

# TEACHING PORTFOLIO

---

JULIANNE VANWAGENEN

ITALIAN STUDIES, COMPARATIVE LITERATURE, DIGITAL HUMANITIES

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>TEACHING PHILOSOPHY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>TEACHING EVALUATIONS (QUANTITATIVE SUMMARIES), 2013-2016</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>TEACHING EVALUATIONS (QUALITATIVE COMMENTS), 2013-2016</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>TEACHING AWARDS AND HONORS</b>	<b>7</b>

# TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

---

As a teacher of Italian language and culture, as well as comparative literature, my goals are necessarily various, but they are never disconnected or independent in the classroom, and the ultimate goal is singular: that students learn to express their own experience, comprehend others', and interpret and evaluate those experiences with a generous and democratic mind. Language and literature studies foster

**STUDENTS IN MY CLASSROOM  
LEARN TO INTERPRET AND  
EVALUATE EXPERIENCES WITH A  
GENEROUS AND DEMOCRATIC MIND.**

conditions in which students come up against possibly radical changes of perspective, and it is of utmost importance to my teaching philosophy that students feel safe to question and experiment without judgment, that they feel encouraged to view the world more inclusively with every introduction to newness, and that they, finally, take that expanded viewpoint with them along their life path.

As students are overcoming the initial challenges of learning language in my classroom, they are introduced concurrently to a new culture, in a framework that reflects, rather than surveils. Whether the class is an introductory-language or a literature course, I encourage students to contemplate their own beliefs and the cultural norms with which they have been raised, so as to stimulate greater open-mindedness and understanding. For example, in my third-semester Italian class that deals with four mixed-media genres, we end the course with a discussion of the Wild West in Italian comics and Spaghetti Western films. The uncanny nature of the Italian version of the West, the sometimes-glaring stereotypes and historical misrepresentation has generated conversations that question the myth as it exists in the US, as well as Italy, and the socio-political reasons for which the US might export such a myth.

As a digital humanist, I believe it is important to close the literary/technological divide, as young people choosing majors today may turn away from the humanities if they feel it is a field that will let their interest in technology go to waste. However, I do not include technology in courses as a buzzword-technique or a flashy garnish, it is included when and if it adds value. In a course on the history of collecting, for example, I designed a studio segment that allowed students to create their own digital collections. Across the semester, they created or collected images, stored them on Flickr, created rich



metadata in JSON files to attach to their jpegs, and uploaded the collections to metaLAB's experimental animated-archive platform, [curarium.com](http://curarium.com). They then used the platform to annotate, make visualizations, and, finally, tell stories about and analyze their collections using Curarium's set of digital tools. This type of digital work is also done in my fourth-semester Italian course, where artwork in a local museum and that museum's digital

archive are used as tools for speaking and writing directly in the target language, with as little filtering as possible through the primary language.

As I began my career as a language instructor at the university level teaching introductory-level courses, I was swiftly aware that the language classroom is a space where students are far outside their comfort zone. Yet, due to the particular characteristics of the introductory-language classroom, which fosters participation around the most basic lexical development—family, travel, hobbies, etc.—students who feel safe in class can come to form special bonds with their colleagues and with their teachers. Students enter the language classroom with a range of second-language experience, from the student who has barely heard a second language to the student raised in a bilingual home. I have found students may feel insecure in both cases: for a lack of knowledge, or for a sense of too much knowledge that they associate with foreignness and difference. By creating partner and small group work that shuffles daily, by giving positive feedback to bolster participatory courage, and by offering opportunities outside of class to work with me one-on-one, I have created inclusive spaces throughout my career that do not, however, attempt to draw a uniform rubric for individual achievement.

