies. While photography and contemporary image culture via networked smartphones are relatively recent, both have had a substantial impact on society, positioning image culture as omnipresent in our daily lives. Today, rapid advances in AI text and image generation have poised it to have even greater impacts on our arts, cultural practices, and daily lives, presenting significant challenges to education and creative industries requiring creative solutions and reflexivity. This makes my work as an artist and educator profoundly important because I empower students with visual literacy skills that push them to make impactful art through congruent and individualized creative practices.

Using critical pedagogy, my mission is to transform students from passive consumers to active producers, critical thinkers, and visually literate consumers and producers of art and media culture. I believe in constructivist, collaborative, and student-centered approaches to learning, providing students with fundamental theoretical and technical tools necessary to achieve the desired course outcomes while instilling confidence, self-awareness, and trust. This also means recognizing and encouraging them to be leaders and teachers.

Part of this transformation requires reflexive discussions and critical discourse on the history, culture, and role of art, examining the societal impacts of the ideas we consume and how they fit into theoretical and methodological paradigms that affect our daily lives. Assessment in my courses is both summative and cumulative and takes many forms, such as online portfolios, presentations, creative work, or research projects, according to specific curricular goals and practical skills needed. Building on constructivist, learner-centred principles I aim for authentic assessment that encourages a critical, experiential journey.

Beyond mastery of media competences, I value change, willingness to experiment and fail, and the ability for students to reflect on their biases and conceptualize in an independent and productive fashion. To achieve this, I encourage students to be creative, self-directed, and reflexive, drawing from their experiences to thoughtfully articulate opinions and guide themselves along the path of their own development. This results in more holistic student development and unique creative expression that moves beyond mere subject competencies and provokes critical questions and new perspectives.

To be an effective teacher, I also must be a life-long learner and employ self-reflexivity. This involves a willingness to reassess my approaches to teaching as well as advancing my knowledge by training with emerging technologies such as AI to discover new ways to merge, cross over or elicit interdisciplinary collaboration and production. My vision is to equip my students with the visual acuity and creative practice-based skills to take their knowledge of art and visual culture from the classroom to real-world applications, helping them become successful and adaptive artists, educators, and professionals in our technology-driven age of information.