

## Joe Payne

### Teaching Statement

Students producing work that they are proud of is at the core of everything I do.

I try to create an environment in which the expectation for exploration is strong, where the quality of product is high, where hard work is rewarded, and critical analysis is key. Above all, I teach with passion and excitement. I believe that this excitement is infectious, and is one of my strongest traits as a mentor. This produces an atmosphere in which students are passionate about their work; they do their best, and are proud of what they accomplish.

Currently, I teach digital media, sound, and projection design to MFA lighting, scenic, and costume design students and undergraduate BA students. While an MFA program for sound and projections is on the horizon, it has not materialized yet.

All the subjects I teach are a combination of art and technology; most often, the creation of art through technology. To that end, I create a series of projects that have a technological component within an artistic framework, giving students both specific skillsets and creative expression. This is a challenge for many, but is also what makes my courses exciting and my teaching rewarding.

I rarely create several small assignments dealing with narrow topics or single outcomes. Instead, I create fewer and larger projects that require many interrelated steps. This gives more time to explore many elements, and based on the student's capabilities and inclinations, allows the final product to be weighted in one area more than another. Ultimately, the individual technologies are examined as tools, making it clear that any number of these different tools can be used to create the desired artistic outcome.

I am passionate about mentorship. Individual consideration was important to me as a student, and is important to me as a teacher. I try to give everyone individual attention, giving advice and guidance at every stage in the development of a project.

Critical analysis of the work is crucial to the learning process. Every project is presented to the entire class, analyzed by the student, critiqued and discussed by the classmates, and openly evaluated by me. Through this, the students learn from all of the successes and failures in the room, not just their own.

As an example of the methodology of my coursework, the following is one of the primary projects in Introduction to Sound Design:

Title:

Sound and Music for a Given Monologue.

Areas of Focus:

Multitrack mixing, music and sound effect choices and editing, voice recording, and storytelling.

Requirements:

1. The student selects a monologue from a limited list.
2. The student then chooses music and sound effects that fit the setting of the text, support it thematically and emotionally, using traditional methods of cueing, such as framing, transition, and/or underscoring.
3. The student will record a voice performing the text.
4. The product must be a stereo mixed recording to be played back in the classroom.
5. The project is presented in class, with critique to follow.
6. The student submits a paper, which outlines their design choices and process.

This is how the above project is implemented. First, I present the requirements of the project, which gives the students context for all of the steps as we move forward. This includes listening to examples of soundscapes that I have created and past student examples. Then we explore multitrack mixing software in our computer lab, focusing on music editing, envelopes, and effects. This is followed by voice recording techniques, which begins with hands-on exploration of the characteristics of various microphones, spaces, and situations. Next, we discuss the use of sound effects, including theatrical vs. natural sounds, the aural world without visual context, mood enhancement, and location clues. We discuss many musical forms and the key factors that dictate aesthetic choices in music, including the dangers of recognizable music and lyrics. Finally, we investigate music mastering for playback in multiple spaces. All of these explorations take place while the students work on their projects, both inside and outside of class. This allows time to answer questions, give individual support and guidance, and to help students who are struggling with an aspect of the project.

In the end, students will have explored many specific aspects of sound mixing and recording techniques, as well as artistic exploration of music and storytelling through sound and text. When presented, students will also hear multiple examples of the same text, handled in different ways, demonstrating different results. Through student and faculty critique, students become more adept at recognizing aesthetic choices and the quality of product execution.

Moving forward in the same course, the music and text project is followed by an assignment that prepares the student for sound design in a theatre, as opposed to the studio. It requires the student to dissect their initial recorded product, integrate notes from the group, and present the soundscape using theatrical playback software in a three dimensional sonic environment. The student presents this secondary project in our media lab, which is a 1/6<sup>th</sup> scale theatre with lighting, projections, and a full locational surround sound system.

My methodology uses multi-step projects, mentorship, critical analysis, and passion. This is consistent throughout all of the courses I teach. Projection Design starts with an assignment centered around creating unified video and imagery to be projected on non-traditional surfaces, using masking and mapping techniques. Digital rendering begins with multiple software platforms that explore options in the presentation of design ideas. Computer Aided Drafting starts by three dimensionally drafting the student's bedroom, which gives them the sequential tools to begin drafting scenery. Digital Portfolio pieces together student work into a marketable package.

All of this leads to developing young artists who can execute imaginative ideas through any technology at their disposal. It also makes them proud of the work they create, which I hope will lead to a life of continued creation.