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## Teaching Philosophy

99 is not 100. That's it. You can stop reading.

Fine, allow me to explain; this adage is the most oft-used phrase heard in my classroom. The idea was inspired by Valter dos Santos, a Catador (picker of recyclables) from Vik Muniz' documentary, *Waste Land*. His philosophy begins with the question, does trashing one soda can really make a difference? His answer: one does make a difference, or, 99 is not 100. My philosophy refers to how a student looks at their own work, and how far they choose to take it. It is rooted in constant self-assessment and leads to confidence in vision.

The idea encourages a student's work ethic and succinctly expresses another recurring theme appearing in my rubrics: craftsmanship. I want them to take their craft as far as they are able. When a student is asked to look one more time at a piece, they are required to answer the question, "Am I satisfied?" Through this process of guided self-critique, they become more thoughtful and confident in their own work, satisfied in its completion, and better able to speak about their vision.

Similarly, my teaching philosophy requires familiarity and understanding of my students' voice, style, and goals. This level of familiarity requires me to listen, especially when a student is from a different background. I've largely taught in under-served communities, from the nation's first accredited HBCU to Community Colleges in rural, economically disadvantaged areas. As a white-cis-middle-class dude from Colorado Springs, it is incumbent upon me to listen. It is my responsibility to help young artists understand what it is they have to say while giving them the tools to say it. I seek to provide formal, contextual, and technical knowledge within a space where the student feels encouraged and safe to tell their story.

Just as my mentors helped me find my voice through conversation, or via their particular adages repeating over and over in my head, I hope that I will be that voice for my students.