

MARIA DELGADO

PH.D. / Graduate Part-time Instructor

1250 14th Street, Suite 2000
Denver, Colorado

P: (970) 391 2460
E: maria.delgadodeleon@ucdenver.edu
W: www.mariadelgadodeleon.com

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Throughout my life, acquiring knowledge drove my passion for learning. Learning gave me the power to communicate my thoughts confidently. When I started teaching, naturally, my knowledge was tested; one must fully understand a subject before teaching it to someone else. However, I quickly discovered that teaching was more than the knowledge a professor obtains throughout their professional and educational career. For me, teaching also became about *learning how students learn* and *balancing* that information to communicate the subject matter in a classroom to motivate, empower, and enthuse students.

Teaching students the principles of architectural design, digital media, and construction is a challenging yet vital aspect of my career. This challenge stems from the fast-paced technological design world that is continuously embracing new applied software and techniques. With time as a constraint, we ask students to absorb and replicate a vast curriculum to elevate the level of work in their academic portfolios and support their demanding studio courses. To help students with this challenge, I incorporate balance as a means to give students a sense of security and to build their confidence as autonomously minded individuals.

As a designer, I value the cross-discipline aspects of architectural history, digital media, graphics principles, typography, and 3D modeling and printing. In my ARCH 3801 Digital Media course syllabus, I have identified clear learning objectives. To help students achieve the course objectives when in class, I create engaging lectures, and I circulate in the classroom giving individual critiques in order to enhance personal graphic feedback and to assist with technical challenges. These activities motivate students and encourage exploration, creativity, and independent thought. I have also developed video tutorials posted on my course Canvas that students can reference at any moment of the day. These *student-centered* tutorials complement the class material and allow students to customize their learning styles. My students can visually access and reference the videos when questions arise, and they have the ability to stop and replay a video at any time. Using a balance of media such as books, videos, lectures, and the like allows students to repeat and retain concepts; therefore, each student can learn at his or her own balanced pace. Encouraging each student to be “in control of the mouse” assures the student is independently designing and producing.

Foundational studio courses I have taught are structurally distinct from the digital media electives. There is a sense of quiet inner reflection in Design Studio One that differentiates itself from the fast-paced Introduction to Digital Media detailed above. Design Studio 1 concentrates on hand drawing techniques and multiple iterations of an evolved design. Although the course outcomes are entirely different, I deliver the courses using the same teaching principles. Group lectures that introduce fundamental hand drawing techniques balanced with individualized desk critiques for each student to create an opportunity to understand their design process and encourage exploration of new options. There are times when I encourage students to break the balance composition and create drastic measures to convey their design intent. Regardless of whether I am trying to teach students about keeping the balance or breaking it, the design process always consists of encouraging students to explore the experiential manipulation of space and form. I want all my

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students to leave my courses with a sense of courage and confidence, which I instill in them by treating each individual student with the highest level of respect. [Note: Studio 1 developed by Amir Alrubaiy]

The International Design Build courses I developed with Jo VandenBurg and Phil Gallegos are extremely rigorous, fast-paced and a *high-impact* practice. In conjunction with the local Nicaraguan community, Jo VandenBurg and I internationally lead undergraduate students to build a school in 10 days. This experience challenges students to find the balance in a completely unconventional classroom setting. The setting allows for the ultimate learning experience: real-life exposure. Pressured to come up with practical solutions on-site, students communicate their ideas quickly. To tackle the pressures, as teachers, we balance and prioritize the urgent project needs to collectively work together to achieve overall project success.

Whether balance relates to time management, a graphically composed poster, the structure of a building, or a pinned-up project presentation, balance creates stability. A steady pace is what undergraduate students need in order to complete tasks as small as a homework assignment or as large as a college degree. As a Graduate Part-time Instructor, my intent is to further that mission every day. I give scholars a strong foundation for success with the foundational design classes that I have developed and taught. I tell each student that their work is an extension and reflection of themselves, so "put forth work you are passionate about and proud to show." My past teaching experience has allowed me to explore how students learn so that I may teach effectively and in a balanced manner. I look forward to evolving as a teacher and inspiring future students to produce their best work.