

# Teaching Philosophy

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Teaching in design spaces is paired with the notion of fostering a collaborative space under the conditions of collectivism and common ground. I want to center conversations with my students around *participation* rather than consumption. I direct dialogue and critique with a focus on the maker and user that remains open-source. Students' most prominent memories and learning experiences are not inside of a lecture hall; they are on outings to other places, sharing food at numerous art openings and shows, and working alongside each other after hours. While I develop the curriculum for the Design Department, I want to turn to what I have learned about sensorial experiences in an educational design space.

Collaborating with artists, designers and scientists gives way to the most transformational experiences. Making opportunities for students to collaborate in workshop-style settings and collaborate with diverse practitioners impact students' time in an academic environment. Education is a socializing experience but never a neutral process. It “either functions as an instrument used to integrate new generations into the logic of a present system, or education becomes the means by which students are allowed to deal critically with reality.”<sup>1</sup> I believe in moving design education towards creating shared and collaborative narratives that participate in the transformation of their future.

Pertaining to my area of expertise, interactive media and graphic design shape the way we accumulate our beliefs about the world and ourselves. As a design researcher, I have studied extensively how digital media reflects communities' behavior and ideas around truth. To be a designer of media means carrying the responsibility of taking care of and being trusted with sensitive information, including data. I think it is important to teach examples of *audacious hacking* that serve as interventions to critical issues for justice and equality rather than for profit and gain. The term audacious hacking is used to describe a method of creative coding to spark an audience to boldly and critically analyze various social issues. I believe in helping students craft their messages out into the world while remaining neutral. The content created by students contributes to the ebb and flow of conversations that need to occur. In lecture, consistently showing impacts of sustainable digital growth and decline amongst communities pave the way for meaningful design prototypes.

My teaching philosophy has developed after teaching several courses in interactive media and graphic design. In the course *‘Coding for Designers’*, the main objective of the course is to learn practical skills in programming and learn principles of both generative and interaction design. The first half of the course includes building skills and completing a series of screen-based static and animated imagery that

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<sup>1</sup>Johanna Lewengard (Konstack, Stockholm)

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includes interactive elements using the mouse and keyboard. Each building block project includes process documentation, including pseudocode and sketches. The second half of the course involves directed skillbuilding towards a final project to fulfill one or more objectives of three available options. These objectives include creating compositions based on simulated patterns in nature, exploring generative design as a means for studying aesthetics throughout history, or formulating an interactive narrative experience or game as a form of social intervention and messaging.

*'Graphics and the Computer'* is a foundational course in graphic design where students study gestalt principles and 'rules' of design as well as how to break them. Not only do they present non-eurocentric graphic designers and talk about how their work is situated on their own on a weekly basis, but there is a continuous conversation around aesthetics and radical design through digital media. One of the projects that students often describe as their favorite is a digital zine to be printed out on a printer sheet of paper. They conduct research and follow a rigorous ideation process. They are encouraged to make the zine's focus on social issues surrounding justice, cultural issues, mental health, and sustainability.

*'Interactive Media I'* is a foundational class for web design. Students learn front-end coding skills from the ground up while also reading articles and writing blog posts about digital media in the information age. They explore topics around digital justice, media's impact on culture and society, and apply what they learn to web-based interactive design. The final project includes a digital narrative adventure where students research and apply interactive elements to a web-based experience towards a directed topic.

Education is a process of change and transformation; 'it is about being approached with new ideas and gaining new perspectives otherwise which would be left uncharted ideas while adapting practical skills'<sup>2</sup>. But this takes effort towards collective thinking and shared knowledge within a group. I ask myself as a teacher: how can I spark wonder, reverence and active listening? Designers occupy a volatile position in society. I strive to provide a space for young people to thrive in a discipline which is increasingly hard to describe and follow. Design isn't about just forms and objects; it is also a practice surrounding beliefs. I want to challenge my students to use design to figure out what matters to them and use it 'as a tool as an emancipatory instrument'<sup>3</sup>. Design education should challenge and unsettle social, political, cultural, and economic ideas and prejudices.

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<sup>2</sup>Annelys De Vet (Alkmaar, Netherlands); Towards a Political Sensorial Design Education, "Design Dedication", 2020.

<sup>3</sup>Annelys De Vet