

**Manfred Becker**  
**Teaching Statement**

Teaching in seminar- and class rooms and townhalls across Canada in the last 15 years taught me that film production as a means of communication needs to be framed in larger context, that of the creator of visual texts, in a relationship to the audience, which includes a direct responsibility to society at large. Filmmakers create visions of the world that are adopted by audiences. As a consequence, teaching film as an art form requires to address issues of representation, authorial voice, questions of objectivity and neutrality, authenticity and artificiality, performance, filmmaker and subject as well as text and visual relationships.

I consider a collaborative spirit of discussion and participation in the classroom as a necessity to approach the challenges for each student's individual goal. That includes developing critical viewing skills through class engagement with the history and current issues of filmmaking practice. In my teaching I strive to question, nurture and strengthen student's ideas of film as a medium of change.

The purpose of my teaching approach is to assist and support students at each stage in the making of fiction, documentary and alternative film from initial research to exhibition, by equipping them with the skills and expertise, as well as a historical understanding and critical overview of the social, economic and aesthetic conditions which have informed the development of filmmaking practice. Students are guided to discuss and confront the major theoretical and practical issues surrounding documentary filmmaking.

My goal is to make my students stop and think. I urge them to embrace critical and independent thought, a kind of intellectual responsibility, by engaging with texts on the screen and in print, and then respecting and analyzing their personal reactions to them. If you know who you are in relation to someone else's ideas, then you're invested in your society: you care about how people do things.

I do believe in democratizing the classroom: in a seminar setting, I communicate to students from the beginning that the onus is on them to lead discussions. I want them to go through the active process of making discoveries by comparing perspectives and disagreeing with each other rather than simply listening passively to me as the teacher's interpretation of a given text. That includes maintaining a spirit of both debate and civility. I ask students come to class with outlines of key themes, a list of questions, and even references to specific films. At the same time, in my own preparation for class, I make extensive notes as to the essential points I'd like to see covered in our discussion, and I'll consistently draw the discussion back to those points to avoid getting sidetracked.

By the end of each semester, I want students will have developed an enhanced overall understanding of all aspects of film pre-production, production and post-production, an overview of some of the historical trends in filmmaking, a knowledge of some of the key theoretical and critical issues in film, enhanced skills in researching, interviewing, directing, and visual storytelling, and an ability to transfer theoretical, critical and historical knowledge to the production of their own films.

Beyond all direct teaching goal, I want students to gain an enthusiasm and respect for the art form of film, its broader implications on our contemporary society which is now so saturated with information, images and sounds, and finally I want them to adopt a thoughtful respect for the potential power of the medium to influence and shape public perception of a group, individual or thematic.