

The foundation of any design is the concept. Conceptual thinking can be difficult for new students who aren't used to thinking about design. I endeavor to spend a great deal of time introducing my students to various creative brainstorming techniques including wordlists, diagrams, sketching, rapid prototyping and more. The Agile Movement is of particular interest to me in that it eschews traditional sequential methodology and promotes flexible thinking based on collaborative effort and iterative design. While this methodology began in software development, companies such as IBM have adopted and applied it to their creative teams with great success.

In addition to process, the development of open and honest critical discourse in my courses is an essential part of my pedagogy. There is a certain fear attached to critique, that I aim to eliminate. From the outset I let my students know that they can expect frank, constructive feedback from me and that they should also provide the same level of feedback to themselves and their peers. Agile design thinking is particularly suited to this type of challenge. I have found that having students work together to rapidly concept, revise and reimagine obstacles helps them build trust with me and with one another.

Every project or task in my classroom is chosen for its learning potential. I try to closely simulate real-world problems and provide opportunities for students to investigate, experiment, assume responsibility, take initiative, make decisions and be held accountable for results. Outside of the classroom, I also encourage students to seek paid internships that align with their career goals, to join professional associations, and to participate in portfolio reviews and mentorship opportunities. It is through this variety of experiential learning activities that they learn the skills they need for real-world success.

Finally, it is very important for me to be forward-thinking. Design is constantly developing - it is important for me to stay current and know how the profession is shifting. While some principles are indispensable, some may no longer be relevant or new ones may be on the horizon. Many design educators refuse to learn or teach interaction design simply because they don't like it or because it is challenging to them personally. I believe that as educators we can't marry ourselves to ideas and methods that are outdated and ineffective just because we aren't comfortable with them.

Ultimately, my teaching philosophy relies on four things: thought, discussion, experience, and adaptation. As Paula Scher stated, "It's through mistakes that you actually can grow. You have to get bad in order to get good."