

Cesar A. Cruz
Statement of Teaching Philosophy

In class lectures, seminar discussions, design studios, and one-on-one tutoring sessions I employ a conversational teaching style based largely on the Socratic Method. Through this style I am able to build a rapport with students, which immediately aids in the learning process. Beginning on the first day of class, I engage individual students with a casual greeting and light conversation as they enter the classroom and find their seats. I do this because as an instructor I believe and have witnessed how you set the tone for the successful conduct of your class with your very first interaction with each student. I continue this approach as students linger when they are leaving the class and throughout the semester. These simple techniques have the benefit of making students feel more comfortable during desk critiques, contributing to class discussions, or replying to questions during a lecture.

During the class period or studio session itself, I begin to engage students with basic questions related to the class material or design project. This enables students to easily and safely participate in a discourse. Then I slowly coax them into more in-depth discussions with leading questions. After subsequent rounds of questions and answers, before anyone has even realized it I have steered the conversation to talking about more substantive architectural issues. Along the way I pose alternative viewpoints. I encourage students to formulate and to express informed opinions. And, where applicable, I encourage students to address and challenge each other's positions. The value of this method in seminars and lectures is that I am not the only one speaking. I have engaged the students, singly at first and then to an ever increasing group of contributors. In the course of such interactions, together we have advanced our understanding of architecture.

In the context of an architectural design studio, the one-on-one student-teacher interaction is even more crucial. As such the burden on the instructor in guiding their students towards a final, quality design project is even greater. Here I make an even more concerted effort to elicit from each student their design goals, inspirations, and baseline knowledge. Knowing those things I can then steer them towards influential ideas or concepts, multiple design approaches and perspectives, and historical and contemporary precedents that will add to their depth of knowledge and aid in their design process. I believe that there are all kinds of architectural audiences for all kinds of different works of architecture. So my intention in studio is not to impart to the students my design preferences. It is rather to help make each student's project better within their vision and intent for the design.

I believe that my approach to students is one that is highly engaging, inclusive, flexible, and conducive to learning for very diverse student populations. My teaching style has been especially helpful in teaching students from many different backgrounds, cultures, and nationalities. But most importantly, this style allows each student to have a voice in my classes.