



Susan Palombo – Reflective Teaching Portfolio – July 23, 2020

Classes I teach:

PK354 – Packaighn Design Strategy

PK319 – Packaging Design Studio

DD114 – Creativity & Aesthetics

1. Define your teaching philosophy.

I believe that my role as a teacher is to not only educate the student on the subject matter at hand, but to also inspire, empower, challenge, and transform how they think of the subject matter in the context of the world at large to prepare them to be the future leaders and innovators. Additionally, I believe that part of my role is to prepare them for “real-world” career situations, so I use teaching methodologies that model and build the soft skills, such as teamwork, presentation, communications, and trust.

2. Have you ever observed a master teacher? If the answer is yes, what do you recall most from the experience?

I don't believe I have, but I always remember the very few teachers who were game changers in my own experiences as a student. Their approach wasn't about them telling me what I was supposed to learn. Instead, I was an active participant in a dialogue of the subject matter, which made the classroom experience quite stimulating. In retrospect, I believe they taught me how to think by challenging me with penetrating questions and conversation.

3. Give a examples of your most successful lesson. Why do you feel it was successful?

I would say it was when I decided to have the students decide what the next project would be vs me giving them the project assignment. To begin the process, I conducted a full class brainstorm with all 25 students, and managed through idea generation, filtering and finally, selection of project assignment. It took a lot of extra preparation for me, however, the student enthusiasm, participation and ultimately the buy-in to the assignment was off the charts. I realized their having more of a say in the class content gave them more ownership in the outcome. That was a real eye-opener for me since it wasn't just how they performed on their actual project, it was me realizing how engaged they were in that first 3 hour brainstorming class where they walked away full of energy and enthusiasm.

4. Do you have an example of an unsuccessful lesson? How did you address the challenges?

I had a class where I created 6 teams of 4 students, gave them a category to study (ie...pasta or tea or paint) and I had them go out into NYC retailers and do a live retail audit on competition and packaging/design trends in that particular category. They had to put a mini presentation together and come back and present. In theory, I thought it was a great "real world" assignment. In practice though, the students felt rushed to complete it, it was a hot day and they didn't have the energy to walk the streets, and they had their core portfolio projects they were trying to finish before the semester ended. I realized that if anything, I should have done that exercise early on when they were first learning about how to conduct a retail/competitive/design audit. I was out of tune with the cadence of where they/we were this late in the semester, so I felt that they thought I was just giving them busy work to do to complete a class session.

5. Why are you introducing and/or expanding the use of technology into your teaching?

Pandemic or not, we live in a digital world whereby technology is not just a tool, it is the channel by which we socialize, communicate and conduct business in our daily lives. With students who are digital natives, it is critically important to me that I can learn how to use technology as a “real time” engagement platform that can enhance my teaching practice.

6. How do you feel these technology innovations will affect the student experience? How do you think it will affect your experience?

If I identify the right tools, I believe it will enhance the student experience. I am looking to mimic successful classroom methodologies like team brainstorming, student-to-student interactions, small group critiques, and teacher-student relationship and trust. Once I get over my fear for not knowing how to use the technology, I believe it will open up my world to better experiences.

7. Please describe new teaching ideas you plan to implement as a result of this technology certificate program.

The biggest “aha” for me is that the new technologies are an enabler for providing a more robust, holistic, ongoing “semester” experience vs just a weekly “classroom” experience. For example, in the past, I prepare my lesson plan all around my weekly class - my lecture, Q&A in class, an in-class exercise and then perhaps give a homework assignment, which usually ends with “reach out if you have questions, see you next week”. Now, with technologies like Padlet, Voice Thread and asynchronous discussion boards, I can create an ongoing engagement before, during and after the class that requires all students to participate. In some sense, the technology makes everyone accountable because you can see if they are responding to the discussion boards and the requests to add their input (ie..Padlet). In some ways, students can more easily “hide” in an in person class by never raising their hand. These tools track participation going beyond project assignments that you grade and enable more participation.

8. How will these new technology tools/approaches contribute to your classroom practice?

I haven't used the tools yet, but this is how I am rethinking my game plan. As noted above, in the past, I would develop and deliver my content/lecture each week during the class. Now, with technology, I envision posting *before* the class, some kind of recording of my lecture hot buttons or some kind of content that is relevant to my subject matter. Then, I would pose a series of questions for them to answer before the class begins the next week, or start a conversation for them to add their thoughts to. By the time we start the class, I will have already been able to see their responses and dialogue, so can use my class time more as a space for discussion around the topic, of which they already had been exposed to. Even if I don't prerecord a lecture, I can still open up a Discussion Board on the topic beforehand and get the students to engage before we hit the class. And with the different tools, you can mix up chats, videos, and a variety of techniques for discussion that keeps things interesting and engaging.

9. How will you evaluate the success of your activities?

I will not only look at learning outcomes for the whole semester, I will look at setting up rubrics for each modular of content that I teach over each week. When I see the rubrics of that content ahead of time, I will select the right balance of technology to engage with the students. It will likely be a "continuous improvement" and I would like to conduct Instant Polls throughout the course to ensure students are feeling engaged and are comprehending the content.

10. What do you consider to be the bigger picture items with regard to technology and learning?

I realize now, that prior to teaching remotely, I saw my role more focused on the weekly classroom. Now, using technology, I see teaching as an *ongoing engagement* with the individual student. In that regard, I can hold individual students more accountable for participating in more thought provoking discussions, not just projects, throughout the semester. Every student learns differently, so using different modalities of teaching can allow me to understand each student uniquely. Overall, my wish is that I am creating more opportunities to understand the individual student's comprehension on the subject matter.