

## Statement of Teaching Philosophy and Interests

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*“Is this art? Is this design? Is this research? Is this... a waste of public funding? What is it any good for anyway? Why should we actually care?”*

These are some of the questions that often pop into people’s mind when encountering the type of research that I do for the very first time. And these are questions worth asking. With boundaries between art, design and research becoming increasingly blurred, and with their agendas getting increasingly diversified and complex, making sense of the field of interactive media and ubiquitous computing – let alone having an overview of what is actually happening in the area – is not an easy task, not even for students in the field itself. Its agenda is indeed less straightforward than say cancer research. It is therefore our duty as teachers to help students understand what this field is and can be about, so that their work will be relevant in the society of today and tomorrow, and thereby give satisfying answers to the questions above.

When teaching design oriented towards interactive media and ubiquitous computing, we should help students acquire particular skills and knowledge to put into use in their future professional careers. These should prepare them for a practice of design that will bring value and meaning into people’s lives. In general, students should gain thorough knowledge of the body of work of this design area and a good overview of related work, including how the area connects to other design practices, related research fields and related academic disciplines. They should acquire in-depth knowledge of relevant design theories, concepts and methodologies, become able to reflect, analyse and criticize works, identify what design issues are relevant, apply practical and conceptual knowledge in addressing them, and reflect on their design process. Within projects, they should be able to study and understand the contexts of use that they design for, keep a user-centred perspective, as well as be able to carry out the development of prototypes, document their work and communicate it to others.

When studying arts, working with interactive media and ubiquitous computing differs from design in certain ways. As opposed to designing *for* someone or a certain situation, art practice is more open-ended and often a question of personal expression. Therefore, students should grow an ability to develop their own voice, refine their style and be original. They should learn how to treat computational media in the same way as people treat paint, clay or sound: as a material. They should fully understand this material and what it can bring to their art practice, be able to improvise with the material and let their interaction with it evolve toward new directions. They should become able to implement their artistic visions and evaluate in what ways their audiences receive their work based on how they executed it.

Because of the tight relationship that exists between design and the arts, I strongly believe that students working with interactive media and ubiquitous computing technology – whether design or art students – should be able to navigate seamlessly between the two fields while still knowing what differences lies between them in terms of approach, ways of proceeding and end-results. Both types of students should also have an open mind, develop critical thinking skills, a certain design “flair” and an ability to think outside of box. Importantly, they should both understand that interactive media implies that the user / audience engages in a dialogue with them through their interactions. They should be able to reflect on the new relationships this creates and act accordingly. In order to be able to develop such skills, students also need to be provided with a creative learning environment where they can receive adequate tutoring and receive space and time for practicing and experimenting, by themselves and in groups. Importantly, they should be given some room to fail in their experiments, in order to grow.

As a teacher, my ultimate goals are to provide students with such skills and knowledge; to help them develop and stand on their own feet; and to bring them to the cutting edge of the field. So far, I have had the opportunity to practice this philosophy through course responsibility, guest lecturer appointments, course assistant duties, administrative service and informal student projects advising. With the help of experience acquired in my own research and design and art practice, I have incorporated in this teaching a combination of knowledge from user-centred interaction design, digital media, engineering, with the addition of culture theory and sociological perspectives.

My relation to students is friendly and non-hierarchical. I consider it important to be accessible to them, both in terms of openness and of availability. Although I am not an elitist, I set a high standard in my teaching and expect a lot from my students, at the same time as I do my best to make sure that no

one is left behind. I see students as peers who have a responsibility in their education and have their own knowledge and perspectives to contribute with. I am genuinely interested in how well the students are learning and cannot think of anything more satisfying than to watch a light bulb switch on over a student's head when they start to realise something they had not thought of before. I perceive my role as their teacher as someone who should guide them towards relevant knowledge, give them the opportunity to get an embodied understanding of what they learn in order to develop their skills, and motivate them to fulfil their potentials. Therefore, I have been teaching to students using a combination of lectures, group discussions of literature, hands-on design and prototyping activities, and individual/group projects supervision.

The fields of interactive digital media and ubiquitous computing are highly dynamic. Therefore, I find it important to closely follow their evolution in order to keep my teaching as up-to-date as possible. As these fields tie together areas of aesthetics, everyday life, contemporary culture, technology and society, they gather around them a number of different disciplines and communities. This makes information spread out across various sources and makes it difficult but nevertheless crucial to provide students with resources that give them a clear overview and broad perspective of the fields, and as well as tools to navigate through these resources. In connection to my lectures which usually include sections about a body of relevant projects, I have at several occasions compiled databases of relevant information and made them available to the students on websites created specifically for my lectures or courses. Because ubiquitous computing is not just a group of technologies but a way of thinking about technology, its design and its potential use and impact on everyday life, it is also important for students to read relevant literature and be acquainted with past and current discussions and critiques of the field. Therefore, I also make sure to provide students with a list of relevant literature to discuss.

I try as much as possible to create a dynamic learning environment when teaching to students. I find it important in terms of teaching style to make sure to maintain a clear red line throughout a course while still being flexible and open to feedback. Therefore, I prepare my teaching carefully but keep it to a certain extent open to improvising in situation, when I feel the need to adapt to new interesting questions that come up in the course of the teaching, and to the students' needs and expectations. I also find it important to facilitate the comprehension of lectures with the help of powerpoint slides that act as a background visual support to my talks, as well as audiovisual material and live demos for giving concrete illustrations of the points I wish to make. The technological part of my teaching is meant to provide students, whichever educational background they might have, with the technical skills necessary to produce working prototypes themselves, and not just make sketches or rely on someone else to make prototypes for them. Learning how to use technology as design material and how to incorporate it into physical artefacts in real world settings - whether it be in furniture, clothing, mobile settings, homes, etc - is an essential skill when working with interactive media and ubiquitous computing that cannot be bypassed. Finally, besides giving students an embodied understanding of the topic they are learning about, the design and prototyping group activities that I usually combine in my teaching are also meant to encourage the students to get actively involved and to interact with their fellow students in a productive way.

I am constantly looking for ways to improve my teaching skills and develop my teaching philosophy. I try as much as possible to learn from previous teaching experiences, following an iterative teaching development strategy: making incremental improvements to what went well, and trying out new approaches and angles to what did not go so well. I make sure to constantly develop my body of knowledge and my understanding of different learning environments and cultures of teaching. I learn a lot from watching others teach, and by reflecting on how their teaching techniques could be applied in my case. For this purpose, I have visited a number of technology, design and art schools to observe how they go about and to learn from their experiences. I have also had several in-depth discussions with art and design students about what they consider is important in their education and what is the best way to teach it.

In the past few years, I have tremendously grown as a teacher, from an insecure first-year Ph.D. student who did her best to convey her interest about her research field, to a confident lecturer with a much stronger understanding of learning processes and student needs. My biggest wish is to have the opportunity to continue to develop as a teacher, and to take part in the education of the students who through their design and art practice, will tomorrow set the standard for what is "good" and "worth caring about" in interactive media and ubiquitous computing.