

Center for Excellence
in Teaching



REFLECTIVE TEACHING PORTFOLIO

PATRICIA A. HENRY, ADJUNCT ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

PHOTOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT PH162 INTRODUCTION TO PHOTOGRAPHIC STYLING



PATRICIA A. HENRY, ADJUNCT ASST. PROFESSOR

PHOTOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT, 1997-PRESENT

Pat Henry is a graduate of FIT's baccalaureate program in Textile & Apparel Marketing. She has been a fashion stylist for retail accounts such as Saks Fifth Avenue, Bloomingdale's, Macy's and Neiman Marcus, Bookings Editor at ELLE and VOGUE magazines, a fashion producer and model agent. She is currently the publisher and design director of a collectibles magazine (Fashion Doll Quarterly) and public speaker on the history and collecting of fashion dolls, as well as the author of several books, including "In Focus: The Art of Fashion Doll Photography" and "Tonner: Twenty Years of Fashion and Design". She lives in NYC with her husband Hal and her adorable smooth fox terrier, Bo.

CONTENT OVERVIEW



- TEACHING PHILOSOPHY
- MASTER TEACHERS
- SUCCESSFUL LESSONS
- UNSUCCESSFUL LESSONS
- THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE
- THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY
- TECHNOLOGY AND THE TEACHING EXPERIENCE
- NEW TECHNIQUES USING TECH
- CONTRIBUTING TO CLASSROOM PRACTICE
- EVALUATING SUCCESS
- THE BIGGER PICTURE
- CLOSING



TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

‘Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.’

–William Butler Yeats

I NEVER WANTED TO BE A TEACHER.

I wanted to be the Editor-in-Chief of VOGUE. Then, a funny thing happened. I got to work there and become an editor at the age of 23- and it was the worst experience of my life. I guess I just peaked too soon.

When your life’s ambitions fizzle out at the beginning of your career, you have to regroup and find another path. I was able to stay in the fashion industry, but in the retail and advertising end of things. I then went on to freelance for many different companies, from Neiman Marcus to Talbot’s and Bloomingdales, and made a very nice living. But freelancing means you often have a lot of free time, and the perennial student in me still longed to learn new things. So, I did some Learning Annex gigs, like “Fifty Ways To Tie A Scarf” and “What Season Are You?” and I realized I liked teaching. I sent a cover letter and resume to the Chair of the Business and Technology division and didn’t hear back. Many months later I heard from the Chair of the Photography Department. And so, my accidental career began and has continued for over two decades.

My philosophy is not about rubrics and learning outcomes. My way of teaching is deeply invested in getting these kids jobs. Every topic is taught based on relevance to the real world and the fashion industry. I don’t use a textbook, because they are obsolete by the time they are published. My students must constantly go out into the real world (even if it’s via google these days), and see what is happening right now.

When we talk about fashion, I want it to be relevant to their reality. But I also want them to appreciate the deep and fascinating aspects of fashion history. I want them to laugh and be shocked and confused and curious before coming to a real understanding of how things work, and how they might work in the field of fashion, advertising and editorial. I may have seen too many movies, but I want them to remember what I teach them. I want them to be as passionate about fashion as I am, but if they are not, I want them to see that people are passionate about fashion, and that it is important part of our culture and our economy. I want them to email me in two years and thank me for the crazy advice or the funny story or the stern talking to for not doing the assignment. And I am proud to say, I do hear from them. One of the most frequent comments I get is that I taught them “what it’s really like out here”. I hope to give them skills and tools, like an artisan, to craft a career they can be proud of, and hopefully, be passionate about as well.

MASTER TEACHERS



In my career as a fashion stylist and editor, I have been very fortunate to work with photographers and editors at the top of their craft. From Penn and Avedon, to Meisel, Elgort, Hispard, Toscani, Bensimon and countless others, I have had the Master Class of decades of experience watching artists create beautiful images and make fashion an art form- they were my master teachers. I was also very fortunate to have two particularly memorable professors during my own college years at FIT. Their style of sharing information wasn't so much teaching as coaching me into the professional world and challenging me to strive for excellence. I try to use that in my own lectures to this day.

