

**GOALS**

My primary teaching goal is to guide my students towards innovative ways of expressing themselves by helping them master new technology and work through the ideas that drive their projects. I place a high importance on individual expression to impart to students their potential as pioneers within time arts. However, I balance this need to foster individual expression with the skills necessary to successfully collaborate. I find that group assignments encourage student dialog, an important step in developing intellectual arenas. Within these groups, I stress the need for openness to difference, respect, and the importance of compromise.

This atmosphere of openness to difference is further reinforced by the examples shown in class. I strive to promote cross-cultural awareness and appreciation by presenting the work of a variety of artists and cultural producers from different backgrounds. This is a natural progression for me as my own research involves delving into visual culture from around the world. Furthermore, I find it important to show students how globalization and cultural mixing affect the visual and cultural forms we appreciate.

**METHODS**

With the help of a grant, I was able to take a course at the Edna Manley School of Art to further my research into visual culture in Jamaica and the forms of syncretism and cultural mixing that occur within the island. I am currently working on developing a summer course to be team-taught with a professor from the Edna Manley School of Art in Jamaica that has both a practical and theoretical component. We hope not only to look more closely at visual forms within art, religion and popular culture, but also to have students create reflection pieces, written and visual, that are related to the class. Our major collaborative project will involve working with Jamaican students capturing video and sound from the different parishes (sections) of the island. This material will then be used as a final edited video and be inspiration for smaller videos and/or installation based projects involving stills, found objects, collaged video or a collaging of sound with other materials.

In terms of connecting theory with practice, I find field trips to be very useful tools. We are fortunate enough to have a residency program near the Pratt MWP campus. Classes travel to the program to view presentations by artists of digital, video, sculptural or performative installations and works in progress. Guest speakers, including filmmakers, video and web artists are invited into the classroom, demonstrating as much their creative projects as their own artistic personalities.

To further the goal of collaboration I have used a group performance assignment. I have students work together to write proposals as they think through the concepts behind their performance. Some groups may take more serious approaches as they try to comment on areas of concern to them within society, others may take a funny or quirky approach. I have also found it useful to assign a collaborative project with a creative writing class. Students were asked to choose poems written by students from this class and created flash animations inspired by the words of the poems.

To promote critical thinking I require students to create a video essay on a social issue that they find important. This assignment introduces students to "the video essay," what some consider a new genre within art. It also furthers our discussions of the formal, contextual and conceptual aspects of work. Within these discussions such contemporary debates as form vs. content, art and politics and art for art's sake will surface. I supplement these discussions with various writings from artists and theorists surrounding these debates. I find that students really absorb these discussions, and they encourage further self-discovery as students present differing positions, including whether they view their social responsibility as falling within or outside of the work they produce.

I have also developed a sound/video assignment that emphasizes the structural and formal elements of image and sound. Students are asked to create a sound composition from ambient sound recordings. I introduce students to thinking about sound's rhythmical elements along a horizontal axis, and textural elements in terms of harmony with the layering of different sounds on a vertical axis. By breaking sound down into simple horizontal and vertical axes, I make this section of the class less intimidating for more visually oriented students. The visual part of the assignment uses the sound assignment as the soundtrack. Students make image/sound connections based on the soundtrack's mood, rhythm and timbre. An introduction to Kandinsky's thoughts on sound's relationship to color is usually helpful. By having students compose the sound first and then edit stills and video to complement the composition I have them thinking outside of the box. I also require the use of stills so students focus on color, line, shape and form within each of their images. By requiring this I find that students become more observant and aware of formal and compositional elements when shooting motion.

In my experience teaching at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, I have made my assignments open enough to allow for a wide range of student work. They also recognize a variety of learning styles. I present information in different formats. Besides providing projected demonstrations of software techniques, Quicktime instructional videos and handouts are given to students so they can learn at their own pace. Visual slide presentations are used to demonstrate concepts and show examples. I have found that over the years one of my strengths is one-on-one interaction with students. I have continued to balance ways to work with students individually while their classmates work on class projects.

I enjoy meeting with students outside of class and encourage email conversations. I welcome the opportunity to supervise independent projects, and encourage students to submit their work to outside festivals and shows. I have continued to refine my approach through professional, peer, and student evaluations; creative planning; and keeping up with outside resources.

When I see my students getting along, politely helping each other and less frustrated with the inevitable failures involved in the process of working with technology, I know I am on the right track. When my students begin to see themselves as part of a world in which their ideas have potential and consequences, I feel I have succeeded. I find that my job is not so much to teach them as to allow them to learn: from me, from each other, and from themselves. However, just as they learn from me through my presentations, assignments and feedback I am rewarded by the opportunity to learn from my students. I learn from them through their questions, observations and challenges. I also find teaching very exciting because I know that one class's dynamic will be very different from the next and I will have to adjust to each one differently. Each semester then offers a brand new experience.