

Personal Statement by Kirk Widra M.Ed.

As an educator, I prefer to teach in a hands on learning environment that engages the student directly on a variety of levels. I find that students studying marketing and media design gain a deeper understanding of the material with direct experience rather than simply the use of traditional rote methods. In many ways the instruction of the various aspects of marketing and media design parallels education itself. Marketing and media design is akin to the educational process in that it presents information that requires a degree of reasoning, influences choices, introduces new knowledge, and builds on past experience and skills to create meaning and understanding. These parallels serve to inform my instructional methodology and are reflective of my belief in a constructivist approach to education.

“The constructivist model requires concrete experiences rather than abstract presentations” (Orlich, Harder, Callahan, and Brown pg. 39). This is an important factor as teaching marketing and media design is difficult and the assessment of such is somewhat subjective. Though it is easy to breakdown the components and the process of marketing something- the how- the intangible parts of the equations- the why- can only be answered with direct contact or experience with the product or service to gain a deeper understanding of it. However, much like education itself, this may prove difficult as looking at new and unfamiliar information objectively is often impeded by the viewers’ inherent bias. Students must be purposefully challenged to go past simple knowledge and cursory facts to gain a deeper understanding of the world around them.

The socioeconomically framed state of education today, and by extension the world of marketing and media design that in part supports it, has taught us how to view the world and identify with our possessions. This unfortunately has arguably become the way we gauge our self worth and place in society. Noted media authority Douglas Rushkoff goes as far as to say that marketing and media are, “the way people, cultures, and institutions create, share, and influence each other’s values.” He sees marketing and media as the landscape where this interaction takes place, and “literacy as the ability to participate consciously in it” ([http://www. edge.org/3rd_culture/bios/rushkoff.html](http://www.edge.org/3rd_culture/bios/rushkoff.html)). This is the value I see in using a constructivist approach, regardless of whether students are simply just studying marketing and media design or participating in the development of it, to achieve literacy they “...must construct what they learn” (Orlich, et al. pg. 39) This process in affect asks students to challenge what they have learned, to break it down and see it for what it really is in attempt to build meaning and foster and a deeper understanding of themselves and others.

Sadly many never bother to challenge the norms and behaviors the media has furnished

them. In fact many unfortunately will look to the corporate entities for their very identity. My hope is that by challenging their views and choices, and most importantly the motivations behind them, students will begin to question the nature of their experiences. It is my further hope they begin to question the long-standing social constructs, economic and otherwise, that continue to divide us and in doing so gain a sense of personal and social empowerment that will serve them for a lifetime.

References

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