

Statement of Teaching Philosophy, Scheiner

My teaching is based largely on two premises: first, that imagination can be strengthened through practice, and second, that art education needs to be firmly grounded in material process so that students have a tangible means of evaluating their projects as they progress. From specific material-forming techniques, to resourcefulness in research, to critical rigor—whether theoretical or actual—I emphasize the significance of experimentation and discovery at all levels of study. Furthermore, as a way of connecting their work to other aspects of their lives—as well a means of self-enrichment—I stress the importance of identifying sources of inspiration outside of the field.

I engage students in class by presenting lectures on a wide cross-section of contemporary artists; conducting group discussions of student source research; providing in-class technical demonstrations; and leading field trips to local museums and galleries. Outside of class, students work individually on assignments that help them generate their own original research relating to material, concept, and site. In addition, they are given reading and writing assignments that explore contemporary art issues.

My courses provide numerous opportunities for discovery and development while moving students forward so that their work will have ample time to evolve. For each assignment I schedule a series of formal reviews—not only of finished work, but of project proposals and research presentations as well. These reviews identify important stages of development and ensure that students work in a well-paced manner throughout the semester. In addition, regularly scheduled group critiques and one-on-one student/faculty consultations strengthen critical thinking and provide a useful forum for dialog. They also provide a means of confirmation that students are in fact, engaged and evolving.

I believe each student is a unique individual with great potential. By the same token, a particular group of students will always form a class with a distinctive character and for both the individual and the group I set a high standard. At the same time, I consider myself an equal and strive to create a forthright and respectful classroom environment—one that fosters trust; that encourages experimentation; and that embraces both successful and disappointing outcomes as essential learning opportunities.

Michael Scheiner, 2012