

## CHRISTINE HEUSNER: TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

As a professor, I seek to create an inclusive learning environment where students can develop their creative, innovative, and critical thinking skills. I encourage investigation and research in the classroom and strive for a diverse approach to a topic or subject. I facilitate learning about a topic from a variety of perspectives discussing intention, technique, audience, aesthetics, interpretations, technology, history, and variations.

### *Creative Investigation*

Whether I am teaching a creative arts or a graduate research course, creative investigation is an important skill in learning and developing as a student, professional, and person. I encourage students to explore ideas, share concepts, and attempt new techniques. I believe that investigative learning leads to artistic insight, innovation, and development of vision. In an experimental topic course developed with two additional faculty members, Smart Textiles, we delivered diverse course content to a group of eight students, two graduate research assistants, and two undergraduate research assistants. The course focused on integrating functionality and aesthetics into clothing to create dynamic and interactive communication in otherwise static imagery. Through this experimental work, we discovered innovative ways to incorporate intra-disciplinary research into the classroom as faculty from three different backgrounds worked with students from 6 unique majors across art and STEM. All students were required to go out of their own area of expertise, push their creativity, rely on each other for information, and explore undocumented practices to discover their own vision in a smart textile project.

### *Critical Analysis*

In the classroom I provide students the opportunity to analyze, critique, evaluate, and adjust. The classroom is an environment where students can afford to push themselves further, discover both their strengths and weaknesses, and develop their own unique set of skills and aesthetics. I think it is important for students to receive critique from me, their peers and through self-reflection. I engage in critique and evaluation with my students in a variety of ways including verbal, written, group, and individual. Students learn to evaluate process, technique, aesthetic, objectives, audience, and goals. In each class I also try to bring in an outside voice to provide evaluation to the students on an in-progress project. Outside reviewers have included alumni, professors, archivists, and industry or community professionals. By providing students with exterior feedback while they are still working through ideas, they gain experience in presenting in-progress work and its intention to someone outside of the project. This activity also allows me to work with the student in processing the review and incorporating adjustments and feedback into their work as they move forward.

### *Collaboration*

I believe in a collaborative environment in which students can learn from each other. I facilitate learning through a variety of methods including demonstrations, critique, reading, lecture, presentations, out-of-classroom experiences, research, and both individual and group work. I encourage both inter and intra-disciplinary learning. In my Magazine Publishing course students work together as a class to build a cohesive and forward-thinking publication for an on-campus client. The class of 12-15 students must plan and execute the project together. This project requires strong communication, accountability, planning, critique, negotiation and work ethic. The classes have had incredible success with the project and having their work shared at conferences and published publicly as an outcome of the project.

### *Comprehension*

I seek for students to have a rounded understanding of a topic or theme and promote associations between students' work and other makers, artists, professionals, traditions, theories, or applications of work. I ask my students to understand concept, rationale, context, audience, approach, and required resources in their project work. As we approach a topic or project in the class, students are incited to do research and/or creative investigation in their work. Projects in my course often begin with students submitting a proposal. This is a way for the students to own their idea and think it through carefully as they begin the project. It also allows me to understand their concept, guide them in areas of confusion, and proactively support them in their work.

### *Communication*

I want my students to be able to effectively communicate with clarity in their expression of an idea verbally, visually, and in the written form. They can have resolve in their intentions and processes and understand where they stand in the history and tradition of imaging and the visual and graphic arts. In every class I teach I require some form of discussion, presentation, critique, and both short form and long form writing.

As many resources, experiences, and influences affect my approach to teaching and learning, I hope to aid and inspire my students to practice life-long learning. I hope to give students the creative vigor, technical foundation, and inspiration to use the information and experiences they have to make their own distinctive and constructive contributions to society.