Compiled from an ongoing discussion posted to the Yahoo group AIGA-Education, August 2007, by Al Wasco.

QUESTION:

I was curious to know late assignments policies at other schools. Do you allow work to be handed in late and if so are there consequences? What about tests? Do you allow students to enter the classroom after a test has been handed out and or make-up a test?

thank you

Andrea Brenner-Shaevitz
The New England Institute of Art

ANSWERS: (in chronological order as posted. Some repetitive text has been deleted, otherwise the comments are unedited.)

Posted by: "Roger Eriksen" neskire@yahoo.com   neskire

My policy is to mark down one half grade per day for late assignments (including weekends) unless they have a valid excuse (illness, bereavement, etc).

As to tests, if a person arrives 5 minutes late, I usually let them enter the classroom. Any later, and they will need to do the test later as a make-up.

As an different note, for some classes, especially history lectures, I give out 5 or 6 questions at the end of each lecture. At the next class session, I have them answer one of the question in a blue book and then grade those. I find that this quick quiz (5 min) helps them to stay focused on the material. Later, I use many of the same questions for a mid-term or final exam. I also use this quick quiz as a means of attendance. If they arrive late and do not take the quiz , they are considered to be absent that day. It really helps them to be motivated to be on time.

Posted by: "Elaine Betts" e@ebetts.com

I can assure you, I ACCEPT NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS!

Hard-nosed? Why? Because Graphic Design is a deadline-driven profession. Blow off a deadline and it costs your client money, your reputation suffers and the design industry takes a stability hit. It's just good practice to start in school with meeting deadlines or suffering consequences that are far less painful then "real world" penalties.

Elaine Betts, Faculty
Multimedia Graphic Design
Front Range Community College   3645 112th Ave. Westminster, CO 80031

elaine.betts@frontrange.edu
303/404-5055(EB office with messages)

Posted by: "Alan Wasco" awdsgn@sbcglobal.net

andrea...

my standard policy, stated in the syllabus, is that all assignments are due at the start of class on the due date. anything turned in after the start of class is late and receives a 5% grade deduction if i get it within 24 hrs. of due date. an assignment can be handed in up to one week late with a 10% grade deduction. after one week i don't accept late assignments.

Al Wasco, Assistant Professor
Visual Communication/Interactive Media
Cuyahoga Community College Western Campus

Posted by: "designprofessor@gmail.com" designprofessor@gmail.com   citizendesign

But isn't the university the time for people to learn about design, not hate it before they even have it as a job?

Sure, come up with a reasonable system to punish students for poor behavior but also reward for good behavior.

Using only inflexible means of punishment helps no one, including the professor.

Design educators should include at least as much inspiration as reality check.

Possible exception: final senior level course(s) in BFA or comprehensive BA programs and graduate students. This would be the time for the reality check.

Posted by: "stephanie nace" Nace@gwm.sc.edu   stephanienace

Fri Aug 10, 2007 6:20 am (PST)

i totally agree with elaine and for all the same reasons i do not accept late projects either. if the student hands the assignment in on the same day, even if they are only 5 minutes late for class, they receive 50 points, if it's later than the day the project was due they receive 0 points. either way they failed the project.

stephanie nace
assistant professor :: graphic design
university of south carolina
t :: 803.777.5880 f :: 803.777.0535
http://froglegstudio.com/usc/index.html

Posted by: "Rosanne Gibel" rgibel@bellsouth.net   artgibel

I do not accept late work unless there is a documented excuse. The grade is also broken down so that points are taken off if they fail to turn in preliminary work such as thumbnails or research or fail to participate in critiques. If they miss class, they should email me or meet me at another time to stay current with their work.

The point is to get them to treat the work in a professional manner. We are in a deadline-driven business and they must learn to deal with that. There are always students that think that they can cruise in the day of the critique with a perfect assignment or show up after the critique. I try to explain to them that when you are working for someone, you must communicate at every step of the project. Missing a critique is like missing a client meeting.

On tests, I allow them to come in and take it whenever they show up, but I do not allow them extra time.

Having said all that, in lower division classes, I give a lot of assignments, in-class exercises and short quizzes in lecture classes. I also weight the assignments given later in the term more heavily. This allows them to catch up if they don't take me seriously at first. In later classes, the air is a lot thinner.

I try to stack the deck in their favor. If only they wouldn't shuffle it!

Rosanne Gibel
Department of Graphic Design/ Arts & Humanities, Art Institute of Ft. Lauderdale
1799 S.E. 17th Street, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33316
(954)308-2205 rgibel@aii.edu

Posted by: "Marjorie Crum" happycrk@rochester.rr.com   happycrk

Hear, hear, Elaine!

That is also my policy. I will make exceptions for dire emergencies but generally work is due when it's due for the very reasons Elaine has so perfectly stated.

