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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 a lot 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, but I wanted to do my best in this job, and so I would diligently devise fun and interesting activities for each class discussion to keep students engaged. Among quizzes, crosswords, and other such activities, one that has been very successful is ludic activity, 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*. Role play is one ludic activity that students thoroughly enjoyed, where they would talk vicariously about characters in an assigned reading, and this would encourage them to complete the class readings so that they could take part and enjoy the activities.

Currently, I am a first-year PhD student and a first-year writing instructor at Texas Tech University. I find teaching English Composition 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. Social media platform has opened up new spaces of writing, and this space is enormous enough to accommodate the entire world. Thus, most of my class activities are designed around digital spaces, and the reason for that is to make students do what they like so that they are engaged in learning. I let students rhetorically and critically analyze 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 of the above sources and they also pull up examples of more sources to show the class. Eventually, this starts reflecting in their essays as they analyze the ethos, pathos, and logos in academic and popular source articles. Thus, my strategy is to start with something students like, such as social media, and then subtly shift 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 make students comfortable while doing a task. Laal and Ghodsi explain that in situations where people come together in groups, it suggests a way of dealing with one another, and this 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. In individual tasks, students are pressured to compete and debate with other classmates,

and they could end up being dominating. I want students to understand that everyone has a right to their opinion and so collaborative learning helps in consensus building through cooperation of group members. Moreover, this reflects in their course work; as students analyze articles, they 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 of a topic. Hence, I believe students should be first tasked to perform in teams and then given individual tasks as it opens up their minds to broad views, simultaneously teaching them to be a functional part of a team.

Finally, 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

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

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