

JASON MOORE

EDUCATOR | CREATIVE PROFESSIONAL

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

My approach to teaching was formed out of my own student experience and an effort to create an environment of belonging and empowerment where students can discover their own visions and voices and put them to use in the service of others. Growing up, I was always the new kid in town struggling to find my place, often retreating into myself because it was better to be invisible than to stand out and potentially invite the unwanted attention and judgment of my peers. I was fortunate to have had many teachers who were able to see through to the real me and celebrate what I brought to the table, turning often stifling situations into safe spaces where I could thrive. My senior physics teacher, in particular, connected with me and stressed the importance of context and how everything - and everyone - plays a necessary role in the grand scheme. For him, it was about more than the science, it was a recognition that every individual has value and potential regardless of, and because of, where they come from and who they are. My parents - a nurse and a multi-hyphenate storyteller - instilled in me a deep sense of service and a call to make a difference in the lives of others. These key points inform the philosophy and approach I use with my students, giving me a drive to build up not only their skills but also their sense of self and purpose for the greater good.

BELONGING

Fostering an environment where students feel safe enough to express themselves and be who they are is foundational to the learning process. I work to set up a classroom where fortified personal walls are unnecessary to enable students to both allow content in and let creativity shine out. A constructive, welcoming setting releases students from fears of judgment and frees them up to ask questions, share ideas, try new things, and find their place.

Each person that comes through the door carries their own struggles, challenges, and strengths that inform who they are, how they interact with each other, and how they approach the subject matter. The creative fields can be very isolating, placing a lot of pressure on students to feel like they need to be able to do it all on their own either to prove to their classmates that they deserve to be there or to others and, ultimately, themselves that they are good enough. This often leads to them either spreading themselves too thin or taking it so much harder when they fall, only adding to that sense of isolation. On the flip side, it is also true that the creative industry is highly collaborative. As students discover who they are they can begin to envision where they fit. Through paired or group work, team building exercises and "big picture" conversations students are able to engage and connect with each other beyond the subject matter.

I start each class with an "Around the Room" to get everyone contributing. It is generally a question that does not have anything to do with the lesson for the day so that there is no pressure related to being right or wrong. It could be an abstract photo of an object, a "would you rather" or "what would you do" question, or a quick game to break the ice, share opinions, think outside of the box. As students respond they are able to see the validity in the midst differing interpretations of an image, share a laugh, take sides in the Pepsi vs. Coke debate, or form alliances as they form their strategies for the coming zombie apocalypse. By starting off with an innocuous open-ended discussion, students can let down their guards, work to overcome fears of speaking in front of a group, and feel more comfortable participating.

I see it as my role to create a community in the classroom where each individual can celebrate the complexity that is their unique self and then empower them with the tools they need to not only create from their own perspective, but to understand that their perspective has value and is needed to help others have a more complete view of the world around them. In my classroom I work to be a calming presence and I am intentional about highlighting strengths and supporting growth, not for the sake of increasing grades, but for encouraging a learning mindset where self-improvement is a worthy goal in and of itself, which will, in turn, benefit our audiences.

EMPOWERMENT

I recognize that every student receives information and instruction differently in more or less effective ways, at different paces, and requiring a variety of supplemental supports to make it all happen. By meeting students where they are and individualizing their learning experience I can guide them on their own paths rather than trying to force them to fit into a predetermined idea of where they should be.

Curiosity and the willingness to make mistakes is a key element of educational success. The difference I have seen in my students over the years has been that those who are more willing to pull at the thread to see where it will lead and who will try anyway even if there are seemingly insurmountable obstacles in the way are those most likely to grow in their skill set, find new ways of cross-pollinating concepts and ideas, and evolve into something entirely new and exciting. In a day and age when most students will respond to a question with blank stares - even if they know the answer - it is those who raise their hands even if they might be wrong that catch my eye because they are demonstrating a quality that has become all too rare in education, yet it is vital for student success: engagement.

