

TEACHING

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I came to Graceland as a practiced teacher. I taught as a graduate student at the University of Cincinnati and began as an adjunct at Fairmont State University in Fairmont, WV immediately after receiving my MFA. After a year, I was offered a “full time adjunct” position in at Shepherd University in Shepherdstown, WV, where I taught 12 to 15 credits a semester, held office hours, and attended committee meetings for several years (no benefits or tenure possibilities). The University was eventually pushed to repeal these special adjunct positions, and all part-time instructors were reduced to 9 credit hours or less. In a way, this opened up new possibilities for me to become the Gallery Manager at the University’s *Phase 2 Gallery* and pick up 9 additional credit hours each semester at Hagerstown Community College in Hagerstown, MD, as well as an art history course at Barbra Ingram Highschool, a magnet arts high school in Hagerstown, MD. The 8 years of experience prior to coming to Graceland gave me an opportunity to build a resilient, robust, and agile teaching toolkit. These experiences afforded me an opportunity to work with students from different socio-economic backgrounds and skill levels, and taught me compassion and flexibility. I am grateful for those years, and am now thankful to be able to focus one hundred percent of my efforts in one community here in Landon.

Graceland has given me the opportunity to grow as an educator and semi-administrator. Because of the size of the Art Department, and my role as Department Coordinator within it, I have been able to help make and see real change in curriculum, something I wasn’t as attuned to or afforded in my previous positions. My experiences teaching in the studio prior to Graceland was largely focused on BFA majors where the majority of students practically lived in the art studio and easily met the maximum requirements of the class. One of the most exciting aspects of teaching at Graceland is the challenge to meet the needs of non-majors and majors in the same studio course, and to really challenge all students to see how they can become life-long visual problem-solvers. I have entirely rewritten some of my courses to focus on intensive conceptual development where students of any major can be challenged through multi-disciplinary divergent research, risk-taking, trial and error, idea development, visual problem-solving, and creation. I’ve collaborated with professors from across disciplines in these courses and many of them including Dr. Dan Platt, Dr. Tim Robbins, Dr. Teri Foster, Dr. Dave Devonis, and Dr. Mary Shawgo have graciously taken the time to lecture in my classes. This restructure is in its second academic season, and I’ve heard praise from non-majors who took part in the pilot season! I’ve already seen an improvement in research skills and critical thinking from our majors as they enter upper division courses.

I teach my students that art in contemporary society does not come from art, it is not cannibalistic, but rather it comes from experiences, research, collaborating with engineers, sociologists, historians, musicians, thespians, and activists to bring their work out into the community and to advocate for marginalized persons. Art is a form of communication and all persons need the ability to verbally and visually communicate, problem-solve, and think around limitations. I teach that art is not insular, and that collaboration across disciplines makes for richer work. Collaborating creates a situation in which students must clarify what they often take for granted, thus crafting better arguments and eventually more effective solutions. I approach my teaching in much the same way.

I love my academic community here at Graceland and their willingness to become more agile in the quickly changing climate of academia. I am thankful for the space and time to share research and pedagogical methods formally and informally with colleagues. After participating in pedagogy workshops at the CETL, I have a renewed love and respect for digital rubrics and have implemented them in almost all of my classes on Brightspace. Giving students concrete goals and teaching them that they have agency in the evaluation process has afforded a measurable benchmark for both me and the students in studio classes, which are sometimes thought to be completely subjective. Through

feedback, I've also learned to be more precise in my expectations and evaluation for studio students. I've also begun to reconsider the nature and role of homework as it relates to the ideas of critical thinking for our students. By assigning cross disciplinary resources and homework that pushes beyond factual gleaning, I have seen my classes engage in deeper multifaceted conversations and reach more profound conclusions in class as a result.

Born out of a desire to flip the Art History classroom and create a more student driven learning environment, I found a role play based pedagogy called Reacting to the Past (RTTP). RTTP is a series of elaborate games set in the past in which students are assigned roles based on and informed by classic texts. After some research, I found one of the pioneers of RTTP was a history professor at Simpson College, Dr. Nicholas Proctor, who graciously met with me to see how I could integrate this high impact practice into my Renaissance to Modern Art History class. Proctor is the co-creator of a game called Art in Paris: 1889, which explores Impressionism and the World's Fair of 1889. Students become Monet, Van Gogh, Mary Cassatt, Renoir, Degas, and Seurat (among others) for three weeks to fight for freedom and liberation from the French Academy! During the game, class sessions are run entirely by students, while the instructor guides, advises, and grades the speeches and papers students have given and written throughout the game. Because the students took to the game so willingly, I started to integrate more of these games. One student wrote this in response to "building the Duomo" in Florence: "First of all, I strongly believe that games are interactive activities that should be more utilized in the classrooms, because they offer a dynamic way to learn the materials in which every person can be into their roles and enjoy the scenes. . . the game was so incredible for me that I did extra art history, professional development research on the construction of the church as well as about the city Florence in the Renaissance time." My students and I have been working on writing two additional games, one on controversial art in the 90's and the other on the photographer Sally Mann. We have played both here on campus, and hope to send them out as a free resource once refined.

Because I am a socially engaged artist, I've been excited to introduce a socially-engaged specific course to our curriculum that focuses on community assessments, mapping, social justice, global thinking, and civic focused engagement. The course has students look at social equity with works that extend beyond the studio to the wider campus and town communities. I've seen passion levels rise among students, greater engagement between campus and community, and am seeing students tackling issues in their home communities as a result.

As teaching responsibilities are my primary responsibility here at Graceland, I was honored to be nominated for the 2016-2017 Alumni Excellence in Teaching Award, and am grateful to have been considered among my other colleagues for the prestigious accolade. I look forward to challenging, affirming, and helping our students find their version of success.