

Shana Salaff

• Statement of Teaching Philosophy and Strategies

Both technical knowledge and creative development are absolutely essential components in any fine arts curriculum. I believe that I have two main responsibilities as a teacher: firstly, to communicate necessary knowledge and techniques, and secondly, to encourage each student's creative development and overall growth. I believe strongly in the necessity of a good foundations program in any art field, and Ceramics in particular. Academic rigor, however, needs to be accompanied by an openness to new ideas and to individual exploration.

I encourage students' creative development and overall artistic growth by tying assignments to personal exploration and engaging students in critical dialogues about content as well as technique. Assignments are graded based upon students' research and preparation, technical competency in form and surface treatment (appropriate to their level), degree of creativity, and overall effort. I emphasize technique and craftsmanship as well as encouraging students to push themselves and to experiment to broaden their knowledge base and their sense of what they can accomplish.

I enjoy teaching introductory ceramics classes, because they are an opportunity to initiate creative processes in students. I preface each assignment with image presentations as well as demonstrations, ranging from historical lectures to images of contemporary artistic practice. I also include a very brief introduction to Ceramic Chemistry because I believe that this demystifies the material. Beginning students write response papers to the Ceramic History lectures I present them as a way to encourage a deeper connection to the material while practicing writing skills in a low-risk setting. Finally, I provide active instruction on critiquing techniques so that students can learn to think and speak critically about both their own and others' work.

In more advanced classes, students become more aware of the nuances of form and surface, and it is exciting to watch them develop their own unique artistic voice. I ask advanced students to articulate their ideas in an artist statement. Advanced students in my classes research a topic in ceramic history and/or contemporary ceramics, which they present to the rest of the class in the form of a PowerPoint presentation. This gives them the chance to discover resources available for both general research and ceramics in particular.

In summary, my goal as a teacher is to give each student the tools to allow them to do their best work possible, and to inspire each student to connect to their own creative potential. I aspire to teach my students competence and self-awareness while opening them up to the possibilities for creativity within the exciting and ever-expanding field of Ceramics. A strong work ethic, attention to detail, creative problem solving, and enthusiasm are all traits that I bring to the classroom and that I encourage in my students.