The techniques taught, software used, and practicum experienced will not only give students the tools they need to perform throughout their careers, but the confidence they will need to adapt and thrive. By guiding my students towards mastery of the tangible elements of design and visual communication, I seek to remove the hurdles of technology so they can become the drivers of innovation themselves.

In my classes I create projects and assignments that are focused on concepts and tools so students may learn the software while also giving them the freedom to execute the project as they wish. It is the combination of technical skill instruction and the flexibility to apply their own direction and interpretation that empowers students to take ownership of the project, build confidence, and fan the flames of their passion. In addition, it is a core element of Career and Technical Education to connect the classroom with the community in order to better prepare students for work in the industry. I partner with local non-profit organizations and businesses to provide my students with projects that will be put to use in the real world where they can actually see the results of their efforts.

To further this goal, I founded Graphikos, a student design studio at Broome-Tioga BOCES. Requests are submitted to the studio and I appoint a student project manager to assemble a design team, meet with the client, develop the design brief, and see the project through from start to finish. Instead of just working through an assignment, these students gain experience communicating with clients, honing their leadership and teamwork skills, while also getting a taste of the pressures that come with working under a real deadline on a project that will be seen by an actual audience. I serve as the creative director to provide guidance as needed, as well as final approvals before submitting work to the client, so students can feel empowered and supported as they form the skills they will need once they graduate.

I wholeheartedly recognize that teaching is also a learning experience for me. I am always seeking out new opportunities to learn and expand my own skills so that I can continuously find fulfillment in my career and so that I can always be a relevant resource for my students. I want to lead by example through my own drive to be better than I was yesterday and encourage the "I don't know, but I'm going to find out" model of actively seeking greater understanding. The software and technology we use in the creative industry is constantly changing and it can be daunting for even the seasoned professional, let alone the fresh-faced newcomer. It is my job to keep myself up to date with the latest advancements in the technology to enable and empower my students to take it to the next step. I do not put too much of my ego into anything I do because I know that it's not about me, it's about being a better technician and a better storyteller for the sake of those I am tasked to serve.

SERVICE

When my nephew was born in September of 2002, I was in Shanghai, PRC looking for a gift for him, not knowing yet that he had just been born back home. I wanted to get him something more than baby clothes or a toy, I wanted to get him something that had meaning and he could carry with him throughout his life. Inside a little shop, I found a simply framed proverb that translates to, "Grow up to be a useful person." It was exactly what I was looking for and it speaks to not only my hopes for him - and, now, also my own children and students - but the deeper call of interconnectedness and how I see my own purpose.

At the heart of everything we do is stories. We all have a story to tell, it speaks to who we are, where we are from, and our vision for the future. There are many parts to our story, and many audiences, which means we need to reach out across multiple channels, in different ways, to meet the audiences where they are. To hit home. To make a connection.

Throughout my career, my job has always been to help others tell their stories. I have helped religious and nonprofit organizations touch the lives of their people, I helped introduce new technologies to the world, and I have played a part in developing, supporting, and maintaining clients' visual communication strategies. My work has focused on the individualized needs of my clients and making sure they felt heard and supported. And now as an educator I give people the tools they need to succeed. The common threads through all of these chapters in my career - as well as every volunteer position I have held - has been storytelling and service. I have been the beneficiary of the generosity of time and guidance of those who have come before me and I am dedicated to paying that forward to those who will come after.

Over the years I have produced training videos for various outlets including Pearson, Envato, and Photofocus. I served as the subject matter expert, lead author, and editor for a distance learning course for the New York Institute of Photography, and I have produced, and continue to produce, the web edition videos for multiple editions of several titles in Adobe Press' Classroom in a Book series, all in an effort to reach out and be a resource for those looking to grow.

Through my example and helping my students discover a sense of purpose within themselves, I strive to place service at the heart of everything that we do in the classroom so they might move into the greater world to make a difference for others as well.