I will also close and have the door to the classroom locked once we begin. If students are not in class on-time, they're not admitted and counted absent and lose points. I will also throw students out of class, which counts as an absence, if they come unprepared (i.e. assignments not completed or ready for critique). I find that one

experience being thrown out and losing points fixes the attendance and deadline issue.

Thanks for asking!

M

_____
Marjorie Crum | Program Diva | AIGA Member
AIGA Upstate New York Program Chair
T: 585.383.1640 | F: 585.383.0552
E: happycrk@rochester.rr.com

_____

From: Charles Hively <chively@...>
Date: Fri Aug 10, 2007 9:45 am

I agree with Elaine and Marjorie.

I'm afraid there is too much leniency when it comes to missed assignments, tardiness and poor output. The university is a time for people to learn about design, but it is not a place to coddle them. There is so much really poor design out there why do we want to add to that? And they must have an inner inspiration to be a designer, you can't teach that. And yes, you reward them for good work but you do not tolerate bad work or a bad attitude.

What I've found in my experience is that the academic professors, the ones who do not actively work in the field, are much more lenient while the ones who make their living as designers and teach part-time tolerate far less. My students who after graduation have a chance to live in the real world of design, often email me with the comment, "thanks for giving me a taste of what it's really like out here, before I got out here." And I sleep at night better knowing the kids know what to expect, that way the client isn't let down and the student shines.
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CHARLES HIVELY Publisher
3x3, The Magazine of Contemporary Illustration
244 Fifth Avenue, Suite F269 New York New York 10001
(p) 212 591 2566 (f) 212 537 6201

From: "Swanson, Gunnar" <swansong@...>
Date: Fri Aug 10, 2007 11:36 am

One reason that some students are late with assignments is that they are convinced they can do better and don't want to turn in work that isn't up to their expectations for themselves. In most classes my students can resubmit an assignment for an improved grade later in the semester. This is partly to short-circuit that tendency and partly to encourage constant rethinking and reconsideration.

They end up with an average of the resubmitted work and the original work. That is much higher than the resubmitted work could have been with late penalties had they not turned in anything on time. The policy encourages getting something done on schedule even if it isn't what they had hoped they would do.

Gunnar

Gunnar Swanson
School of Art & Design
East Carolina University
Greenville, North Carolina 27858
swansong@ecu.edu +1 252 328 2839

From: "turk829k" <jon@...>
Date: Fri Aug 10, 2007 2:54 pm

As Gunnar has described, our department has a policy that allows for resubmission and for similar reasons. We do this for a couple of reasons. One is that we are teachers, working with adolescents who are developing into adults. Our feeling is that to say "Now or F" dismissed any reason for lateness beyond the assumption of laziness or irresponsibility on the part of the student. Maybe there was something in the process that the student didn't understand, or maybe there was something that we didn't teach well. It does happen.

Permission for resubmitting is always at the discretion of the instructor. Maybe, just maybe, there is something more to be learned from the situation than failure. After all, some of these students are as young as 17 years old. I think there is a need to learn correct practices. As the students progress we become less and less willing to accept unfinished work until they develop the working methods that lead them to always being on time. There will be students who will abuse the situation and that can be dealt with very easily.

The second reason is because those of us who have been, and still are, working professionally as well as teaching know that there have been times when we have been late. I don't know a single designer who can say that they have never, ever been late on a deadline. On those few times I have been late, I have never had a client give me an F and refuse to pay me. They have had the option of not hiring me again, but that hasn't happened. I am both a profesional theater designer/theme park (United Scenic Artists 829) and a graphic/multimedia designer. I am amazed at how relaxed graphic design is compared to theater. With theater, the curtain goes up no matter what, because there is a paying audience sitting there.

I don't believe that teaching process is a pass/fail situation from the very first project. It is a path you use to lead students to the point of never being late.

Jon Walker
Chair, Assistant Professor
Department of Art & Design
Sacred Heart University 5151 Park Avenue Fairfield, CT 06825 203.396.8061

From: professor spadaro <jspadaro@...>
Date: Fri Aug 10, 2007 5:05 pm

I agree that students have a responsibility to produce work on time, but I also bristle at the notion that the classroom is a simulation of the "real world".

My thoughts on this paradigm has been that the classroom is a place for experimentation, critical thinking, dialogue, and debate. If we teach for the graphic design profession, the profession will never move forward. And I know this may not be a popular position, but the professionals who sometimes criticize student work are, in many instances, not qualified to make such judgments.

In my experience, students who enter the field quickly learn the pace of the design field and adjust accordingly (my students are required to complete a full semester design internship). If we conducted our classroom teaching with only the profession in mind we would ask our students to design logos in a few hours and make it pink because that is what the client and or sales rep wants! We do not teach in this manner because it serves no one to do so.