PROFESSOR LANDERS

She was a blond CoCo Chanel, with the voice of Elaine Stritch. She used grand hand gestures and had an unidentifiable accent that came straight out of a 1940s Hollywood movie. In her pearls and tweed jackets, Muriel Landers made the world of fashion presentation come alive for me. I realized early on I didn't want to be a buyer, and she showed me there was a world of stylists, window display designers, merchandisers and professionals who got to play with clothes! She was a name dropper and entertained us with her own stories of the industry while also showing us that these were actual professions. This stays with me and is a guiding premise of my own class today, to make learning a direct link to the world outside of the college doors.

PROFESSOR SHAYE

Professor Shaye taught English at FIT. I was always a good student; I loved English all throughout school, but Professor Shaye taught me to use my love of English in different ways- in debate, in drama, in fiction writing. He gave me the tools to use language to great effect, whether in conversation, a job interview, or even on the stage (I was also in the FIT Drama Club). He, like Muriel Landers, was as much an entertainer as an educator. He was a raconteur, and made Shakespeare, Chaucer and Vonnegut all equally lively and valid in the classroom. He encouraged me to go to law school; I couldn't afford it, but I often wonder what my life would look like if I had followed his advice.

SUCCESSFUL (AND NOT SO SUCCESSFUL) LESSONS

One of the challenges of measuring success in creative assignments is that it is partly subjective. The student may achieve the bullet list of requirements, on time and properly presented, but was it successful? What if it lacks originality or punch? What does that even mean? For me, it has been an ongoing process to grade fairly but effectively. Many students get the work done in a perfunctory way. It might seem to lack insight or excitement, and I get that. Not every class will set their world alight. But there is always room to grow and I often like to leave them with new questions of what more could they do with the luxury of time, money, staff, and location?

Each assignment leads to the next. The final assignment is a four page fashion editorial, which they would not be able to easily achieve had they not started with their first assignment- photographing a simple object.



FRAGRANCE CAMPAIGN SUCCESS

The goal of this lesson is to become familiar with the photo studio. We begin with a single object. We discuss composition, styling tools and the effective use of props to support the main focus, suggest a time and place, and to strengthen graphic impact. The student must choose a product, and then use simple props to make a bold and exciting photo that would be used in an ad campaign. This team did a great job creating a graphic image with good color choices and bold, colorful flowers to make the bottle “pop” and draw the eye.

SPRING
2020

The first assignment of the semester is the cosmetics campaign ad. Students choose a product and must create an ad using props (no copy).



WILLIAMS SONOMA NEEDS WORK

Selling a product is a special skill, and in this age of self-promotion through social media, we discuss how large companies create imagery that gets you to make a purchase. The students were tasked with choosing a product that would be sold at WS. This time, the props had to be food, as we cover the specialty of food styling. We don't have kitchens or refrigeration so I encourage simple foods that add color and excitement. This shot hit all the buttons as far as the rubric, but needed some finessing. As I tell them, the key to good editing is a simple phrase- “when in doubt, take it out.”

SPRING
2015

The second assignment is for Williams Sonoma, using food as prop, while creating a strong product shot for sale in print or online.



THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

When teaching, it is imperative to hold two seemingly different ideas in your head- each student is a unique individual with their own talents and skills, while also noting that year after year, students tend to display the same behavioral tendencies that you can identify as archetypes, and therefore predict certain outcomes.

When you have a class of two dozen different people from different parts of the world, with different experiences, temperaments, and skills, the challenge is to make them all feel equal while allowing them to shine as individuals- no easy task.

