

### **Teaching Statement – A Shared Sense of Humanity**

Art does not exist in a vacuum. As designers, we must interpret the historical context, expectations, audience, and global currents that influence the art and its presentation. By investigating the intention of these elements alongside visual research, we can develop a vocabulary that articulates a distinct stylistic voice that produces vivid storytelling. This is the cornerstone of my design philosophy, an exploration that starts anew with each project, and I would love to bring students on that exploration.

My primary objective as an educator is to help young designers find their stylistic voice, a voice that is confident, articulate, and aware of the world around them. That voice allows them to communicate a visual vocabulary and style through collaboration and technical execution. Providing a safe community, encouraging productive failure, facilitating discourse on global themes, and implementing inquiry-based projects for self-guided learning form the bedrock of transformative design education.

Risk-taking is a cornerstone of my teaching pedagogy; the work in the classroom is never about getting it right. It is always about diving in and discovery. Past students will tell you I am fond of saying, "I will never fail you for failing; I will only fail you for not trying." I am committed to empowering students to navigate setbacks and harness them for personal and professional growth. I encourage students to venture beyond their comfort zones to help them discover their design voice and style. Designing in and of itself is a process of trial and error; I aim to prepare them for a professional workflow by making space for that dynamic in the classroom.

In the classroom, I like to combine inquiry-based learning with project-based assignments. Project-based assignments mimic the design process to help students become more familiar with institutional practices and allow students to develop a professional workflow. Combined with inquiry-based learning, I encourage students to use observation, investigation, and discovery to express higher-level questioning that mimics an informative and comprehensive design process. This helps students become invested; Invested students can take greater ownership of their education and explore topics they are passionate about learning.

In addition to fostering a safe community and empowering students to fail and grow, I believe in illuminating connections to help students discuss more prominent global themes. Art doesn't happen in a vacuum, and it requires me to evaluate art's relationship to cultural currents to help break down complicated social issues and uncover a shared sense of humanity. Embracing universal themes of humanity, I search for ways that design can counter the ever-increasing pace of a technology-driven world to leave space to process the emotion in our work. This is an ever-evolving journey, not to exclude technology from the theatrical space but how to use it, as Jean Rosenthal would say, to affect the audience, not become an effect. Each design is a fantastic opportunity to explore these concepts, an exploration that will help my students and me continue to hone our design aesthetic.

With a better understanding of their aesthetic, coupled with a confident and global voice, I know my students will be able to become successful professionals.

**DEI STATEMENT - Welcome the discomfort, be bold in change, and love the growth.**

As a designer, I am committed to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion (D.E.I.) with the single tenant that all voices deserve to be at the table and heard. I have woven a series of reflective practices and inquiries into my design process to accomplish this. These principles underpin my aspiration to contribute to a more diverse and equitable design community while guiding my approach to D.E.I. topics within educational settings.

**Reflective Design Process:** I systematically assess my voice within the design process and its impact on the community it serves. A critical evaluation of how my experiences and perspective influence the design table allows me to recognize potential biases that may affect my interpretation of production materials. These assessments extend throughout my design process, ensuring I make inclusive choices in material selection and community representation. Moreover, I advocate for expanding this perspective to the technical side, ensuring that technical documents are crafted for maximum accessibility and serve as agents for education and equity when collaborating with production staff.

**Continuous Refinement and Reevaluation:** These inquiries are the foundation for each design process, evolving through continuous refinement and reevaluation. As an educator, I recognize that D.E.I. begins with self-reflection. Regular assessments of my syllabus and teaching materials for implicit biases and periodic surveys gauging students' interests enable me to identify opportunities for diversity enhancement. This proactive approach empowers me to include diverse viewpoints and subjects, fostering an inclusive educational environment.

**Decentralized Classroom Strategy:** Decentralizing the classroom is a crucial strategy, along with inquiry-based learning, to transfer some elements of control from the instructor to the students. I categorize materials into core concepts, supporting materials, and project assessments. While core concepts remain stable, project assessments adapt based on student feedback. For example, mid-semester assessments informed changes to course materials in my Opera THET328 Class at the University of Maryland. Responding to student interest in socially oriented operas, I adjusted supporting materials while maintaining core concepts. This approach empowers students to choose projects aligned with their interests, integrating feedback and creating an educational environment responsive to the evolving needs of a diverse student body. While this process can start with input from students, I need to be the one to do the work in making classes more varied and inclusive, not the students.

**D.E.E.P. Lens for Inclusive Teaching:** Finally, I utilize the D.E.E.P. framework as a lens to create a more inclusive classroom environment. I consistently DEVELOP inclusive language for use in class. ENCOURAGE open and honest dialogue while I EMPOWER students to share their viewpoints through the lens of their cultural diversity. Additionally, I create space in the class and within projects for students to PROCESS information, reinforcing it through course content. This approach is where my teaching philosophy and D.E.I. statement converge as I establish a safe learning environment and foster diverse cultural currents in the classroom.