Another consideration is that students work increasing more hours to pay for their education than many of us ever had to (this is especially true for those who are teaching at state universities). I have students who work 20 hours per week, have families, take care of siblings or parents, etc. Yes, life gets in the way and to crush a student's dreams and career potential is something I'm not willing to do. This is not to say I'm easy, just flexible. My students take a full academic and studio load and must maintain a 3.25 GPA in all studio courses. If someone is late, I listen to why and almost always give them a chance to turn the project in late while keeping up with their current projects. Students appreciate this and usually get back on track, being better students for it.

Perhaps I'm getting soft in my older age, or perhaps I'm just sick of design being rushed in the service of a business model that I do not always embrace. I believe there is a "hurry up and wait attitude" in many businesses towards graphic designers and I think we should address this attitude. I also want to add that I have never had a student who was fired for not having work completed on time. As mentioned, students have a natural adaptability when introduced into the workplace. In my courses I want them to be free to experiment

push themselves and fail without the consequence or threat of grade reduction. Has anyone of us every had an employer ask to see our grades?!!

I have had students with amazing excuses over my years of teaching. The best one (not from my current institution) was, "I was in jail"!!!

Best,
Joani

Joani Spadaro
Associate Professor of Graphic Design
Director, Program in Graphic Design
USF St. Petersburg 140 7th Avenue South St. Petersburg, FL 33701 727.873.4966
jspadaro@stpt.usf.edu   joani_spadaro@doubledagger.net

From: Angela Norwood <anorwood@...>
Date: Fri Aug 10, 2007 6:57 pm

Brava Joani!

Thanks for your comments overall, but especially your mention of allowing space for failure in the classroom, as a result of experimentation, as separate from assessment of grades. This distinction between forms of failure in design school is crucial to me and I spend a lot of time, especially with those right out of high school, trying to get students over the notion of designing for the grade. My classroom is a safe place for experimentation. I must say I penalize for late assignments (without legitimate excuse), but it is in the spirit of building the self-discipline students need to get through our program - not EVER as a threat to their ability to work in the field should they choose to do so later. I also encourage them to readdress their projects throughout the term, as has been described. I don't believe we can be serious about asking the next generation of designers to tackle the issues they'll face if we are so focused on making sure they're obedient first.

Cheers,
Angela Norwood
Assistant Professor
Department of Design
York University Toronto, ON Canada

From: "Swanson, Gunnar" <swansong@...>
Date: Fri Aug 10, 2007 8:20 pm

Joani,

Good points. I require that my students take me, their work, and themselves seriously. Missing a deadline can be a sign that they are not doing so but it does not necessarily mean that.

> I have had students with amazing excuses over
> my years of teaching. The best one (not from my
> current institution) was, "I was in jail"!!!

I had a semester in 1993 where "My wife had a baby" tied for third with "I smashed my finger in the car door so hard that I had to fish around in my purse for my keys so I could get the door open and then go to the emergency room." Second place was "A horse fell on me." The winner was "My work was on my laptop and the computer was in my car and they burned down with the rest of Malibu."

Gunnar Swanson

From: Melanie Rodgers <mrodgers@...>

Date: Sat Aug 11, 2007 9:19 am

Dear colleagues,

There have been some great comments and ideas on this topic!

Let's not forget that those of us who are full-time faculty were not only hired for our knowledge of our discipline, but also for our ability to break information down, put things in perspective, create an environment of learning, and relate to students in a meaningful and sincere way. If we fail to do this, we do our students, and the entire profession, a disservice. A sophomore Graphic Design major is not a smaller version of a 36-year old freelancer, and should not be treated as such.

What I see as my main function, is to ignite in my students a passion for design, awareness of self and the importance of process, and context. Once the fire of passion is lit, students don't need draconian deadline and attendance measures, but guidance and support. And my guidance and support does include reduced grades for late work and attendance requirements. I also feel that the "real world" attitude that a lot of adjuncts bring to their studios provides a great balance to a student's entire experience in the program, and I support our adjuncts in doing what they feel best parallels their experience, yet is perceivable by the students. The roles of full-time faculty and adjuncts are different and they should be.

Just as in the professional world, I have encountered individuals who will never make it, because they don't have a passion for what they are doing. But the majority of my students are hard-working, passionate, funny, smart, open people who are young, much like I was when I was in art school.

Have a great fall semester,

Melanie

Assistant Professor
Coordinator of Graphic Design
York College of PA

From: Katherine Miller <kmiller7@...>
Date: Sat Aug 11, 2007 9:44 am

Angela,

I also believe in the need for giving some leeway under tough life circumstances, but I also needed to find a way to penalize students who simply blew off deadlines. After much experimentation, I found a successful way in the capstone portfolio class.

