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Hand Sewing & Mending

Center for Continuing & Professional Services

Reflective Teaching Portfolio-June 2020

***\*Teaching Philosophy***

Handwork is the backbone of every cultural sewing philosophy. I believe that

everyone can benefit from learning the art of hand-sewing. Additionally, I surmise the students

(private individuals and certificate students) enrolled have a desire to be challenged, not in a combative way, but within a creative space. The students receive the challenges with the understanding that they are the ‘master’ of their needle and thread- they are in control of results. Predating my teaching assignment, when I was a guest lecturer/speaker (on the high school and college level), it became immediately apparent that today’s students were born into a visual society, where imagery resonates more than the spoken word. Embracing this reality, I displayed multiple samples highlighting the correct and incorrect manner of achieving the desired results.

At the time of my initial introduction to the class, I speak on my multifaceted career, engaging the students with stories of current-day celebrity interactions and how my craft has taken me around the world. Thereupon, allowing me to remain relevant in the eyes of younger generations, while emphasizing the importance of skill. In the first session, I have the students introduce themselves and give a short bio. I find this exercise allows assimilation among strangers. During the course, I challenge them with the salability of their work, intensely expressing that handwork is the fundamental method of artisanship in couture. Additionally, I instruct the students to train their eyes to be observant. I encourage them to question what exactly delights or disturbs them (a detail, a hemline, or any other aspect) about a garment, then examine why they had that reaction. I suggest that students viewing You Tube tutorials create a visual field of at least 4-5 tutorials for re-evaluation, comparison, and perspective. This exercise, I believe, will result in a more adept awareness of skill level while allowing each student to scrutinize their work, in their own time, outside of the classroom.

***\*Have you ever observed a master teacher?***

As a young man, recently out of school, I was extremely fortunate to have worked alongside the old country tradesmen that migrated from various parts of the world onto American soil and employed on Seventh Avenue, the fashion capital. That level of tailoring and patternmaking remains a relic of the past (with all due respect to its current incarnation), that degree of mastership has long disappeared along with any semblance of the garment industries glory days. Armed with the skill and knowledge obtained from these master tailors, craftsmen, and technicians, I continue to pay homage through my work.

***\*Successful lessons***

Embracing the diversity of cultures, languages, and ages in my classes resulted in a re-examination of the traditional teaching methods. Undoubtedly, my visual demonstrations were exceedingly advantageous yet, I have found music to be the one common denominator. Introducing a calming, stress-reducing, and subliminal factor in the satisfactory completion of class assignments. I recall one student whose apprehensive temperament was apparent upon entering the classroom, who later became self-assured and confident while listening to the music associated with her homeland. Upon leaving class that evening, she was extremely congratulatory for the ‘comforting environment’ created by familiar music. The jaw-dropping exhilaration of an older student who completed an assignment she once deemed pointless was another triumphant moment. Overall, my most successful projects are the ‘sewers choice’ segments, when I allow the students to complete their tasks utilizing any of the applicable techniques that were taught in class. I find this exercise allows their creativity to flourish on what could be considered a ‘mundane’ undertaking. I have discovered the unsuccessful lessons are the same that were victorious in other classes. Despite the structure of the lessons (beginner, intermediate, or advanced), the skill level of any incoming class is always uncertain. Taking that into consideration, I have always maintained a collection of relatable and engaging projects for the array of students.

***\*Technology***

The incorporation of visual tutorials into the class will allow each student to learn at his/her own pace. The features contained within this online platform can only result in a positive experience for myself and my students. The ability to create ‘folders’ within Blackboard is another compelling aspect. Categorizing the visual information, in a designated timeline to coincide with the actual class demonstration is a gratifying concept. With the inclusion of Padlet, I see a vehicle for student growth. It allows each student the opportunity to view the image(s) as seen through the eyes of nonidentical classmates, allowing the students to collectively participate in an open discussion on the varying cultural perceptions evolving around the image(s). Undoubtedly, this format will present a challenge to some of my students who are easily intimated or overwhelmed by technology. Be that as it may, I believe a slow, informative introduction and transition to this platform can be introduced to those students. I see incredible opportunities in presenting my class remotely. Of course, this will not override the intended purpose of the class or lessen the need for technique but, it will amplify the experience.

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