

TEACHING STATEMENT

In the decade I have been teaching at the university level, my teaching philosophy has expanded from a strong commitment to inclusion and collaboration to developing design curricula that explicitly addresses and incorporates anti-racist and critical pedagogy.

Through my courses, I try to shift students' perspectives of what the practice of design can entail. Because of the intertwined and inseparable relationship of design and culture, and because designs are generally considered to be created for human consumption, it is essential for future design practitioners to be aware of their biases. By coming to terms with biases, we can begin to understand how to move past them in order to avoid incorporating negative biases or perpetuation of racism into design work. I, therefore, consider addressing these competencies as part of my responsibility to my students, to the design profession, and to the general public—anyone who may be an audience for design work.

To be sure, this creates some discomfort for some students; some are not expecting this kind of framing or type of challenge within a design course, but that discomfort is often a sign of potential growth. I demonstrate respect for all students by meeting them where they are individually. However difficult it may be, though, it is essential for students to gain a holistic view of the world and how their work fits into it, and to see beyond the limited definitions or preconceptions of creative practice they bring with them from high school. As such, I set high expectations for my students in the classroom and beyond.

INNOVATIONS & INCLUSION

Since coming to Stamps in 2017, I have challenged myself to address an interdisciplinary population of students within the context of a School of Art & Design, both on undergraduate and graduate level. I have experimented in many ways and continue to grow as a teacher based on the expert advice available at the University of Michigan and since 2018, have worked with U-M's Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT) to conduct formal observations. I have also consulted individually with two CRLT experts, and participated in five workshops and seminars to continue my own learning about effective teaching.

As a discipline, user experience designers are systems thinkers who have not necessarily been taught to think about systemic racism. "Principles and Practices of Anti-Racist Pedagogy" (CRLT workshop Fall 2019) encouraged me to further incorporate my commitment to allyship into my courses. For example, in one of my classes I introduced a semester-long activity around shared understandings of systemic racism, to generate a list of "truths we confront" about design as related to systemic bias. We referred to this list in multiple discussions throughout the semester, and as an active Google Document. It was not an easy class to teach. However, at the end of the semester, I was pleased to see that teams embraced explorations of socioeconomic diversity and raised important questions about equity, access, and inclusion through their interaction design research and project outcomes.

In my Typography course, I used a Stamps Inclusive Teaching Grant to foster a rich dialogue between classmates and an opportunity for multilingual students to bring their language skills into the design classroom. Creating an activity and lecture to expand awareness beyond Latin-based character sets, contributed to students' understanding of modularity in typographic systems beyond their familiarity with the English alphabet including asking students to bring and share visual examples of non-Latin languages in use. As many of the students in the class grew up speaking or reading non-Latin languages, several of them enthusiastically shared examples with personal meaning to them. Many students expressed that they felt included and invited to utilize these skills in ways they had not experienced before.

APPLIED & COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

I am also committed to amplifying my teaching through partnering with others and enabling students' learning outside of the classroom setting, especially through applied learning. These values came together in my Winter 2020 Interaction Design course, particularly after the campus shut down. COVID-19 forced me to quickly find an alternative to our scheduled partnership with Michigan Medicine. I saw an opportunity for my class to contribute to the UX research for the creation of Stamps' commencement and exhibition website (stampsgrads.org) involving the Stamps Communications Team and a professional web development firm. The class conducted competitive analyses and in-depth interviews surveyed all graduating undergraduate and graduate students; and coded, analyzed, and presented findings to internal groups and external design experts. I am proud of what the class was able to achieve. In the midst of a moment when we could not see or speak with each other in person, my students learned that the interaction aspect of Interaction Design is about creating conditions for humans to have meaningful connections. My class experienced, firsthand, that the quality of human connection and collaboration are both essential to the creation of design—an outcome that is one of the key goals of my teaching.

As I reflect on who I have become as an educator since joining Stamps, what matters most to me are the quality of relationships, engagement with students, empowerment through action and dialogue, sense of humanity, and contributions to community. I strive for students to learn that design reveals our values more than we realize and, fundamentally, that design is about relationships. After more than eight years of prior research in collaborative online intercultural learning (COIL), I am still constantly humbled by uncovering new ways in which I can grow as a teacher. I continue to experiment in creating safe spaces for my students that will empower them to address perspectives of diverse audiences and users in their work.