I created a contract with the students to have individual projects prepared for critique by specific dates. Students were required to set those dates at the beginning of the semester, sign the contract, and give copies of the project due dates to the instructor. Dates could be changed by either the instructor or the student any time before (not after) the due date, but the instructor was not to remind students of those dates or set up the review sessions. The students were responsible for all scheduling. If the review didn't take place on the scheduled day, points were taken off for late days. The student could potentially receive a failing grade for a very late project.

Overall this system provided enough structure for the students and put the responsibility on their shoulders to keep track of time and due dates. Students who had routinely missed due dates came to the realization that their habits needed to change.

This system did cause one student to fail the portfolio class and not graduate. He came back one year later a changed person and retook the class. He obtained a full time design position after graduation and has been promited twice since then. Very surprisingly, he has stayed in touch with me and has praised his educational experience.

Katie Miller

From: junky <junk@...>
Date: Sat Aug 11, 2007 4:15 pm

While I do consider extenuating circumstances, I believe a firm due date/time to be beneficial to the process of learning and thinking. This is not intended to replicate the professional work environment inside the classroom, but to reinforce the idea that people and responsibility are important aspects of design. I would tend to be more accepting of a failed effort, as opposed to an agreed upon, yet missed deadline.

I've abandoned the "percentage off", and "one day late equals one letter grade" type of compromises, as this is just confusing to everyone and creates unrealistic terms. Actually, I've found that the excitement and acceptance of the deadline can foster competition and rapport between students.

My favorite so far has been " My mom didn't know I had a project due."

W. Anthony Watkins
Assistant Professor of Art + Design
Northwestern State University of Louisiana
p. 318.357.6013 e. watkinsa@nsula.edu

From: Rosanne Gibel <rgibel@...>
Date: Sat Aug 11, 2007 9:50 pm

There have been some great responses to this question. Obviously we all feel strongly about it. Clearly everyone is trying to find a balance. My purpose in asking students to turn in work on time is intended to develop professional behavior, but not necessarily to create a "real world" atmosphere in the classroom. To think that the classroom is not a real world for students who are juggling work, family and school (not to mention the huge cost of an education) devalues what we do as instructors. The time frames in the classroom are also different. Sometimes longer, sometimes shorter, but certainly not "real world".

Asking students to meet deadlines does not preclude experimentation. The steps that we ask students to meet along the way to a finished project should allow for discussion, introspection and development. I do allow them to build credibility. There has to be a difference between the student who has a genuine issue and the one who always has an excuse.

Revisions are another story. If a student has most of the deadlines along the way, I always allow revisions or extended time to really get it right. It is not unusual for a student to totally underestimate the amount of time it will take to follow through with their plans. That is all part of the process.

Finally, one of the reasons for the deadline is the critique. While I know that traditional critiques are also the subject of contention, the students find it valuable to see and discuss each others work. And while they complain about having to present, that is probably the thing former students thank me for the most.

In response to student comments, I have started to have interim critiques as work progresses. Everyone just puts up whatever they have that day and gets feedback. This encourages everyone to stay on the same page so they can get the feedback. It also eliminates a lot of late revisions.

From: "Roger Eriksen" <neskire@...>
Date: Sat Aug 11, 2007 10:00 pm

This has certainly been an interesting and lively discussion. It seems that there is quite a spectrum of opinion.

I tend to side with those who feel that the classroom is an area of experimentation. Education, creativity and discipline must be balanced. I expect more from experienced seniors than freshmen and grade accordingly. One must also remember that cognitive and reasoning skills are not fully developed in adolescents until 19-21. Every student is unique. I have had very responsible 17 year olds and very delinquent 30 year olds!

Roger Eriksen
Assistant Professor of Art and Design
Adams State College
Alamosa, CO 81102 719-587-7312
email: roger_eriksen@...
department website: www2.adams.edu/academics/art/   personal website: eriksen-art.com

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From: "Mara Jevera Fulmer" <emjayfulmer@...>
Date: Sun Aug 12, 2007 9:51 pm

This discussion has been a very enlightening one for me since as one who created a new program for an urban community college, and who also has 20+ years in industry, I am often torn by how to balance the need to create a graduate with some skills and professional ethics, and one who has had the opportunity to explore their creative potential with the caring and supportive guidance of their instructor.

Realizing that the goals of a community college can be starkly different, it was comforting to see that some of the educators responding to this thread recognized the increasing outside pressures of students. Many of ours are working, have children or parents to care for, have already gone through the demoralization of a failing economy (did I mention we're in Flint, Michigan?) and are seeking new avenues for contributing to both their personal and family means of support and fulfilling their passions after seeing their parents, et al work in the now closing factories for generations.

My approach has been tempered over the past 10 years by observations on the impact a professor can have on a student who may "seem" not to care about deadlines. And I have found that my latest practices, which I began to implement over the last 5 or 6 years, seem to work well.