THE WATCHER

POSITION

The watcher is not lazy; they are often taking notes and will email you to clarify a point on a homework assignment. They are often shy, and can be pushed aside by the more dominant students. Objective: draw them out in class by following up on your one-on-one discussion as a jump off point for the whole class.

THE DOMINATOR

POSITION

Talks the most, pushes around the other students, angles for the teacher's attention. These are often A students, but not always the most successful in the real world. Objective: let them be heard, but don't let them take over.



THE COASTER

POSITION

Often insecure, and sometimes lacking a certain amount of discipline, the coaster will do little on a group project but take the grade. They often disappoint in that they can't close their own deals when necessary. Objective: Encourage more responsibility by finding their strengths.

THE CHALLENGER

POSITION

Always asking questions, challenging the teacher and wanting to do the assignment a completely different way than you have designed it, the challenger can be fun to have in class, but sometimes disruptive. In many cases, these are the students who I keep in touch with when class is over, because they never stop asking questions, or seeking advice. Objective: Help them share their enthusiasm by pairing them with the watcher or the coaster.

ENGAGE

Students tend to work together when taking on new tech. They help each other out and become curious in order to learn or even master the tech they are given. This may be a camera, or a session with photoshop. It may be working on set to rig a perfect sandwich or make fake ice cream. The shared experience makes engagement a satisfying part of learning.

COLLABORATE

In the real world, people tend to work in groups. You rarely work on a project alone for a company or client. Collaboration is a necessary part of socialization, and a key talent in a successful career. “No man is an island” and team work has been a key component in our studio classes. Students must learn to work with, as well as depend on others for the best outcome. Google hangouts, Instagram chats and Blackboard allows us to collaborate on- or off-campus.

TECHNOLOGY IS JUST A TOOL. IN TERMS OF GETTING THE KIDS WORKING TOGETHER AND MOTIVATING THEM, THE TEACHER IS THE MOST IMPORTANT.

- BILL GATES

CONNECT

Being able to connect with fellow students or the instructor is the most valuable aspect of tech. Even the shyest student can send off an email or ask a question in chat. The ease of having a question answered while doing your homework via Zoom, or finishing a project using Voice Thread has undoubtedly enhanced the students' ability to learn with more depth and understanding than ever before.

PREPARE

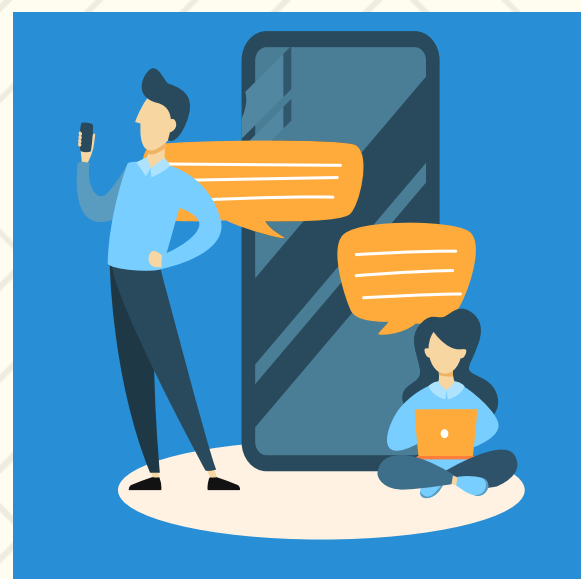
Being comfortable and adept with tech like apps and programs are a necessity for our students to achieve success in the workplace. No matter what speciality they choose, employers today want workers full-blown from the head of Zeus, ready to work without too much time used up with on the job training. The more masterful they are with the technology in demand today, the more valuable their skills will be in the marketplace.



THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

The word itself is in the name of the school. We should use technology to our advantage as much as possible, as long as it doesn't supercede the goals of the class itself.

