

Teaching Philosophy

“CODE IS POETRY”

Amongst people who code, exists a mantra made popular by WordPress. It is “Code is Poetry”. Code flows from one line to the next. It has constraints, semantics, meanings, and structure just like poetry. In the same way that one part of a stanza cannot stand alone without the rest of the poem, one line of code is unable to do something without the corresponding lines of code. Well-written code should flow with a sort of simple elegance that you also find in poetry. It is this appreciation for code that I try to get my students to understand and appreciate.

The only way to be a writer is to write, the only way to be a painter is to paint, and the only way to be a web developer or programmer is to code. My responsibility as an instructor is to facilitate the learning process so my students can learn. In computer coding classes, this does not come from sitting in a classroom listening to me as a professor as I “profess” my knowledge on the material. It comes from the students taking what they hear in my lectures, read in their textbooks, and see coded in class then sitting down in front of a keyboard for themselves and writing code.

COURSE COMPONENTS AND GRADING

By requiring numerous coding assignments, mini-projects, case studies, and projects allows students the opportunity to practice writing code. The more they code, the more natural coding comes to them and the easier it becomes to code. I encourage my students, through the use of assignments, to learn how to use resources online to not only learn how to be a better web designer, but to also learn how to use the resources available to learn new subjects beyond what is covered in their college courses.

Computers by their very nature are very unforgiving. A missing period, comma, parenthesis, or semi-colon can completely break the layout of a web page or cause software to crash. As a result, a student missing a closing tag in their code or missing a required punctuation mark will lose points. Depending on the number of errors, these points can quickly add up. As a result, to provide my students with ample opportunities to not only practice their coding but also to achieve the grade they want, I assign numerous homework assignments, case-studies, mini-projects, WordPress blog posts, and milestones for projects in addition to several tests. Their tests are designed to provide them another opportunity to practice their coding and have the practical coding as a large percentage of their exam grade.

During my lectures, I focus attention on coding techniques, accepted use cases, and relevant issues in addition to the code itself. I cover in depth what the code is, how to use it, and what it does. In my Web Design I class, I assign a case study that they work on throughout the entire semester. As part of my lectures for Web Design 1, I record a video that

goes along with each lecture. During that video, I do a coding example so I can show my students how to do proper coding and so they can see how making one coding change can have an impact on the entire web site. My coding example for Web Design I is my personal biography page where I use the new code elements, properties, and attributes that we covered in class. This allows them to see the code they saw in my lecture used in a real-life setting. To ensure students watch the required videos, I assign a quiz for each video that they can't take until they have watched the video. These quizzes asked questions based on what I do and talk about in the video, so if they don't watch the videos they won't do well on the quizzes. I have heard several positive comments about how much having the videos is helpful to the students.

MY RESPONSIBILITIES AS AN INSTRUCTOR

Since the students that I teach are typically ones that plan to enter the workforce and not necessarily the world of academia, I see it as my responsibility to simulate the real world in my class as much as possible. As a result, deadlines are strictly enforced. Furthermore, in addition to all of their coding and web design assignments, students have to write several papers, give one or more class presentations, and work on a group project. This provides them the opportunity to practice their coding, design, writing, speaking, communication, and teamwork skills. I provide appropriate critique and feedback to help them improve their skills and learn from any mistakes.

It is my responsibility to provide a classroom environment that is conducive to learning where students are able to come in, hear the material, see the material used in a real-world example, and provide the tools, means, and opportunities to use the material themselves in their own coding. I make myself available for regularly scheduled office hours, both in-person and online using Zoom, as well as encouraging my students to email me at any time with questions or problems they are having with the material. A few semesters ago, I had one student thank me for not only my quick responses to their emails, but for giving detailed answers that help explain where they went wrong and how to fix it. The student went on to tell me that they have never had a teacher that answered their emails let alone answered his questions to the detail and depth that I have.

EXPECTATIONS FROM STUDENTS

Not only should students expect things from their instructors, but instructors should also have expectations of their students and they should hold them to those expectations. In the same way that I respect each one of my students, I expect my students to be respectful of their fellow classmates as well as of the instructor. I do my best to be adequately prepared for every class to help facilitate their learning of code, and so it is only natural that I expect them to be prepared for class. I expect them to do their best and put in effort on every assignment, test, and project and I will grade what they submit with efficiency and fairness without compromising the course standards and my expectations.