

**Shannon Gilley**

**Teaching Philosophy Statement**

After having spent several years fully engaged in the craft of animation, I have long since found great satisfaction in sharing my experiences with students and collaborating with them in the lifelong learning process. Cultivating a student's ability to become a visual storyteller and problem-solver, make emotional connections with audiences, and create engaging informational media are paramount goals in my classroom. I lead my students in their pursuits to entertain, educate, and persuade their intended audiences.

My specialties lie in the multidisciplinary production pipeline of computer animated media. Through my courses, students learn industry-proven approaches to tackling the challenges of designing and animating in the digital age. Whether in an introductory- or portfolio-level course, I bring students through a professional-quality process of analysis, strategy, execution, and evaluation. Students gradually evolve from understanding tools to designing innovative solutions for complex communication challenges. They breathe life into characters, visualize products and architecture, bring imaginary places to the screen, and show how science can make our world a better place to live.

My teaching methods revolve around a multi-directional flow of generating information. I prefer an environment where the instructor engaging the student is just the beginning; it is essential that students move toward becoming self-reliant in wielding technically complex software tools, critically analyzing their own work and that of their peers, and developing skills in constructive interpersonal communication. Developing this broad range of skills demands that my classroom includes demonstration and discussion, research and design, innovation and production, and presentation and critique, with students engaging themselves, their peers, a broad range of learning resources, the professional industry, and of course the instructor.

Success is measured largely through the students' models, animations, and renderings as viewed through the lens of an industry professional. Does this character behave in a way with which the audience can empathize? Does that 3D model closely resemble its real-life counterpart in full detail? Does this educational short clearly engage and inform the intended target audience? Further, formal and informal feedback from students on their classroom experience is of great importance as I am regularly looking for ways to make my instruction as vital as possible. In addition, program-level analysis of student outcomes, discussed regularly with my fellow faculty, is a key measure of what we are doing well and where we can improve.

When reflecting on my career as an educator and animator, I find it very satisfying that my own perspectives have broadened far beyond their initial focus on using software tools that make things move, to encompass nuances of form and performance, strategic design of visual communication, and a multi-faceted approach to achieving teaching and learning goals. My students, in kind, have over time gained a greater appreciation for a holistic approach to animation. A great many of my students have earned their places in the creative environments of commercial, game, and film production, and I am proud of the work they have created as well as my role in helping them get there.