What we must strive for is critical thinking; problem solving and communication amongst ourselves before depending on Google or Wikipedia. Once we have a solid foundation of ideas and questions, then we can begin to use the tools provided by technology to move our projects to fruition. Motivation, inspiration and imagination are the bottom line in education.



BLACKBOARD

Blackboard has its quirks, but it has been a fairly easy transition to online teaching. The students get it, and it's fast and simple when it comes to uploading assignments, presenting PowerPoint presentations and quickly flipping to what's on your home-screen for additional demos.



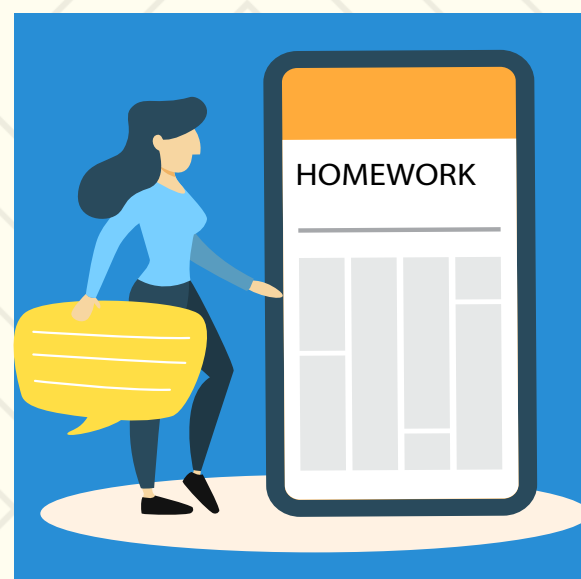
PADLET

I am new to Padlet and at first could not see how I would use it. However, now that I have had to rethink what I teach in class and what students should be working on alone offline, I can see it will be a great team tool for collaborating and creating in class..



MICROSOFT OFFICE

Everyone needs Office. The first thing I go over with my class is making sure everyone is adept at Word and exporting PDFs for assignments. It is the base of all education at this point.



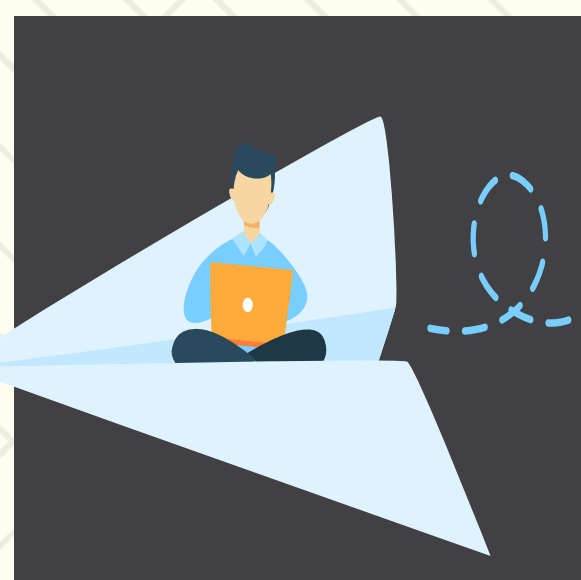
VOICE THREAD

I think Voice Thread will become more relevant this semester as a critiquing source as well as a good feedback app for students who want to review work, get tutored on challenging subjects, or have an office hour out of the usual scheduled times.



ADOBE CLOUD

Honestly, the cloud can be a pain in the ass. Sometimes, you don't want to be hooked up to the Internet when you are working, but that's the way it is. That being said, Adobe products are the non plus ultra of any creative's desk top.



GOOGLE DRIVE

I have been teaching long enough to remember classwork being handed in on paper, typed and presented in heavy portfolios that I lugged to my office. Having all classwork for any of my classes in one place has been a game changer, and my students have embraced it completely.



