



TEACHING STATEMENT | Dr. Francisco López-Ruiz

I find project-based learning extremely useful to translate goals into action. If the «assignment» is a *real* challenge—not only an academic problem—the better. Working on student projects has strong pedagogical value in promoting creativity and critical problem-solving. Academic work is training for life.

A recurrent workshop in my teaching career is *Set Design: Film, TV & Theater*. In Spring 2023 I gave *Set Design* to 23 students of the Bachelor's Degree in Communications and Media Production at Universidad de las Américas Puebla (UDLAP). With no previous experience, these students developed design competences—such as how to make scale models—while reviewing the relationship between scripts and the different ways to express a proposal based on a *design concept*.

We encouraged collaboration and cooperation over auteurism and competition, building a strong community and adopting a cooperative behavior. We strengthen confidence in approaching three-dimensional design sketching proposals for films and TV shows students admired, but from their own sensibility and approach. We then moved into territory they knew little about: dramaturgy and theatrical design. I asked Prof. Eduardo Espinosa to give us a lighting class in the beautiful forum that UDLAP has on its campus. We attended several dance and theater productions, and even took an academic trip to Mexico City to attend a play by Compañía Nacional de Teatro. In addition to the learning objectives we had, my students achieved camaraderie working together in drawing boards (something they had never done before) and solving gradual exercises that demanded greater capacities of analysis, synthesis, collaboration and creativity. In this process, I also learned and had a lot of fun. Although it was not planned, I made three audiovisual records of academic excellence at UDLAP: [Stage Lighting & Design](#) and stagings [Noche tan linda](#) and [Ensayo sobre débiles](#). Theater students now have these materials to complement their portfolios and sizzle reels.

We blended theory and practice. It was important to have a real professional exercise with a practical application. I proposed to the director of the Department of Communication the possibility of designing a television set for UDLAP—something that had not been done in ten years. Dr Valeria Leal obtained a budget that, although small, allowed us to design a proposal that will be used by future generations. The inauguration of the set was an interview with the Dean of the School of Social Sciences, Dr Juan Antonio Leclerq. From my point of view, the experiential value of these products are irreplaceable in the formation of these students, who will be better prepared to take on a design problem in the future, whatever its specific nature.

This is the *Set Design: Film, TV & Theater* [audiovisual record](#), with opinions and interviews from my students, the professors who participated as consultant and jurors, as well as the main academic results students achieved in this elective.

