Gene Brenek

512.413.9167 | genebrenek@txstate.edu

LECTURER • CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Drawing on my decades of experience at major ad agencies, and in my role as creative director and group creative director at GSD&M in Austin, I helped redevelop Texas State University's Mass Comm Creative program. It was my intent to teach not only creative theory but also introduce robust and practical real-world applications to better prepare our students for finding jobs within the ad industry.

Lecturer | Texas State University — January 2018 — Present

- Tasked with reshaping the Mass Comm Creative program, I began teaching MC4333 *Creative Thinking and Concepting*. Knowing that this was a required course for all ad majors, it was my intent that everyone enrolled—not only those pursuing creative endeavors—would deeply benefit from the course learnings and objectives.
- Influenced students who had the talent and the drive but were lacking the self-confidence to pursue a creative field as a profession.
- Developed our first Portfolio course—MC4304 *Advertising Strategy and Execution Portfolio*. Drawing on my years as a creative director, the focus of this course was for students to experience a close approximation to an actual creative internship. I challenged students to push their ideas by finding novel solutions and to use their critical thinking skills to solve the right business problem based on client briefs. In addition, it also meant these projects served as the foundation for student's portfolios and their websites to help them be competitive and position themselves for success in the real world.
- Tasked with developing an elective course that would serve not only ad majors, but also PR majors, I developed MC1100R (currently titled 4341) *The Power of Brands*. Noticing a gap in instruction of the brands behind the brand builders, this course explores how companies use their brands to create awareness, shift perceptions in the marketplace and connect emotionally to consumers. It has been my intent that students pivot from seeing themselves only through the lens of consumers as we study brands of various sizes—and not only a brand's success stories. For it's in highlighting a brand's missteps and peeling back the curtain of how companies work internally that we're able to truly understand brands. Importantly, I also draw connections with how companies use branding to connect with consumers—to consider how my students can brand themselves—especially for positioning themselves in the job market.
- Recognizing a cognitive gap in students' understanding of what constituted a creative idea versus merely brand communication, I completely restructured MC4338, *Advanced Advertising Copy and Layout* (formerly titled MC4316). Now, instead of immediately pairing individuals into teams, students work on individual projects for the first third of the semester. This has also significantly helped most of the students who are unsure if they want to purse copywriting or art direction as their creative profession.
- Continue to evolve and instruct the MC4338 and MC4341 courses.
- Instrumental in onboarding new part-time faculty members to teach MC4333.
- Developed the *Summer Portfolio Series* (along with my colleague Dr. Devlin). The pandemic was extremely rough from a job and morale perspective for our newest graduates. We wanted to keep them motivated during this time, so we introduced a portfolio series to encourage our graduates to continue working on campaigns for their websites. This was an unpaid project, but we felt we needed to give back to our recent graduates.
- Developed *Portfolio Night* (along with Dr. Devlin). Drawing on our vast industry connections, we match recent graduates with working professionals who offer feedback and importantly, a different perspective on how to continue to improve their work.
- Every year, I offer the TXST NSAC team insight, instruction and support, which has helped them place and/or win consistently.
- Moderate numerous panels/individual speakers during Mass Comm Week.
- Guest speaker in Dr. Clay Craig's *Introduction to Advertising* course.
- *Bobcat Day* ambassador for the Advertising Department within Mass Comm

Group Creative Director | Creative Director | Art Director | GSD&M 1992 — 2017

Accomplished Creative Director and Group Creative Director with extensive experience in advertising, skilled at taking projects from their conceptual stage through final production. Managed a group of twelve creatives while working on AT&T, Lennox Industries, Sysco Foods and Zales Jewelry.

- Worked with Fortune 500 companies—AT&T, Southwest Airlines, Brinker Corporation, Coors, Lennox, Walgreens, Zales—developing their national media campaigns.
- Worked with numerous state agencies such as Texas Lottery, TXDOT and Texas Tourism.
- Worked with nonprofits—AARP and American Legacy Foundation—developing impactful creative on extremely tight budgets.
- Significant track record building strong relationships —within agency, clients and client partners.
- Worked with minority-owned and women-owned production companies while on AT&T.
- Contributed to numerous new business pitches.
- Presented and sold national media campaigns throughout my career—to clients at all levels—from junior clients to the C-suite.
- Encouraged the growth and success of individual members on my team by fostering their ideas and talent at every opportunity.
- Background includes digital, social, Out of Home, traditional print and broadcast (consumer and direct).
- Collaborated with numerous national and international production companies to create live-action, stop-motion, 2D and 3D digital spots.
- Worked with Pixar and Skywalker Ranch to produce a *CARS*-themed collaboration for AT&T.
- Contributed to various Austin nonprofits including numerous AIDS Services of Austin events, OutYouth Austin, and the Austin Library Foundation's *Illumine* fundraiser gala—designing and illustrating promotional materials.
- Created and produced Southwest Airlines' long-running and beloved "Wanna Get Away?" campaign.

Art Director | TM Advertising (formerly Temerlin McClain) 1989 — 1992

Art director on American Airlines and North Carolina National Bank.

Awards | Acolades | Etc.

- Educator of the Year, Austin Advertising Federation.
- Award/Honor Recipient: Alumni Association Teaching Award Honor
- Print Magazine Regional Design Annual Winner
- Communication Arts Design Annual
- National Addy Winner
- One Show Finalist (twice)
- Austin Addy's Best in Show—Print
- 3 Silver Austin Addy's
- 10 Bronze Austin Addy's
- 1 Silver Dallas Addy

- Guest Speaker for *Beginning Creative Fiction: Intro to YA Fiction*, Austin Community College
- Guest Speaker for the *Sisters in Crime* (Bay Area Chapter) conference. Spoke to mystery writers on how to incorporate advertising brainstorming techniques to generate stronger fiction writing.

Education

- 2009 MFA in Writing for Children, Vermont College of Fine Arts (formerly Union Institute)
- 1988 Undergraduate B.S. Degree in Art Direction, Texas A&M University, Commerce