TECH & THE TEACHING EXPERIENCE

I love technology. I am a bit of a science nerd type of person, so I embrace new phones, new apps, and programs that make life easier. I have been using digital cameras for two decades, and photographed an entire how-to book in 2000 using a large, one-pixel Olympus camera. Jumping in early gives you a great advantage in education. Some may complain that all this tech gets in the way of teaching, but the ease of use has made grading, homework submission, group projects and test taking far more efficient. Teaching is still about communication with the students in a human way, but as far as all the new apps and toys, I say bring it all on!

AUTUMN 2020

PHASE 01

FOR FIRST ASSIGNMENT

COVER USE OF BLACKBOARD, PADLET AND GOOGLE DRIVE, AS WELL AS ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION AS PDFS GENERATED FROM WORD DOCS.

PHASE 02

SECOND ASSIGNMENT

USING VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS ON BB TO BRAINSTORM WITH GROUPS PLANNING THEIR PROJECTS

PHASE 03

THIRD ASSIGNMENT

DISCUSSING USE OF CAMERAS, APPS AND EDITING SOFTWARE FOR PROJECTS, SUCH AS ADOBE CLOUD, FREE APPS, AND OPEN SOURCING, AS WELL AS HOW-TO VIDEOS VIA LINKEDIN LEARNING

PHASE 04

FOURTH ASSIGNMENT

USE VOICE THREAD AND LIVE CHATS TO INTERACT WITH STUDENTS AND VIEW ASSIGNMENTS, LAYOUTS, ETC.

PHASE 05

MIDTERM AND FINAL EXAMS

DEVELOP TESTS VIA BLACKBOARD AND GOOGLE DOCS TO EXPEDITE GRADING AND GIVE STUDENTS REAL TIME RESPONSE TO GRADES

PHASE 06

POST SEMESTER

ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO CONTINUE ON WITH LINKEDIN, INSTAGRAM AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO KEEP IN TOUCH.



NEW TECH IN TEACHING

Photography majors tend to be very tech savvy and unafraid of equipment and computers. However, not all majors cover deep dives into multiple forms of programs. With so many new offerings, I will be introducing different apps and learning tools over the course of the semester, without assuming the students are already adept at all of these programs. All my courses this fall are elective for different majors, so I have to alter my expectations from the usual classes in Photography. The key is use these programs as tools, without them becoming an overbearing part of the learning experience in the class itself.

C

CLARITY

Simplifying goals and the expectations of assignments will make each project more meaningful and less stressful.

The advantage of online learning is the ability to capture the lecture, download PDFs with vital information and reduce the more complex discussions during class into bullet points and straightforward statements about what the object of the lesson is and the goal of what is to be learned in any given class.

L

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning outcomes are too often vague and conceptual. Being more direct and logical will help the student understand why they are in class and what they should expect to get out of each lecture.

Instead of saying, "you will learn the professional procedures in a photo studio" we can hone in on specific lighting tricks, styling tips and tools for the best presentation and ease of use.

A

ASSESSMENT

Students often find that grading confuses them. Why did I get a B instead of an A? What really constitutes failing?

Comprehension should be the main goal so that students understand what it is they should be mastering. They may not come to be exceptional at the practices being taught, but they should understand them in order to use them or appreciate these skills and tools being used by others they encounter in the work place.

S

SUPPORT

Positive reinforcement has to be a constant, particularly in an online class, when the student may feel somewhat distant from the instructor, or anonymous in the class.

Online office hours, group chats in Google hangouts, tutoring on Blackboard and live demonstrations, when possible, will give the students a more concrete sense of accomplishment and know that their work is being seen and their issues are being heard.



CONTRIBUTING TO CLASSROOM PRACTICES

Taking a studio class online is particularly challenging. I have always discouraged offering this particular class as an online offering because I feel it is imperative to learn by doing. A demonstration by the teacher, followed by the class learning to produce a photo shoot is the key to Photographic Styling. However, circumstances have forced me to work outside the box and change the rules to solve the problem. It is the 'Kobayashi Maru', in essence. For the non-Star Trek fan, The Kobayashi Maru is a training exercise in the fictional Star Trek universe designed to test the character of Starfleet Academy cadets in a no-win scenario, a test of one's character or a solution that involves redefining the problem and managing an insurmountable scenario gracefully.

