

Current Practices of RISD Faculty in Teaching and Learning

SUSAN DOYLE

Assistant Professor, Illustration

Criteria for Effective Projects+Assessment

Know your students capabilities

- Are there prerequisites for your course?
- What assumptions, if any can you make about the group based on the placement of your course within the hierarchy of your curriculum. (Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced)
- For the first few times you teach the course, start the class with a prior skills/knowledge questionnaire.

Break down your syllabus into manageable “bites”

- Create a logical, hierarchal sequence of information and assignments of so each new assignment builds off the last thing learned.
- Prioritize your goal for each assignment. Ask yourself: *If they only take away one thing from this assignment, what should that be?*

Objectify the assignments into pertinent categories:

- Conceptual vs. Technical
- Planning vs. process orientation
- Memorization vs. Analysis

Be clear about whether the assigned material requires strict memorization of facts or technical information versus invention or synthesis of concepts/practices to form new ideas or original approaches to making art. Hand-outs need to reflect the type of information.

Avoid creating assignments that involve learning a difficult skill at the same time they tackle an important conceptual point.

- As a rule: offer skill-building exercises in class where students can get hands-on attention from you. Repeat the skill in a more challenging assignment for homework so the students can practice it again soon, but in a longer working window.
- For skills that take have many facets and approaches, and therefore take a long time to learn, (e.g. oil painting) tackle just one facet of the process at a time in a series of separate assignments rather than one long assignment.
- Avoid assigning long projects that will effect the students grades until all basic skills have been taught. Do try to create scenarios that allow revisiting earlier concepts or revising projects in a *meaningful* way.
- Avoid Frustration: Structure assignments narrowly for beginners. Structure assignments broadly for advanced students.

State your objectives and your grading of the assignment to the students. You may think your goals are obvious from the assignment itself, but it is helpful to articulate your goals in a way that disentangles them from other aspects of the assignment. *Ask if they have any questions. Ask them to paraphrase the goals.*

Clarify how you be assessing the assignment:

- Oral critique? Grade? Both?
- Will there be an opportunity to re-work the project after critique?
- Is it assumed the project will be re-worked by the end of the term? For additional credit?
- What percentage of the semester grade relies on the project?