

Statement of Teaching Philosophy & Practice

Mine is a family of teachers. Back in India, my grandparents were teachers, and mother still practices teaching. I have always been fascinated by the enthusiasm my family has had for teaching. During my master's program at Auburn University, I had my first teaching experience. I started as a graduate teaching assistant (GTA) for world literature and American literature and then promoted as an instructor for first-year writing. During my time as a GTA for literature, I would research extensively to first teach myself and then teach students because I did not have background in literature, and I was new to the academic atmosphere of the United States. I found being a GTA very challenging, and so I applied ludic strategies, which has been described as a part of games studies by Roger Caillois in his book *The Definition of Play and the Classification of Games*, in my pedagogy to be able to enjoy teaching. Ludic activities made students actively engage in classroom discussions and motivated me to work hard in order to teach better.

Currently, I am a PhD student and a first-year writing instructor at Texas Tech University. I find teaching first-year writing less challenging than teaching literature and my pedagogy has also developed to include multimodal approaches because of my expertise in communicating technical information through texts, audio, and images. Today, students are extensively involved in their electronic devices 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 these technologies and changing environments, I embrace the value of flexibility in my pedagogy by designing class activities around digital spaces, so that students stay engaged in learning. I make students rhetorically and critically analyze online content such as twitter feeds and hashtags of popular personalities, movie reviews, websites, video advertisements, infographic advertisements, public discussion forum posts etc. When they work on these digital spaces, I see them very excited to talk about the rhetoric and visual appeals in those 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.

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 as students learn to cooperate with 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 further to learn about varied or opposing aspects of 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 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 to discuss what they are learning.

Works Cited

Caillois, Roger. "The Definition of Play and the classification of games." *The game design reader: A rules of play anthology* (2005): 122.

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