

Teaching Statement

I believe, as a media scholar and educator, it is my responsibility to engage students and support their learning toward three primary goals: (1) To establish an understanding of the basic processes involved in creating digital media (2) To establish a set of vocabulary and a means by which to think critically about design practices and fundamentals within the contexts of history, culture, social science, and political science (3) To develop the skills necessary to locate, understand, and synthesize research as a means of informed inquiry and of creation. These goals are meant to meet students where they are as natural consumers and creators of digital media, but also to extend the measure by which they situate their innate knowledge and use of media within more scholarly and professional contexts. My ultimate aim is to prepare students for professional positions outside of academia while also imbuing them with the theories and methodologies required to be lifelong critical thinkers.

Given my goals for students, I organize my courses in such a way that learning is treated as a process rather than an outcome. In my process-based classrooms, students are provided with three attempts to complete every assignment and receive qualitative (in the form of comments) and quantitative (in the form of a rubric score) feedback for each attempt. Within this structure, students are more willing to take risks with their work. Furthermore, within this structure, students learn that a first draft is exactly that – a starting point from which better work will emerge. As they will learn in the professional workforce, students in my classroom come to understand that “one-and-done” media production is both lazy and dangerous. Forced to reflect on their own errors or missteps, and to correct them, my students learn to be better critical thinkers and more aware creators. Students are receptive and appreciative of this pedagogical approach. As one student remarked on evaluations, “[Prof. Joyce] was very prepared and accessible to the students and created a dynamic learning environment instead of one that felt like a rigid instruction plan. She always gave detailed feedback and it was clear that she spent time reading student work and tailoring each response, feedback, or critique.”

In addition to treating learning as a process rather than an outcome, I believe students not only learn best by doing but that they learn best when they are invested in what they are doing. In order to optimize my student’s investment, I permit students to identify their own themes and topics when creating media products. In my Digital Content Design courses, for example, most of my students are majoring in Game Design or Animation. Under those broad parameters, I ask students to identify a theme. Students then work within the context of this theme all semester. The benefits of this approach are myriad: students are naturally interested in researching and completing assignments because they have an invested and personal interest in the work; students conduct deeper and more meaningful research when asked to sustain a theme over an entire semester; students reflect on how assignments relate to and build on one another; and finally, students appreciate the trust and respect I offer them by allowing them to follow their own pursuits.

Of course, while I encourage students to invest in their own interests as a means of practice, I also utilize class time to establish common ground and to discuss the methodologies, processes, and

theories students must use and consider while working on their independent projects. As my courses typically meet twice a week for 75 minutes each, I use the first session of each week to engage students in theory and analysis. Students are assigned readings and are expected to come to class with a set of critical questions about the readings. In these sessions, I employ a broadly Socratic approach, guiding the discussion, but allowing it to happen organically. In the second meeting of the week, I begin by revisiting our discussion from the prior class and add in any essential information or context that was glossed over or missed in the previous session. In this way, I emulate the critical and reflective thinking I expect students to have regarding their own conversations and writing. Following this reflective introduction, I reserve the second half of this class period for media production. Students are given time to commence work on their independent projects. While they work, I circulate and give each student a few minutes of individual attention and feedback.

Commenting on how I structure my courses, one of my Digital Content Design students remarked, "I enjoyed the relevant discussions and the way that Professor Joyce encouraged the class conversations to flow freely. I think Professor Joyce did a great job of providing examples...with a variety of sources. She offered relevant examples and information I otherwise wouldn't have known about. I also think that she supported students...with constructive guidance. The information taught was very pertinent to our lives currently." Another student from my Writing and Research in New Media class similarly remarked, "I really enjoyed the layout of this course and the instruction from the professor."

Finally, I use my own research and professional experience to inform the class. My research approaches media with an interdisciplinary lens and from a variety of approaches. By opening discussing numerous ways to approach research and thinking, I expose students to the hidden complexities of any and all topics. I urge them to think critically about how their own methodologies and approaches to topics welcome saw audience while potentially closing off others. As media creators and scholars, I expect students to be conscious creators who are self-aware of the decisions they make as well as the implicit and explicit audiences and messages they construct in their processes.