For all but one of my classes, from the start I make it clear that this is a class meant to prepare them for a professional occupation, that it is a partnership between me and them, that attendance is mandatory, and that it is my goal for every student to succeed to the best of their potential. Deadlines are deadlines - I create a calendar listing them all for the entire semester. The syllabus shows that there are consequences (deduction in points) for turning in late assignments.

The deadlines, however, are not just for finished products... they are for thumbnails, fullsize roughs, etc. with critiques/discussions at each of these stages. Students turn in these interim materials for a portion of their grade.The interim deadlines provide the student with the opportunity to get feedback not only from their instructor but from other students who may have varied backgrounds and skill levels.

At the end of the semester, there are always a few students who just couldn't keep up, for whatever reason, and their grades were low as a result. Since we have a minimum GPA req't for moving forward in the sequence of courses meant to assure a solid preparation for later classes, students understand the impact.

Speaking for myself only, then, when a student actually makes the effort to come to discuss their results with me (and may have been communicating all along), I give them one last opportunity. The grade will be turned in as it is (a 0, 1.0, or whatever) and they are given one month to turn in to me a fantastic version of whatever it is they're delinquent on (missing material or just poor quality) and I'll consider a grade change (usually averaged into the original total). It leaves the responsibility in their corner while keeping the door open. Some students have taken me up on it. While others have come in to say they feel they really would benefit more from taking the class over again. The results in either case show a growing maturity and responsibility for the student's own future.

As for the one class that I mentioned as an exception, it is an exit class (Self-Promotion & Portfolio - dealing with the obvious but also business ethics, etc), the last one before graduation and heading off to either the job world or transfer to a 4-yr school. At this point the students know there are no second chances. The course is offered only once a year so if they mess up, another year will go by before they can take it again (and some have done this). And it is just amazing to me how seriously they take it. As a result, I have maybe 1 or 2 students (out of an average of 17) who have a problem. And at that point their classmates are sitting there chomping at the bit ready for their "competition" to make a mistake. In addition, by the way, all students must complete a full semester (150 hrs) internship which is also competitive.

And last, I remind my community college students that not only does the world not need another 350 new graphic designers (our program has about that many total) each year, but that they are competing with

thousands of 4/5-year program graduates as well. Most of my "kids" go on to 4-year programs with a very high work ethic and they tell me (very proudly but also with some disdain) how many of their new classmates who started out in the university programs don't seem to take deadlines seriously.

As for excuses, I've heard them all... but I've learned not to even remark about them after one turned out to sound too outrageous but really was true. I hate to make students cry. I'm tough enough on them during crits so if misery is going on in their outside lives, I don't need to compound that by ridicule. However, the funniest real situation I had was early on in my teaching career when two young ladies came to my 8 am class looking pretty bedraggled. When I asked what happened, it turned out that they'd spent the night in jail for DWI (one in the jail, the other in the "waiting" room). They then walked from the jail (about a mile and a half away) to class rather than go home first. Apparently facing me was preferable to facing the wrath of their parents.

My students are full of interesting lessons for me, too!

Mara Jevera Fulmer
Associate Professor/Program Coordinator in Graphic Design
Visual Arts & Design Center
C.S. Mott Community College 1401 E. Court St. Flint, Michigan 48503 810-232-3431

www.finearts.mcc.edu
mfulmer@...
personal website: www.lookinglassdesign.com

From: Charles Hively <chively@...>
Date: Mon Aug 13, 2007 7:47 am

I feel I must weigh in here when the discussion starts talking about "real world" versus the classroom. I think you are forgetting that once they are outside the classroom, once they have graduated they will be facing similar circumstances.

They will not necessarily get a full-time job right away, they may end up juggling freelance assignments, a part-time job, internships, family responsibilities and hopefully a social life. It really is no different than what they're experiencing in the classroom. Outside pressures will always be a part of their career, juggling multiple-assignments, the pressure to come up with interesting, unique ideas, to self-educate whether its a new software program or refining their problem-solution skills--they will always be a student of graphic design; pressure will always play a part of their day to day life. Outside pressures don't go away no matter how many years go by, in fact many times they increase: juggling work, family, kids. So I think it's incorrect to think that just because they have outside obligations now they should be given special consideration, that's just not life.
....
CHARLES HIVELY Publisher

From: "Russo, Dominic" <Dominic.Russo@...>
Date: Mon Aug 13, 2007 10:39 am

This is exactly why I joined this network!

I only wish we could all participate in a group discussion face to face on this subject. Add wine and cheese to that and I would probably spend all of my free time there!

Weighing in on this:

I have not stopped learning. About anything; my craft, my own thought processes, how to deal with students and their tender feelings, the whole lot of it. I remind my students of this, and I request that they remind me when my methods seem more rigid than ultimately helpful.

