

Erik Austin Deerly

Teaching Philosophy

It is a privilege to teach—one that offers a great reward to the instructor and the student. The student's duty is to continually strive to gain a better understanding of self, of purpose and of chosen discipline. It is the teacher's responsibility to foster that endeavor. To that end, the instructor must provide a safe environment, where the student can be coaxed from their comfort-zone and closer to a mindset of discovery. I teach both fine and commercial art; both technical and conceptual subject matter. An interdisciplinary approach fosters a strong foundation by building upon existing strengths and experiences. In theory, this approach continuously applies methodology and language from multiple disciplines in order to examine an issue from many vantage points. In practice, the student learns to create links; laying the groundwork for original thought.

I strongly believe in a diverse student population that reflects the world in which we live. It is the teacher's responsibility to create an open learning environment for all students, reinforcing the notion that differences and challenges can be made into strengths and tools. In The School of The Art Institute of Chicago's Visual Communications Department, many classrooms are predominantly comprised of students for whom English is a second or third language. For some, historical references, metaphors and analogies are less effective. I often practice subjective learning methods—Constructivist—where I adopt the role of facilitator, helping the student to gain their own understanding of the content. Employing this method, the learner plays an active role in the learning process. I make use of technologies (videos, websites, electronic presentations, headphones, Podcasts) and traditional strategies (field trips, guest lecturers, student-led discussions, collaborative work, competitions, demonstrations) in order to engage the students in the five recognized learning styles—Visual, Aural, Physical, Verbal, and Logical.

I have developed a set of rubrics for every course I teach. They are used to measure the learning objectives stated in my syllabi and are also shared to better communicate my expectations to the learner. I have been involved in heated discussion with my peers regarding the subject of the tardy or absent student. I do not set out to punish those who do not attend a class, however I will not allow the progress of the class to be curtailed in order to repeat a lecture. I combat this by adhering closely to the syllabus, communicating regularly via web portal and email, promptly returning graded material, providing an open-door policy to those who need additional help, and by allowing a student to earn extra credit for work that goes beyond the rubric.

Students are the ambassadors of the school. They will leave the classroom but will never cease being a student. It is the role of the teacher to lead by example and to instill a sense of personal and professional responsibility. I am aware that my success is rightly measured by the success of my students. I am not always the preeminent learning resource. I challenge students to join me in active involvement and participation in professional and artistic organizations that reinforce our class work and prepare us for the rigors of work in our chosen fields. This is my urgency as a teacher.

(Source: Downloaded directly from <<http://erikdeerly.com/about/teaching-philosophy>>).

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