

## **Statement of Teaching Philosophy & Practice**

I believe that engagement is a necessary first step in learning. Studying outside school is less work for students if they stay engaged in the classroom. Today, students are extensively involved in their electronic devices for using social media or simply surfing the web. Writing environments are changing as social media platform opens up new spaces of writing, and this space is enormous enough to accommodate the entire world. With respect to new technology and changing environments, I embrace the value of flexibility by designing lectures and class activities around digital spaces so that they stay engaged in learning. Students enjoy doing a rhetorical and critical analysis of twitter feeds and hashtags of popular personalities, movie reviews, websites, video advertisements, infographic advertisements, posts on public discussion forums etc. When they work on these digital spaces, I see them very excited to talk about the rhetoric and visual appeals in the digital sources. Students also pull up more examples of such sources to show the class, this in turn confirms their interest in learning, and eventually, this interest starts reflecting in their writing as they rhetorically analyze academic and popular source articles. Thus, my strategy is to be flexible in my instruction by adapting to the likes and dislikes of students and then subtly shifting their focus to academic course work.

Further, engagement is better achieved when class activities are designed with a sense of community in mind, such as working in groups or pairs. A sense of community encourages students to contribute during class or group discussions and helps them shun feelings of personal anxiety in classrooms. Students usually open up more freely when put into groups; I see less participation when I assign individual activities to students, and they find doing those activities by themselves as overwhelming. For me, a classroom becomes a home when students move around to interact with one another as they work on an assigned task. Thus, I use collaborative learning techniques to incorporate the value of community in my classroom. Laal and Ghodsi explain that in situations where people come together in groups, collaborative learning suggests a way of dealing with one another, and this type of learning respects and highlights individual group members' abilities and contributions (486).

When students come together and share their thoughts, they are aware that they are a responsible part of a group, a classroom. In individual tasks, students are pressured to compete and debate with other classmates, and they could end up being dominating. However, the feeling of being a part of a community makes students understand that everyone has a right to their opinion and so collaborative learning helps in consensus building through cooperation of group members. Further, as students analyze articles, the practice of collaborative learning makes them realize that there is more to argue and that there could be more perspectives to a particular claim in an article. This then teaches them to draw concessions and research more to learn about varied or opposing aspects in a topic. Hence, I believe students should be first tasked to perform in teams and then given individual tasks as it broadens their perspectives, simultaneously teaching them to be a functional part of a community.

Finally, being an international citizen myself, I feel that students should have an understanding of diversity in a community. I want international students to have a positive attitude toward the instructor and be more open or less anxious in the class discussions, especially when American students outnumber the class population. Most importantly, I want all students to have a diversity understanding so that none feel left out. Collaborative learning techniques help a great deal when I assign culturally diverse readings to students since it makes them talk to one another to

understand issues in a reading that they are not familiar with. This then builds a respect for individual and cultural identities in the classroom. In summary, my idea of a classroom is a space where students are in anticipation of what they will be learning today, they look forward to working in teams to help one another learn something, and they create a hustle or liveliness to discuss what they are learning.

### **Works Cited**

Laal, Marjan, and Seyed Mohammad Ghodsi. "Benefits of collaborative learning." *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 31 (2012): 486-490.