

Katherine Rhodes Fields
Teaching Philosophy

My philosophy towards education bases in five objectives that are also components to a strong work of art: concept, process, technique, criticism, and results. The ultimate goal for me as an educator is utilizing these five objectives to create a strong foundation with which my students can build a creative repertoire for future endeavours.

When teaching beginning level courses within my focus areas of printmaking and photography, I allow the students to become familiar with the facilities and tools associated with the processes. Safety instructions/lectures always begin the semester for the students. A safe studio environment is a comfortable one in which to work and learn. Mutual respect for fellow students, their supplies, and the instructor takes high priority in my classroom environment. I enforce this attitude by means of example. Respect for material, studio, and the persons involved create a grounding atmosphere that sparks great amounts of creative energy.

Once the environment is set, the class will involve themselves with the work at hand. A calendar-based syllabus outlines my curriculum for the semester. I find that by handing this out on the first day of class, the students recognize my expectations of them (which is always high), what they need to do to complete the course, and what is involved in the course.

A list of assignments utilizing different medias increasing in technical and conceptual difficulty follows the calendar with an all class critique ending each assignment. Once the students learn the basics of the media, I feel they can then push ideas further as well as push the media further. As the old adage states, one must learn to crawl before one can walk; it rings true for studio-based classes. Critiques also follow the saying. As each assignment grows in difficulty, I push the students to think more critically and more constructively as the semester wears through the year.

Examples derived from slide lectures, independent research, and instructional lectures play an intensive role accompanying the five objectives. By looking at Old Masters, New Masters, and Contemporaries, the students can see first hand how all five objectives working together create a strong work of art. The use of sketchbooks as a collection of research and notes on instruction perform as a measuring stick for the student's growth in the class and a reminder for them of their thoughts during that time. I encourage the use of the Internet for research and look for students to involve themselves in competitions, art exhibitions, and critical writing.

My enthusiasm towards printmaking and photography also plays a vital role in how I perceive my role as teacher. I am passionate for art making and share this with my students, exciting them to reach goals in the creative process formerly assumed off limits to them. I am an experimental artist who, with a very traditional background in the studio arts, is not afraid to explore new and exciting ideas within the realm of art or academia. By affirming the use of concept, process, technique, criticism, and results, I can help my students build firm foundations for a creative life.