EVALUATING SUCCESS

A long time ago, it became clear to me that being an “A” student did not guarantee success in the work force. Being curious and engaged tended to mark the more successful graduate, post-college, than their exam grades. No one really cares what your GPA is; few follow up to see if you are even telling the truth.

By concentrating more on engagement in class, team work online to keep social energy closer to normal, and less homework to destress students during an unprecedented time, I think we can keep our classes more engaged and more open to learning and retain the knowledge we are sharing with them.



RESPONSE INCREASE ENGAGEMENTS

Each assignment should be thought of less as homework, and more of a new skill set you can use in your future career. Making the course work a useful toolkit for future job duties will make the classwork less of a chore and more of an asset to each student personally. Emphasis on case studies is effective here. We discuss very specifically what it is like working in a retail advertising department, a fashion magazine, a freelance gig, etc.

PRESENTATION LINKING LEARNING OUTCOMES

PH162 was formerly a requisite course for the Photography major. It is now offered as an elective for numerous majors, like Fashion Design, Fabric Styling and Marketing. This means the student may or may not ever work with a team on a photo shoot. However, with the democratization of photography, there are few jobs that don't somehow involve photographic styling, particularly as more fashion houses and retailers depend on in-house photography and styling for social media.

FOLLOW UP INTERPERSONAL ACTIVITY

Once the assignment has been submitted doesn't mean it should be forgotten. It is important to stress how the big picture looks. There will be many new concepts presented and discussed in class. Which of these can you use in your chosen profession and how can you adapt them as useful work tools? I often tell my students the biggest thing they learn in my class is diplomacy- how to work well with others and respect the viewpoint of someone who disagrees with you. That is a valuable lesson no matter what your future vocation may be.



KEEP IT REAL

Encourage students to take what they can from the course that will help them in their future career. Too much esoterica and theory can stifle creativity and curiosity. Particularly in elective classes, you will have a diversity of majors, and their needs and expectations will differ.

UNGRADING

Particularly during this pandemic, students are under more stress than ever before. It is hard to stay engaged online for hours in each class. Less graded assignments, and more in class brainstorming and group projects will give them greater understanding of what is being taught.

+36%

INCORPORATING NEW TECH

Tech is constantly improving, changing and becoming more sophisticated. Instead of assuming everyone has a grasp of the latest app or procedure, a gradual addition of systems to achieve course goals should be added so the class can keep learning without getting bogged down with procedure.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Towards the end of last semester, I noticed the students were very quiet. I asked them “Are you guys OK?” And I was overwhelmed with their anguish and anxiety they felt during this quarantine. We cannot assume the same curriculum every semester will be adaptable for each new class. This unforeseen change in our lives has made it clear that courses must remain flexible and organic.

LINKING OUTCOMES

Circle back on previous lessons to show the connection to what students are being taught in the now. Classes should flow and not feel like disjointed, random to-do lists. The big picture helps make sense of it all.

MORE ENGAGEMENT

Students must turn their cameras on; when they don't, you can feel them drifting- literally as well as figuratively. Logging on to Blackboard doesn't mean they are present. Including all students in the dialogue of the lesson is imperative.

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CLOSING

Changes in technology, and society itself, often present challenges when teaching. No one could ever have imagined or predicted a pandemic and how it would alter education. However, once we accept that this is the new normal for the foreseeable future, if we are flexible, we can create a new- and possibly better- paradigm for teaching this, and any course in the future. Trying new things, even if we fail, will inevitably make us stronger, and smarter. These ongoing additions to technology have made it possible to continue teaching from home, while maintaining engagement and connection. Students are resilient, and adaptable. They will continue to learn and grow with this experience, and so should we.