

Tamara Cedré
Teaching Philosophy

Process Driven Inquiry

The formal and technical aspects of art-making are important, because they articulate ideas. However, empowering students to value their unique way of seeing and learning is critical to their future careers. This introspection is cultivated when students are afforded a wide berth for discovery and experimentation.

Learning is an act of freedom and responsibility.

How we come to knowledge, and the choices we make as artists affect our society at large. Learning is often a process of unlearning and relearning. Awareness of this freedom, with an understanding of the responsibility of our choices, is something I aim to cultivate in the classroom.

Student Centered Learning

I strive to provide a range of experiences for my students so that they may make connections that will assist them in synthesizing their own concerns beyond the classroom. Through student-centered learning, I often present real-world scenarios for discussion and kinesthetic activities which reinforce the concepts we are learning. This could take the shape of solving a design problem we see on a scavenger hunt or blogging about the ethics of photography as it relates to a current event in Photojournalism...Taking the temperature of their interests and learning styles is vital to resonant lectures and labs.

Points of View

Equally important to cultivating one's personal vision as an artist is the skill of developing an appreciation for other points of view. As visual communicators, I encourage my students to draw from their own experiences to create resonant works of art while valuing the stories and expressions of other cultures found in cinema, literature and music. This sensitivity to others is critical to challenging their own assumptions and being in conversation with the rest of the world.

History + Contemporaneity

In every course I teach, from foundations to upper division, I challenge my students to place their work and ideas within a historical context. Using contemporary media (social media, digital photography, etc.) is enriched by understanding its place in history.

Studio Practice

My practice is directly influenced by my teaching, as students represent the shifting climate of artists newly entering the field of photography. Their rich questioning keeps my inquiry relevant. Being conversant in this discipline means, outside of my studio in Redlands, I make it a priority to visit spaces to view work, read journals and blogs, and cultivate a personal community of artists and other academics I can learn from. I encourage students to do the same. Like so many artists who have shaped my own education, I try to exemplify what it means to be disciplined in my practice for continued success as a maker and thinker.

How do these ideas take shape during a given class?

- My engagement with Critical Pedagogy at MICA has informed the way I structure my lessons and the readings I assign in classes. I have had marked success with teaching courses like Photo History, introducing less formalist canons, Socratic discussions and trying to present vernacular examples to students that are relatable—privileging everyone as having a unique voice and experience.
- When possible, I like to create at least a few assignments that are self-guided and open. An esteemed professor of mine once said that, “we don’t teach lessons, we teach students.” I believe that after the fundamentals have been understood, an allowance for critical decision-making is important. When teaching studio and design courses to adults, I find that individual projects allow for students who are self-guided the room they need to work, while other students who may need more direction, are afforded one-on-one instruction upon request. In larger seminars, assigning group work or teams for discussions has been an effective method for keeping this personalized dynamic.
- Keeping a record of responses, contemplations and continued investigations is important for an artist. In my classes, I assign blogging, reflection journals or sketch-booking that is weighted equally with their final assignments. Having a record of this process, and valuing it, is vital to their respective fields of study.
- These ideas are always changing as my praxis grows and student feedback shapes this philosophy. But it is my sincere hope, that each learner I am privileged to work with, will encounter visual art as a way of understanding and that these skills will harvest a higher order of thinking that will translate to other areas of their life.