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Teaching Philosophy

With the advent of the computer, mechanical skills and the process of making some art forms and media have shifted. The computer allows a single individual ease of use from concept to output. While a team is not required to make the art or media, teamwork allows the various components to be broken down so that individuals can concentrate on areas specific to their interests. As an instructor, I am interested in the multidisciplinary approach to art and multimedia. A well-rounded background informs the developer/artist, which in turn informs the concept. Knowing the processes involved is an important first step to media creation.

I see new media as being inherently interdisciplinary. By offering various theoretical, critical, historical, and creative perspectives through visiting artists, fieldtrips, presentations, and examples, the student begins to see the diversity of approaches and processes allowing them to think beyond one prescribed method of development. Fieldtrips can provide information in the practical application of the skills they are learning. I like to expose my students to other media forms. Bringing in magazines and looking at design layout provides the opportunity to discuss how computer interface has changed print design, and how the principles and elements of design still apply to all. Looking at Letterpress type, handmade papers, and broadsides inform the student of historical practices and connects them to the 'modern' computer terminology of layout applications. Research is an important aspect of development. Readings, podcasts, and Web searches are assigned with the goal of informing the student and precipitating discussion of issues and ideas. All are required to document their process of inquiry, development, and final composition through the traditional methods of proposals, thumbnails, roughs or storyboards, artist's statement, and final which can be offered as a presentation to the class or placed in a learning portfolio. Critique allows the student to think critically about their own work and the work of others, to articulate their thoughts verbally, to situate their work in terms of contemporary philosophies concerning media art and production, and to think about how art is received and distributed.

In the classroom, I spend time looking at examples, discuss principles of design juxtaposing one media with another, and contextualize the practice of new media within the historical and contemporary art world. Beginning with the basics, it's important to build upon what's been previously learned. Discussion with other faculty about applications used, assignments, and successes allow me to tailor a course to fit the ladder of learning I use. Students work best when applying skills with concrete results, and assignments are developed with success and student-centered learning in mind. Having collaborative projects, production schedules, flow charts, and deadlines help to establish working skills they'll need in a multimedia production setting. It's especially vital to begin to develop team skills, because multimedia is rarely done in isolation, and the notion of individual artist fails quickly when faced with the often short deadlines of multimedia.

I want to prepare my students for an array of possible jobs that they may be taking when they graduate. While some students will have a specific focus and job duty, many of the jobs available to graduates of interaction design are jobs where employers expect them to do a little bit of everything. In my own experience, I can say that I've never had an art or development job where I've had only one role; therefore I believe a broad education provides the best opportunity for achievement in the production world. While the students are somewhat aware of multimedia through commercials and the movies, there are a wealth of other areas where skills in this realm can be put to use, so I like to inform my students of the variety of work being done in the field of multimedia, and discuss the skills needed for those areas. For example in training videos, skill in sound design, lighting, scripting, storyboarding, and editing are required. The same can be true of Web development, where interaction varies from linear and hierarchical to free flowing, and multi-modal. New technology allows for streaming video, audio, and animation, which highlight time-based storytelling, community, and interaction. Using the computer classroom as a studio environment, students are encouraged to bounce ideas off one another and work together, facilitating community, and empowering the student's relationship to technology. Students are asked to discuss thumbnails with one another and may be given projects with a team focus that allows all levels of students to gain skill and learn new techniques. By allowing for collaborative work, the student develops the capacity to work in the production style work environment they will most likely encounter today.