

Teaching Philosophy Statement

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Love. This single word encapsulates my teaching philosophy. I believe students learn best in environments, in-person and virtually, that foster comfortability and heartfelt acceptance – *a pedagogy of love*.¹ In *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks writes, “Professors rarely speak of the place of eros [...] in our classrooms.”² By placing love and self-love at the center, I aspire to facilitate a learning environment of productive struggle that wields a transformative balance of autonomy, community, and self-discovery in the college classroom and its borders beyond.

In my writing and literature courses, I view censorship as ineffective and outdated praxis. I promote a seminar-based format where everyone has a voice, but I have found that “talking” can be done in non-verbal ways like quick writes, shared documents, and online discussion forums. I craft my syllabi to assist students in working through and embracing their personal, social, and cultural experiences through active sense-making. Such an act requires a means of vulnerability, resilience, and an openness to emerging knowledge. Students will read and write about topics that are socially, culturally, politically, and institutionally relevant to them. At the heart of my teaching lies an equitable and sincere devotion to curating a student-focused and heuristic pedagogy that offers academic and emotional support, both in-person and virtually. For example, it is crucial to create syllabi with transparent and accessible designs that use relational language, first and second person points of view, inviting and communal rhetoric over authoritative and policy-driven structures, and even sections that share campus resources centered around student success and emotional support (i.e. writing centers, queer resource centers, disability services, campus security, title ix protocols, and mental health services).

When it comes to classroom activities, I teach the importance of prewriting, writing, and rewriting. I create a decolonized, interactive, and participatory classroom climate by providing engaging lectures and workshops with technology integration for improving student engagement and learning. For example, lectures incorporate formative checks for understanding like pausing for reflection questions where students break into small pair-share groups for further inquiry and collaboration. Questions are formulated in ways that allow them to bring in their lived experiences and cultures to connect with class modules. I integrate technology where students can communicate in multiple modalities. I provide equal opportunities for verbal and written engagement based on student comfortability and learning preferences. I use polling so students can express opinions or ideas for further content development, but in a discreet way. I provide opportunities outside of class to host workshops on writing-oriented topics like thesis formation, quote integration, and researching with integrity. I set aside time for pre-essay brainstorming and peer review equipped with guided handouts and self-evaluation questions to assist students in their transition from process to product, while fostering a sense of community and peer support.

With the idea of support in mind, my approach to grading is non-punitive. I aim to create a circular, transdisciplinary, and all-encompassing pedagogy that is productive over destructive. I facilitate students’ talents in a way that allows them to trust their own rhetorical choices and build confidence in their skillset. Grammar, to me, is a low-level concern, but it is a skill I will support my students in mastering. I provide ample feedback on papers through analytic rubrics focused on development and future mastery. Though, considering essays are summative checks for understanding, I allow rewrites to support lifelong learning. Overall, I am devoted to seeking

¹ Darder, Antonia. *Reinventing Paulo Freire: A Pedagogy of Love*. Routledge, 2017.

² hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Routledge, 1994.

out efficient tools to teach and evaluate writing and literature in equitable ways that move beyond single stories, homogeneity, and the coloniality of language rooted in difference.

In order to create an inclusive learning environment, I want students to see that I prioritize content over prejudice when it comes to assessment methods. It is my strategy that my students turn all of their essays in with their names omitted from the first page to ensure complete anonymity. This is my way of showing my students that I am devoted to teaching with integrity and teaching with an equitable appreciation to every student's uniqueness and contributions. Another way I promote inclusion in my classroom is through assembling a diverse reading list from BIPOC male and female forms of scholarship published in the 21st century. When I teach literature and works from John Bunyan, William Shakespeare, John Milton, or Edmund Spenser, I accompany the discussion with a plurality of perspectives. For example, if I were to teach one of Shakespeare's early tragedies like *Titus Andronicus* with themes of female trauma, rape, disability, and racism, I would assign scholar David Sterling Brown who analyzes the play through a lens of CRT and Black Lives Matter,³ and compliment it with a scholar like Francesca T. Royster who argues that "whiteness" is instead the "alien" race in the play.⁴ By doing so, we work towards escaping the single-story model of education by exhibiting that there is not just one way of thinking, being, and knowing. This simple, yet transformative approach to reimagining education allows us to dismantle binary thinking by setting a liberatory precedent that all perspectives and identities are welcome and honored to foster multicultural edification.

I am also committed to growing and improving upon my methods of instruction through the use of student feedback. At midterms and finals, I ask students to anonymously fill out check-in surveys regarding their honest assessments of course organization and course content, as well as strategies and assignments they enjoyed, and what can overall be improved upon. I want to create a growth-centered environment that not only allows students to work toward "the discovery of self"⁵ and aid in furthering "self-improvement, and self-searching,"⁶ but self-actualization as a learning science also applies to myself as an instructor and ethical educator.

As an early modern scholar, I extend my work to the world of feminine psychology, coined by Karen Horney. She saw a need to give women a voice and perspective in a time of Freud's male-dominated psychology. Similar to Horney, I aim to use my research and teaching to deconstruct the overt one-sidedness of the white male perspective in the early modern canon. In the same way that Horney says, "Like all sciences and all valuations, the psychology of women has hitherto been considered only from the point of view of men,"⁷ I believe early modern literature faces a similar plight upon being overtly white male oriented. My exploration of the early modern canon with intersections of feminism and psychology sets a precedent in my teaching that no insight is too small, and no subject is too exhausted for further inquiry.

Overall, the teaching philosophy of love I practice disrupts legacy methods that no longer fit our present moment. Love and literacy allow for a deeper sense of connection and honesty, where we can move away from legacy education's punitive, egoist, and hierarchal approaches. Simply put, "Love heals."⁸ As a literature academic and ethical educator, it is my ongoing quest to continue my education surrounding the myriad of identities that inform a student's learning experiences in the classroom, where autonomy, community, and self-discovery are front and center.

³ Brown, David Sterling. "Is Black so Base?": Black Life Matters in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*," *Early Modern Black Diaspora Studies*, edited by Cassander Smith, et al., Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 137-155.

⁴ Royster, Francesca T. "White-Limed Walls: Whiteness and Gothic Extremism in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2000, pp. 432-55.

⁵ Maslow, Abraham H. *Toward a Psychology of Being*. J. Wiley & Sons, 1998.

⁶ Maslow, Abraham H. *Toward a Psychology of Being*. J. Wiley & Sons, 1998.

⁷ Horney, Karen. "The Flight from Womanhood." *Feminine Psychology*, edited by Harold Kelman, Norton, 1993.

⁸ hooks, bell. *All About Love: New Visions*. Harper Perennial, 2001.