SF SARAH FLAHERTY

403 Broadway / Rochester, NY 14607 / 585.330.7372 / sarah@sarahdolan.com

Teaching Philosophy

I focus on **challenging, inspiring and stimulating** my students while fostering a safe and open environment that adapts to how students learn. Through lectures, reading and active participation, students gain the confidence needed in the field of design. I stimulate growth in my students to be motivated, hardworking and independent learners. Creating complex but achievable goals during the assignments allows the student to push their talents to the next level. During the design process I ask them to rely heavily on inspiration, brainstorming and sketching. They are required to create a considerable number of thumbnails, sketches and roughs before even opening a design program. By showing the students process books created by their peers and design professionals, I am quickly able to demonstrate to the students that more imaginative and experimental designs begin with pen, paper and exploration.

CHALLENGE

A student's time enrolled in academics is about exploring and growing as artists and individuals. I foster this exploration through my teaching methods by pushing the student to become a more critical thinker. Teaching them the rules of design and pushing them to question the results encourages exploration and innovation that is so important not only during their time in academics but throughout their careers. Giving novice designers a strong foundation in design history will prepare them for their professional careers.

INSPIRE

My passion for design and teaching has brought me to academics. I utilize my broad background as a graphic design professional in the classroom by pulling from my own experience as a designer–working in an advertising agency, corporate in-house and freelance. This background has given me a unique point of view allowing me to effectively prepare students for their future in a professional environment. I have firsthand experience of what the field is looking for in a designer–what they expect from their portfolio, talents and expertise. I develop projects that can be used to develop their skills but can also be featured in their portfolios.

STIMULATE

Graphic design is about communicating. It's about interpreting a message and being the amplifier for that message. Designers have the unique power to persuade their audience, to modify their current and future behaviors. Graphic designers are the mediators between the audience and the message. Designers need to be historians, theorists, critics, researchers and educators. I encourage responsible design by putting more emphasis on teaching culturally and socially responsible design to students. I think by focusing on the importance of understanding the symbolism of all design elements they will join the workforce with the right tools for creating effective designs. I push my students to research and fully understand all their design elements as these can directly affect the audience. They need to be taught ethics during the design process.

I encourage my students to make their own elements, to push the envelope with their imagery, text, colors and messaging. In my classroom no idea is a bad idea, because all their ideas are building blocks for the final product. I teach them that every design is a unique opportunity to develop their problem solving skills. All projects foster critical thinking, which makes for the strongest designs.