

Philosophy of Teaching

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My philosophy of teaching is one that recognizes the myriad applications of language, literature, and writing. I believe strongly that students have their own definitions of what makes writing good, and my philosophy of teaching writing is one that encourages students to access and utilize their preexisting writing skills. Students come from wildly different backgrounds, and will arrive in my classroom with wildly different levels of access to educational resources. My goal, as their teacher of writing, would be to unearth what excites my students about English and writing. Because writing courses are often a part of a general education/core requirement, many students come into their first college writing course unenthused or unconvinced that writing would be important to them. *I recognize writing and literature analysis as essential, foundational, and access-creating skills.* In order to most effectively teach these skills, I encourage students to identify what is important to them, outside of the realm of writing and reading, and look for ways to connect those values and priorities to the forms of writing, speaking, and presenting that I aim to teach.

In practice, this includes approaching new topics with curiosity as to what makes each class ‘tick.’ I am intentional about getting to know students and their interests at the front of the semester so that the class can not only build rapport, but also so that I am able to identify, at least in part, what is taking up space in my students’ minds. It must be a tactful operation, but when done carefully it provides data as to how to get students to invest in the writing and literature analysis they practice in my course.

I also believe that teaching is learning. In my classrooms, I am constantly adapting and learning and relearning things taught to me by my students. Although this cliché is one as old as time, it holds up, and the more I teach, the more I learn how to teach, and why I teach.

I believe that every student seeking education should be able to access it. Because of this belief, I think frequently about the rapidly-changing social and political climate of our country, and try to hold space for the variety of beliefs that might exist within my students. However, in order to keep the classroom an accessible space for all students, I believe the classroom must have rules around hateful language and expectations of respect. Inclusion is necessary to make the classroom environment equitable and effective, and it is not a virtue I will sacrifice. I want students to write about what matters to them, because that is what I believe produces the best and most meaningful writing, but I also require a level of communal respect in the classroom that would supersede students’ right to discuss what they like if that discussion was harmful, hateful, or otherwise alienating toward identities that may be present in the classroom.

I hope to offer students a classroom environment that is accessible and meets them where they are coming from. I also aim to have a classroom environment in which students feel comfortable sharing with the class, sharing in small groups, and sharing in pairs. Part of the way I accomplish this is by sharing ground rules about communal respect and tolerance early into the semester. Writing is vulnerable much of the time, particularly creative writing, and so it is imperative that I provide my students a place where they can safely be vulnerable and try out new techniques or ideas related to writing and literature analysis.