

## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I can't outline a teaching philosophy without acknowledging the fact that the North American education system is undergoing a profound transformation. The scenario in five to ten years is likely to be completely different from what we've been operating in so far.

Tuition fees keep growing while income and employment rates decline resulting in widespread youth indebtedment. As the global power balance shifts to East Asia, the Government tries to react with a massive mobilization toward STEM education (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), an effort that often involves disparaging the fields of art, humanities, and social sciences. Meanwhile, the private sector is leveraging the current crisis to push for reductionist "solutions" such as Massive Open Online Courses that are, de facto, encouraging the de-founding of public schools, creating of a two-tier education system, and de-valuing the profession of teaching.

We have no reasons to believe that Carnegie Mellon University will remain unaffected by these changes, as if it were a happy island of privilege. We also shouldn't hope for things to stay exactly the same, since higher education, as it is, is unsustainable and increasingly exclusionary.

Teachers ought to reaffirm the value of face to face interaction while taking advantage of, and contributing to, the proliferation of educational resources online. In my case, game pedagogy is still a fairly uncharted territory and it's essential to engage with an international community of practitioners: sharing syllabi and strategies, comparing pedagogical experiments and approaches, and so on.

Conversely, we should emphasize the importance of being in a real place together (which is, luckily, an exciting, livable, booming city) and constantly look for ways to burst the campus "bubble".

Connecting with the local community and the surrounding urban context is not a sentimental civic duty, but a way to enrich our students' practice with a variety of experiences and perspectives. Way too often our undergraduate work reflects an homogeneous upper-middle class background mediated by commercial pop culture: how can we expect them to go beyond it if their entire existences are spent between a dorm and a studio?

How can we give our students, both BFA and MFA, the means, the connections, and the reasons to stay in the area and thrive after graduation? Other departments have business incubators or direct pipelines to local employers. How would an art incubator work?

I don't have the answers to these questions but this is what I've been thinking about since I got hired on tenure-track.

In this longstanding, possibly structural, economic crisis, and amidst the mounting utilitarian/militaristic rhetoric of STEM education, art schools must be able to demonstrate the importance of artists in society.

Art education is not a playground for rich kids nor a lottery ticket for the swanky world of professional fine artists, but rather one of the few remaining laboratories of human resistance against the violence of capital.

Our main concern should be to create compulsive out-of-the-box thinkers, professional disruptors, carpenters of Utopia.

Especially in the field of digital arts, the role of an artist has to be in dialectic relationship with mainstream commercial culture. Higher education

should provide students the theoretical tools to understand and question the dominant discourses surrounding technology.

Coming from a social hacking background, I have learned to not consider technological artifacts as politically “neutral”. I always try to put emphasis on the deconstruction and transformation of those artifacts.

In my courses I strive to combine history, theory and practice in the most compelling way. We are interacting with a generation of over-stimulated, attention-deficient multitaskers: our primary challenge as teachers is to fight boredom in the classroom. The way a lesson is presented is as important as the content itself. I propose a mixture of frontal lectures, discussions, screenings, in-class demonstrations and oral critiques. I like to juxtapose pop culture and fine art to question the boundaries of artistic practice.

I'm constantly experimenting new approaches to game design pedagogy. Games and videogames can be seen through a multitude of lenses and throughout the years I learned that it's impossible to give a comprehensive overview of the medium and its various production tools; so every semester I propose a different focus: the social and relational aspects of games, storytelling through interaction, or the role of interfaces in play.

In regard to the forthcoming concentrations in media design and the minor in game development, I'm looking forward to bring a much needed theoretical and experimental component to an otherwise extremely technical path. As we speak, the game industry is experiencing major tectonic shifts and the worst disservice we can do to our students is to train them to work in an environment that won't exist for long.

Alumni often lament the lack of teamwork in our school so I'm planning on implementing more collaborative activities to cultivate non-cognitive skills that are crucial in most workplaces. I'm also experimenting with tighter feedback loops during the creative process, that is: allowing more opportunities for dialog during the ideation and creation process as opposed to the traditional "post-partum" critiques.

In conclusion, I found my teaching activity to be extremely beneficial to my artistic practice and I want to keep them informing each other. Working with some of the brightest minds around is not only extremely inspiring but also a constant challenge: it encourages me to stay in touch with the latest technologies and with the ongoing critical discourse, it forces me to a continuous self-reflection and meta-reflection (what am I doing? What are we doing?). It can be anxiety-inducing sometimes, but it's well worth it.