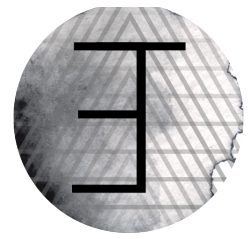


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## Teaching Statement

Institutions across the country have been making great effort to recognize and encourage diversity. It is essential in creating a vibrant community capable of progressive discourse and innovation. Diversity itself is a multifaceted concept spanning across ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, citizenship, ideologies and many others, all of which should be considered when designing courses. The way that I consider course materials is to cultivate an inclusive community by examining work from diverse artists and creating a safe space for students to understand and define their individual voices. Diversity is a natural driver of innovation and when properly explored, it can lead to important discoveries, evocative experiences, and remarkable works of art.

Meeting the learning needs of a diverse student body can be challenging as each student may require any variety of approaches, validation, and encouragement, but with this challenge comes many opportunities. It sets the stage for meaningful and honest discussions, tempering the students minds and developing productive approaches to critique. It demands research into the lesser known corners of animation history, many times leading to new discoveries of marginalized innovators. Instead of cultivating homogenized animation approaches, attending to diversity promotes an expansion of media process, style, content, concept and voice. By emphasizing the individual, the student's work deepens and enriches in artistic value.

In designing course curriculum, it is important that a diverse array of voices is expressed, heard, and validated. By curating animation and media examples from a broad range of artists spanning the spectrum of this ubiquitous medium it is demonstrated that the power of animation lies not in uniformity but rather in its multifaceted diversity. Cultivating a safe space for minority classes and opinions is paramount. Encouraging students to frame their diversity as a unique creative perspective expresses the value of their differences and promotes confidence as well as safety. One concrete approach used to achieve this is to implement the *progressive stack* method in class discussions and critiques by ensuring that marginalized or minority groups have as loud a voice as majority groups. Economic diversity also plays a major role in designing course material. An awareness of the complexities of paying for higher education can help tremendously in encouraging risk-taking and innovation. Using class funding wisely and shifting the burden of in-class activities, materials, and field trips from the students to the institution encourages more participation and enthusiasm.

As an adjunct instructor at the Kansas City Art Institute I had the opportunity to teach and work with students of vastly diverse sexual orientation and gender identities. As an institution, we worked to celebrate this diversity by implementing several quality-of-life initiatives on campus. Firstly, several restrooms throughout campus were converted into unisex restrooms creating a safe place for all students. Secondly, we created a system in which the students could register their preferred pronouns which were then printed on the class roster in order for the professors to address the students appropriately. Finally, several counselling resources were established and promoted to the students, giving them additional support as they continued their studies. All of these initiatives worked to help students as they discovered liberation from their sometimes fraught and unsupportive home situations, thus giving them the ability to focus more on their research. I personally saw a general uptick in the overall happiness of my students as well as a fall off of major stress levels which effectively allowed the students to create more compelling animation projects. This simple effort of validating students' identities made incalculable differences in their lives.

Diversity is the substance of innovation. I have seen for myself how instrumental diversity of every kind can be for the development of novel concepts and artistic breakthroughs. Creating an environment of inclusion with an emphasis on listening is the key to breaking down stereotypes and social barriers. Every voice deserves an equal footing in carving out this artistic landscape of the digital epoch. It is together in our multifariousness that a synergy emerges in all things creative.