



## Statement of Teaching Philosophy

My pedagogical philosophy begins with the acknowledgement that we are born into a social reality not of our own making. Our social lives are structured by pre-defined paths of least resistance. By following these paths, we reconstitute society in its own image, keeping intact the unequal power relationships upon which social and economic inequalities stand. The legitimacy of such power depends on culturally entrenched values and discourses, or particular ways of interpreting and assigning meaning to the social phenomena we encounter. It is the promise of university pedagogy to unearth and critically examine these entrenched discourses in order to construct a more just social world.

Toward this promise, my pedagogy pushes students to understand that the meanings of social phenomena are not inherent, but rather are socially constructed, with their particular formulations contingent on the political, economic and socio-historic contexts in which they are embedded. To foster this understanding, I employ, evaluate, and continue to hone multiple teaching strategies. Here I will discuss two such strategies: (1) critical media analysis, and (2) reflective essay assignments. These strategies represent a pedagogy grounded in the same conceptual framework guiding my research agenda: the critical analysis of discourse, or patterns of interconnected ideas and particular knowledges that are drawn upon to construct meaning. From this framework, students can begin to critically examine not only the substance of their own assumptions and beliefs, but also the origins and implications of their corresponding values and behavior.

Critical media analysis refers to the process of collectively deconstructing selected media (e.g., news articles, advertisements, pieces of popular culture) as a class. The goal of this activity is to demonstrate the myriad possible meanings a singular medium can hold, depending on the angle from which it is approached and the lenses through which it is viewed. In this context, the angle of approach refers to the intersectional identity of one's social position, and the lenses refer to the particular discourses individuals use to construct meaning. Through this activity, we decode the various unspoken discourses and taken-for-granted knowledges the media both rely upon and convey. I employed this strategy in a Psychology of Gender course by having the class collectively deconstruct Viagra advertisements. The class decoded the unspoken discourses of sex and gender and explored the different meanings the advertisement could have to different communities. The students evaluated this specific activity favorably, with nineteen of twenty agreeing that it significantly contributed to his or her understanding and/or interest in the topics covered that day.

Reflective essays are out of class assignments through which students document their meaningful interaction with course material. I instruct students to first provide a synthesized overview of a particular assigned reading. They are then to document and reflect upon their personal reactions to the reading and connect the material with their own experiences and opinions. The goal of the assignment is for students to not only understand the ways in which their particular life histories inform their interpretation of newfound knowledges, but also the ways in which new ideas can reshape the meanings of previous life experiences. I used reflective essay assignments in an online Crime and Delinquency course and received very positive feedback from students, with the majority identifying the essays as the aspect of the class that contributed most to their learning.

Landon Bevier

My pedagogy is thus designed to cultivate the sociological imagination, through which students begin to understand the reciprocal nature of personal biography and the social force of history. Putting this philosophy into practice, my goal is to foster the knowledge that, though we are born into a world already constructed, the structure of social reality relies upon the agency of individuals for its perpetuation. The (re)construction of society is a constant process. Whether it is recast in yesterday's mold or in an entirely new formation depends on the agency of individuals.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'L. Bevier'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'L' being large and the last letter 'r' having a long, sweeping tail that loops back.

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