The real world is relative. My students are living in their own real world with the same relatively weighted pressures that my real world has. One of the first things I share with my students is that respect has to be earned; their respect for me as someone with something valuable to offer, and my respect for them as

someone who has the intrinsic spark worth finding. But all of the deadlines and lost letter grades and contracts aside, the efforts of my design class distill down to this:

We all live with pressures, and we still need to perform. Sometimes we won't be able to think as clearly, but we still need to think. We need to learn to juggle, to employ a bit of improv thinking, to delegate when we're in over our heads. That's a huge part of the lesson that I'm trying to instill.

So yes, my syllabus for designers does include:

"My Attendance Policy:
Show up.

You can't learn if you're not here. You will have the benefit of your classmates opinions and ideas in an open forum during my class. I realize that life brings on many unexpected circumstances. I care, clients will not. You are here because you have made the conscious decision to become a better designer. I congratulate you, and I expect you to be here for every class.

*If you are not here on a day that we are critiquing a finished project, your finished work must be in my hands by the start of class with or without you."

And yes, I like to lock the door after my class starts...but only because I think that the uncomfortable feeling that students get when they have to interrupt me is much less desirable than hustling up a bit and making it to class on time...

But my classroom is still a loud, energetic, unorthodox think tank that, hopefully, teaches young students to not only emulate the work and techniques of successful designers; but to surpass them with the lessons taught by their forward thinking (open minded) professor.

Great discussion.

Dominic J. Russo
Adjunct Graphic Design
Notre Dame College Cleveland Ohio

From: Katherine Miller <kmiller7@...>
Date: Mon Aug 13, 2007 3:09 pm

I do agree that life's obligations are going to exist at every stage of student learning, but I also think it takes practice to learn how to deal with those obligations. Should we consider adding to our course objectives something about learning time management? Can/should we teach time management in ways other than being decisive on deadlines?

It dawned on me that so far we have discussed this broad issue with very few solutions. Perhaps what we need is additional solutions (discussion points, ideas on how to approach time management in general, a possibility of role playing?) to help students understand how to manage time at the beginning of projects. We wouldn't be teaching design per se, but we might foster student success.

Katie Miller, MFA
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
Web and Digital Media Development

From: CAROLYN CRAMPTON <crampton@...>
Date: Tue Aug 14, 2007 2:10 am

I give a lot of timed exercises...my midterms and finals are usually various kinds of exercises with tight cut-off times. During this I remind them of how much time they have left and problem-solve with those who are behind. How do you present something to the 'client' who is coming in at the cut-off time? I find it works well.

I also like to have the students doing a quite a few assignments concurrently with various deadlines. That seems like a real world situation to me. They need to be able to juggle priorities. I know it isn't easy for students but my work experience has been one of constantly changing priorities and to know how to create (and think) under those circumstances.

re: late work -- I teach beginning classes and would rather have the job done well then on-time. Our program is very fast. I take off points and give make up work, but do accept late work. Certain deadlines they have to meet. I also think that for beginning classes, my job is to have a fun and safe environment where they learn to play and create. It's a balance between asking them to act like my junior staff and take direction while still being open to explore all the options and grow.

Generally classes are for the few really talented and motivated students -- you can't force someone to be passionate about their work.
-c

Carolyn Crampton
Design Director and instructor Color and Type I and II
Ex'pression College for Digital Arts Emeryville, CA
ccrampton@expression.edu

From: "turk829k" <jon@...>
Date: Mon Aug 13, 2007 6:56 pm

After reading so many differing views regarding grading policies and attendance, I have to admit that i am finding myself to be a bit astonished with so many extremely harsh policies. I posted my policy earlier, so I am not speaking without letting you know what has been very succesful for me.

Here's what troubles me about this whole thread. If someone outside of our profession were to read this, they would probably have a similar reaction to mine. Is there a crisis in design education? Why is it that the academic attitudes of your students is so poor that people have to resort to threatening them with immediate failure, even locking them out of the classroom?! Executions at dawn! Is it impossible for these teachers to motivate their students to handle their responsibilities properly?

This is the impression I was left with. I have a late work policy and an attendance policy so that all of my students feel that they understand how the system works and they will LEARN to function as a professional designer. ALSO, by publishing an evaluation system for participation, they won't doubt that they will be treated fairly.

From reading some of these policies, I would have to assume that in some schools half the students don't finish their assignments and most of them stroll into class whenever they feel like it. I always have one or two students each smester who don't quite get the idea of personal responsibility, and it always seems to stem from what they have been taught before they reached college. Maybe Mom always tried to "protect" them from reality, maybe their high school experience led them to believe that they really did not have to be responsible (think of "Officer Krupke" in West Side Story).

Whatever the excuse, it only takes a quick "heart-to-heart" before they understand what is expected of them. If they don't catch on, they will soon enough when they are evaluated, critiqued, or graded. However, I would rather show respect and understanding to the 99% who do what they should do when they should do it, rather than create a blackboard jungle environment for everyone because one or two knotheads need a little maturity.

