

Jordan Beck | Teaching Statement

My goal as an educator has always been to provide students with engaging, personally meaningful learning experiences while ensuring that they leave my class with the knowledge and skills they need to practice creative and effective human-centered design.

I accomplish this goal in three ways. First, I create inclusive classroom environments characterized by trust and mutual respect. Trust and respect are necessary qualities for students to be creative, participate in discussions and critique sessions, and to be comfortable enough try new things, fail, and learn. Second, I make my curriculum relevant by grounding it in real-world contexts. I develop courses with input from practicing interaction and experience designers, product designers, and instructional designers. We develop project briefs together and evaluate course content to ensure that students are learning the methods and tools they need to secure internships and entry-level positions in industry at companies like Lyft, IBM, and GE Digital, where some of my industry collaborators are based. Third, I show students just how much I enjoy teaching. My own unconventional background in the arts, humanities, and informatics, has led me to develop a unique style in the classroom that mixes seminar-style theoretical discussions, sketching and prototyping sessions, rapid design projects, design critiques, and the occasional engaging lecture.

Students at the College of Information Sciences and Technology at Penn State have responded especially well to my unconventional, engaging approach. As one student expressed on an exit survey conducted by my department, *“This course was AMAZING! I felt like the professor actually cared about what he was teaching, and taught in such a way that the students were challenged, and faced situations that they would face in the real world with a real job. I think this class was extremely beneficial to my learning here at PSU.”* Other students pointed out the value of working on design projects that were grounded in *“real-world situations”* and characterized class discussions and instructor feedback as *“clear”* and *“helpful.”* I was especially pleased that one student appreciated *“how different this class was”* from the others they had taken at the College of IST. The educators that meant the most to me were the ones who managed to create learning experiences that challenged my expectations.

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Course Summaries

2018- IST 331: Foundations of Human-Centered Design. This course orients students to key theoretical ideas and practical tools and methods to practice human-centered design. My course emphasized design theory, qualitative research techniques for data collection and analysis, and idea generation and presentation. All material taught reflects the needs of undergrads seeking summer internships or entry-level positions in industry.

2015-2016 I604: Interaction Design Theory (w/Erik Stolterman). This graduate-level course supports students in developing a deep, intellectual understanding of professional design practice. It involves examining and discussing design as a process of inquiry, thought, and action.

2014-2016 I694: HCI Master's Capstone (w/Eli Blevis and w/Jeffrey Bardzell and Shaowen Bardzell). This is the HCI/d capstone course. I was responsible for guiding and supporting students at all stages of their design work, including: problem framing, primary and secondary research, sketching, prototyping, and presenting research and design outcomes.

2013 I590 Rapid Design (w/Martin A. Siegel). This studio-based course consists of 13 weeklong design projects, each of which is co-developed with an industry partner. Students received design briefs on Monday, conducted client interviews via Skype on Tuesday, and submitted design proposals on Friday. I worked with Marty to facilitate industry partnerships, develop project briefs, and provide guidance to student design teams at all stages of their work.