

Teaching Philosophy – Lindsay Tan (tan@auburn.edu)

Based on over a decade of work in the field I believe that interior design is best served by a formative professional education, the core purpose of which is to shape students into practitioners who are conscientious and thorough, and decidedly passionate, in their work.

I am reflective and purposeful in my teaching, starting from a philosophy grounded in theories of constructivism and active learning. Active learning, in the broad sense, shifts the focus of activity from the teacher to the learner. This student-centered approach suggests the use of multi-modal learning – listening, reading, writing, discussing, and problem-solving – and higher-order thinking tasks such as analysis, synthesis and criticism. A constructivist approach to active learning considers the influence of a learner's *constructs*, or mental filters, and the different ways knowledge is shaped when new information interacts with existing. This approach plays off of a student's innate curiosity about the world and how things work; it suggests the use of discovery, hands-on experiences, project- and task-based learning and collaboration. I believe this philosophy articulates well with the studio-based learning environment at the core of our nationally ranked interior design program.

From this theoretical foundation I create an environment in which students can positively shape their own learning experiences. From day one I make sure students have buy-in on the idea that they are responsible for their own learning, and understand how this perspective will shape the course. In this environment students are not simply left to fend for themselves; for every new content area I provide guidance and good examples early on, and then create multiple opportunities for problem-based application that allow room to fail, to explore possibilities without a given solution, and to seek resources before seeking assistance from myself or their classmates. I bring theory to action by challenging them to think deeply about their goals within the context of the course and beyond. I also aim to provide instruction that can reach everyone – for example by explaining a process verbally, showing visual demonstrations, and then guiding students through hands-on exercises. Lesson plans target specific objectives but remain flexible to accommodate unfolding events and individual student concerns.

I employ a conversational lecture style in a relaxed environment that encourages open discussion, reasoned questions, and outcome-oriented creativity. Although I cultivate a casual and approachable teaching style, I hold my students to the highest standards of professionalism in their work. Comments from my student evaluations frequently address my strict grading policies and elevated expectations. They also show appreciation for my fun, approachable, and supportive attitude. Most of my students embrace my style of teaching and enthusiastically take charge of their own learning. It is rewarding to see that many carry their new attitudes, values, and beliefs about learning into their future coursework and careers. My student, peer, and external evaluations of teaching consistently report that I am an effective teacher; my student evaluation averages have been in the range of 4.98-5.81 each semester and I have been honored with the SGA Outstanding Faculty Award (2015).

My professional experience and NCIDQ certification, the national professional exam for interior designers, enable me to teach where I am most needed, and so I have successfully managed seven new course preps since Fall 2011. Each semester I adapt the specifics of my approach to what I know of the incoming cohort of students – their strengths and weaknesses, and interests – to make the course content relevant to their needs. I am also proactive in analyzing and resolving weaknesses.

My strong pedagogical foundation and teaching experience across three Universities have further enabled me to make valuable contributions to our undergraduate and graduate programs beyond day-to-day teaching activities – marketing and recruitment; curriculum development and assessment; accreditation compliance; and strategic planning.

I enjoy the challenges and opportunities inherent in teaching, and will continue to demonstrate my value as a teacher and colleague through tenure and beyond.