I have a question for those with the stearnest approaches to these issues. Do you really have such a problem with your students that there is nothing else that works besides such a harsh attitude? Why is it that so many of your students don't do their work on time and don't attend class properly simply because they love learning and coming to class? That may sound naive, but when we are teaching design classes, shouldn't the students be far more involved and motivated than someone teaching, say, art history to 40 non-majors who have to take a fine arts course?

I am very curious as to why there is such an apparent problem at many schools.

Jon Walker

I tell my students that time management is half the battle. It is a tough concept for many young students to understand. Perhaps it is because they have a life ahead of them.

But as I grow older and slower myself, again, I fall back on the simple fact that all of us are human.

Joani said it well:
"My thoughts on this paradigm has been that the classroom is a place for experimentation, critical thinking, dialogue, and debate. If we teach for the graphic design profession, the profession will never move forward."

A university or design school undergraduate (pre capstone design course) education is more than being prepared for deadlines and the "real world".

I also get emails from students and comments on my course evaluations saying they liked that I did some real world projects with them, gave them much real world advice, etc. But ultimately, we are there as educators to educate people to be designers. What does that mean at a deeper level beyond the business and daily practices? When will students have an opportunity to discover who they are as designers except while in the first 2-3 years of study? Most of the students, that we on this AIGA group teach (all of us too probably), did not have innate design abilities or "inner inspiration" and we all developed strategies and techniques to solve design problems and be creative. Much of the foundation for success as a designer (beyond business) is built during those critical 2-3 years in college. I simply place more importance on that and working with reality than forcing students to conform to arbitrary mid semester deadlines with zero flexibility. I'd rather penalize the project grade (up to a reasonable chronological point after the due date - no more than a few days) than ever say I will not accept an assignment at all.

My concern is that an unforgiving approach (attitude?) makes the teacher feel good and makes them think they are teaching the student by being "like the real world" and that all may be true, but, beyond that?

Joseph Coates

Joani's point was my favorite as well.

And likewise, I also believe that teaching students to be like me is doing them a disservice! Sure I'd love to have the take-away be a a true passion for the way designers think and view the world; but I remind my students that "I'm just one man" with "one man's opinion". Further, I have my brand of time management (the very statement would make my wife double over with laughter) that has served me well for almost 20 years of professional performance. But is it the best way to teach my students?

I would agree that we should teach some form of time-management that students can use as a springboard. They will ultimately need to customize these techniques to fit their own ways of getting things done. They always will.

My way is not the best way; it's just my way. I will teach the students however, how to have confidence in themselves the way I have confidence in myself. That is something we will build together over the course of the semester.

In stating earlier that final projects need to arrive "on the day that they're due (with or without you)" really only affects the students who haven't found their passion yet. Believe me, we start the semester watching a wide-screen video of Prince so that I can quickly illustrate the power of multi-level design. These students know when they start that passion for the craft will be on tap, and that this will be a class worth showing up for.

The average student in my class looks forward to the critique. I have told them that I am not interested in holding a precious grade over their heads. The process means everything, the grade means very little. And yes, I have had projects show up to the critique without their owners. We, as a group, just wait until the next class to discuss that piece.

Dominic J. Russo

From: Joseph Coates <jmcoates@...>
Date: Tue Aug 14, 2007 12:08 pm

This is not a crisis.

At most U.S. universities, it is the Instructor of a course who sets most of the policies concerning grading and attendance for that individual course. You will see variations in methods for both. There are variations per institution as to how much they set institution wide attendance and grading policies that may or may not be required for use in classrooms. If they are, they are usually common sense in nature. You can usually find that stuff either in the faculty handbook (or document of another name depending on school) or the university printed catalog. Some schools are more draconian though with controlling the classroom from the top down.

Generally speaking, the professor is head of the course, sets policy following the outline or rules set by the university. The professor being in charge is the tradition of the classroom probably for thousands of years. It seems to work.

Grading and attendance policy variations from course to course, school to school, etc. is reflective of the subjective nature of a liberal arts education. It is also a demonstration of the traditional democratic method of governance that exists in individual centers of learning. The Academy (professors, students, staff, researchers, fellows, etc.) are types of citizens with different roles in the community. The faculty senate sets the general rules. Departments have variations, if any. The deans and president run the day to day affairs and long term campus planing and are popular, or not. There are also many committees. Just like the real world!

Joseph Coates

From: "turk829k" <jon@...>
Date: Tue Aug 14, 2007 9:10 pm

I don't believe there is a crisis in graphic design education either. Nor am I unaware of how there are as many different types of administrative structures as there are universities.

The question I do not have an answer for is why is there such a strong adversarial relationship between students and their teachers at a number of institutions represented by our unscientific random sampling here? I am simply trying to understand why teachers would seemingly take pride in what appears to be a harsh "zero tolerance" policy towards any behavior that doesn't match the teacher's one and only acceptable learning pattern.

