

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

My philosophy of teaching might more properly be referred to as a philosophy of learning. For me, learning and teaching are inseparably intertwined, and I actively learn in my classroom alongside my students. In part, this is a necessity since my scholarship and teaching focus on writing, rhetoric, and technology. Writing and rhetoric have expanded throughout my career to include new genres, new methods, and new literacies in step with the pace of technological change. As a result, I continually adapt my pedagogy and course content to address these changes. Today, I regard myself as a partner with my students. They teach me about ever-changing applications, technologies, and genres, and I provide for them a framework to critically engage technology, informed by rhetorical principals and theories. To create this kind of learning environment I pursue a set of common principles in all of my courses, adapting my pedagogy to meet the needs of varying student populations. These principles are (1) situating student work in scholarly, civic, and professional communities, (2) challenging students to adapt to new or changing contexts, and (3) employing equity-minded and culturally-sustaining teaching practices.

1) Helping students to situate their work in larger scholarly, civic, and professional communities: I believe that it is important for students to learn about the power of their ideas to impact readers and effect change, and I foster this learning by providing opportunities to write for authentic audiences and real-world contexts. Course-based research experiences are one pivotal way that I provide these opportunities for students. I design research studies to include in my undergraduate and graduate sections of professional writing, and my students work as research assistants. Doing so requires them to become certified to conduct research with human subjects, conduct semi-structured interviews with volunteers, and create clean textual transcripts of their interviews. This approach has proved to be highly successful at engaging students, even when the courses are entirely online. For example, during the 2020-2021 academic year, I designed a year-long study investigating how professionals from diverse fields perceived of disruptions to their work caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. My students conducted over 40 interviews with professionals and compiled a database of interview transcripts that they then used as primary research for projects in which they explored topics such as the impact of the pandemic on higher education professionals' workload, how technology contributed to miscommunication among teleworkers during the pandemic, and others. One of the graduate students who participated in the project used the research report she wrote for my class to successfully apply to PhD programs in Spring 2021, and two of my undergraduate students were accepted to present their work on the project at the leading conference for rhetoric and composition scholars in April 2021.

2) Challenging students to flexibly adapt their skills in new or changing contexts: I believe that students need to be prepared to negotiate multiple linguistic, cultural, and technological differences, and to recognize that they have numerous ways to approach unfamiliar texts and writing contexts. Thus I provide opportunities in my courses for students to practice using new writing tools and engage unfamiliar genres so they have the chance to adapt and expand on the reading, writing, and research skills they already possess. In my first-year writing course, along with more traditional essay writing assignments, I also focus on infographics, which helps students expand their traditional reading strategies to closely read and analyze multimodal texts that also often include data. Additionally, I sought to expand this opportunity by allowing students to practice multimodal writing and research while studying infographics.

To achieve this goal, I give students the opportunity to create their own multimodal research article, which can take the form of an infographic, a website, a podcast, or another multimodal form that they student chooses. By focusing on infographics and asking students to produce their own multimodal texts, I seek to help students reflect on their own literacy practices and to think about what demonstrating rhetorical reading might look like in digital spaces unbound by the traditional conventions of print research essays.

3) Employing equity-minded and culturally-sustaining teaching practices: I strive to design my courses to cultivate an environment where students from diverse backgrounds are engaged equitably and where students are invited and encouraged to draw on practices from their culture in the classroom. In my writing courses, this often means honoring the multilingual skills that students bring with them to class and framing multilingualism as a strength to be valued and drawn on in academic and professional writing. Two ways that I work to engage diverse learners are 1) including course texts on the syllabus that discuss and model multilingualism and cultural diversity and 2) providing opportunities for students to share and reflect on their linguistic and cultural background in course assignments. Additionally, I choose assessment methods that don't advantage and disadvantage students based on their previous experience with academic or professional writing. For this reason, I use portfolio assessment in my writing courses, so that the majority of the course grade is based on a portfolio that that each student builds throughout the semester. Students choose the course assignments that best represent their work and learning in class to include in their portfolios, revise their portfolio documents multiple times based on peer and instructor feedback, and write introductions and self-assessments for their documents to provide context to the reader. I have found that this method of assessment is more equitable because it allows a greater range of students to succeed in writing courses at all levels since each student can showcase their individual strengths, provide useful context for portfolio documents, and detail their growth as a writer over the course of the semester.

As I have gained experience in the classroom, I have realized that creating a classroom environment in which learning can occur is critical to fostering lifetime learning objectives. However, creating this environment is challenging in practice, requiring constant refinement and adaptation for each new class of students and each different learning environment, including face-to-face, online, and hybrid courses. As I develop and teach a range of courses in rhetoric and composition and professional writing, I ensure that my courses connect to larger values by keeping in mind the principles of helping students to situate their work in larger communities, challenging them to flexibly adapt their skills in new or changing contexts, and employing equity-minded and culturally-sustaining teaching practices. As a co-learner with my students, I know that I have succeeded in effectively scaffolding a course when I am learning alongside my students.