I am trying to understand the underlying rationale for why others would appear to take such pride in what I interpret as confrontational and adversarial behavior like locking students out of classrooms, throwing students out of class, "I ACCEPT NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS!" (shouting by original author, not me), and, in general, seeming to take pride in doling out punishment as the best and only way to educate a student properly.

I am also trying to understand the assumption that our classes are serving the students best when we try and create a false impersonation of the "real world." These students live in the real world everyday. And while I try and introduce them to professional practices as they mature as students, people, and designers, to say the we provide them with a "real world experience" just isn't true. Outside of their internships, we can only describe it. And that is often like describing an ocean to someone who has never seen one.

One person made a statement that when a deadline is missed, the entire design Industry takes a stability hit. Do we really believe that the industry many of us work in is so fragile that we need to protect the industry

from our students? What are we really protecting through these measures? The industry is not threatened by a blown deadline.

Can someone put all this into perspective for me? I am not saying anyone is right or wrong. I am asking about the educational goals and objectives being met through means that I am not understanding. Please don't take a defensive posture and rail against an assumed foe. Instead, educate me.

Thanks

Jon Walker

Posted by: "Meredith Davis" meredith_davis@ncsu.edu
Wed Aug 15, 2007 9:39 am (PST)

Dear colleagues:

I've watched with interest the back and forth on the issue of late student work. Quite honestly, I'm astounded that this topic has generated so much commentary as it is only one of many classroom management issues that faculty deal with and wouldn't be high on my own list of national problems, but there you have it. If the exchange provides some useful models for addressing immediate concerns, then it has served its purpose.

What I think is below the water level of this iceberg, however, is the larger issue of the culture we establish in design schools. Design faculty point with great pride to the long hours and last minute rushes of adrenalin that characterize student performance in design; you don't get that kind of output from an English major. New students arrive at school already acculturated in the lore of the design studio; late nights, grueling schedules of deliverables, and stiff competition. We reminisce about our own lost sleep as students or professionals and defend this culture by saying that it matches the demands of practice.

Well, unfortunately, it does. The expectations that we put on students carry over into the workplace and before long many designers burn out by promising unrealistic turnaround on projects, working young designers at levels that don't accommodate a balanced life, and closing down any time for reflection on the work they're doing and on the world around them. Some professions reasonably respond to crises; I recently had an appendectomy and my surgeon had just finished dinner at 11:00 when he was called back to the hospital to perform the operation. I'm thankful he was willing to work overtime. But I would hardly call a logo or website design an emergency. As a profession, we have taken the concept of "service" to levels more typically accorded to trades; if my basement is flooding, I want that plumber NOW!

I believe as academics, we need to consider how we introduce students to reflective practice. How we actually slow down and pace the physical execution of work in order to design smart. How we teach students to find the intellectual challenge within the assignment that will sustain them when, as professionals, they think they just can't face one more 4 x 9 brochure. How we teach them and their clients to value the research component of a project just as they do the billable hours in form-making on the computer. How we ask them to connect what they're doing in design to things people really care about.

As I attend design conferences and speak with faculty around the country, the constant lament I hear is that there is just too much to teach in a four-year degree program; that the addition of software, strategy, theory, history, and professional practice have overloaded an already full curriculum. Having taught and practiced for more than 30 years, however, I can confirm that students produce a lot more stuff with technology than they ever did through traditional comping and mechanical production methods. But what we ask them to do with all that extra comping time that the computer eliminated is to make more of the same. And the response to all those new requirements (history, theory, etc.) is "curriculum by accrual"; we add new content to an existing structure and pedagogy that we're just not willing to let go of or even challenge. No wonder we feel overwhelmed by the content demands of a design education and no wonder students feel like they're churning out proof of some fictional mastery.

We have to teach smart. We have to look at trends whose trajectories are likely to define practice for students across a fifty-year career. We have to challenge traditional paradigms of design education and invent new ones. We have to integrate content across courses and scaffold experiences so that students don't start over with every project or every course. Not all new content requires its own turf. And we have to value the

reflective component of design as much as we do the active one. There are some great models for doing this and where they are successful, life is less frenetic; students are engaged in producing a body of work, in understanding big ideas that are at the core of the discipline and the practice. In other words, they behave like students, not trainees, and their output and mastery build across time, not in some last minute rush to the finish.

This is not to say we need to disconnect from the demands of practice or that deadlines don't matter. Like it or not, there is an unforgiving world outside of school and changing the nature of practice is a long-term project. And I do believe that schools can model the successful kinds of existing practices in which we hope our students will be employed. But a pattern of late work is usually a symptom of something else and you don't fix the problem by simply treating the symptom with policies. Now there's a discussion we could have!

Meredith Davis
Professor of Graphic Design
NC State University