Students learn differently, and therefore, it is important to give a wide range of assessments. From writing and revising compositions, to creating and performing short plays in class, to organizing critical thinking roundtables, students can shine where they are strongest and improve their weaker areas. Regular and early student evaluations help me understand my own strengths and weaknesses and to reorganize my syllabi and class time accordingly. No matter the strength of my evaluations, however, I am truly satisfied only when students come back for more, beyond their language citation or literature pre-requisite. I have met my goals when they return to the humanities, generally, and to my classes, specifically. I have met my goals when they come to find me at my regular office hours even when they are not in my classes, or contact me to ask for a book recommendation in Italian or to tell me that something we discussed in class has stayed with them and guided or sustained them in their lives since graduation.

**I HAVE MET MY  
GOALS WHEN  
STUDENTS  
RETURN TO  
THE  
HUMANITIES,  
GENERALLY,  
AND TO MY  
CLASSES,  
SPECIFICALLY.**

# TEACHING EVALUATIONS

## FALL 2013 – SUMMER 2016

	ITAL 10: Pathways to Italy (instructor)	AESTHINT 51: The Cosmos of the Comedy (TF)	Humanities Studio 2.0 (TF)	ITAL 11: The Art & Craft of Italy (instructor)	ITAL 10: Pathways to Italy (instructor)	ITAL 20: Romance, Mystery, Noir (instructor)	ITAL 20: Romance, Mystery, Noir (instructor)	ITAL-S 190: Beauty, Leadership, Innovation (TF)
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
<b>Instructor Overall</b>	4.8	n/a	n/a	5	4.6	4.2	5	n/a
<b>Effective Lectures or Presentations</b>	4.8	n/a	n/a	5	4.9	4.4	5	n/a
<b>Accessible Outside Class</b>	4.4	n/a	n/a	4.6	4.5	4.6	5	n/a
<b>Generates Enthusiasm</b>	4.7	n/a	n/a	5	4.9	4.4	5	n/a
<b>Facilitates Discussion &amp; Encourages Participation</b>	4.7	n/a	n/a	5	5	4.6	5	n/a
<b>Gives Useful Feedback</b>	4.4	n/a	n/a	4.8	4.6	4.6	5	n/a
<b>Returns assignments in a timely fashion</b>	4.4	n/a	n/a	5	4.6	4.6	5	n/a
<b>Evaluate your TF's teaching between 1 &amp; 5</b>	n/a	4.5	4.8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5

## TEACHING EVALUATIONS (QUALITATIVE), 2013-2016

---

*Fall 2013, Italian 10:* "Julianne's preparation for the class, and her enthusiasm for the course material pervaded her instruction style; as a consequence, she gave compelling sections, and engendered enthusiastic response from the class. I learned a lot because of the care Julianne took to prepare well for the class."

*Fall 2014, Italian 11:* "Julianne is exactly how a teacher of this class needs to be: strict with work, demanding of effort, but enthusiastic and approachable. While the expectations were high, I always got the sense that Julianne was there to help us on the journey to learning Italian rather than an antagonist."

"Julianne is a wonderful TF! She was very engaging in class; she always encouraged participation, and her teaching style and humor made it a comfortable environment which I think helped me gain confidence in trying to use Italian both conversationally and to communicate ideas and think critically about the various cultural aspects of the course. [...] I really liked Julianne's teaching style, and I think it was pivotal to my gaining confidence beyond reading and writing in Italian and moving towards a more natural way of conversing and communicating in the language. Julianne was great!"

*Spring 2015, Italian 10:* "This class changed a significant amount of my future for the better. Julianne made me go from wanting to drop the class my first day to falling in love with Italian and deciding to study abroad in Italy next spring. Yes, it is overwhelming at first if you don't speak any other romance languages already, but the work you put in goes so far and lasts far after the class ends. Amazing experience! Also, Julianne is incredibly inspiring as a person and teacher."

*Fall 2015, Italian 20:* "Julianne was a great teacher. She was always in a bright mood that early in the day and really encouraged enthusiasm for the material. Her teaching style of not simply lecturing us was greatly appreciated as it allowed us as students to engage with the material through thought-provoking questions and by simply explaining what was on our mind. Assignments were always given back to us quickly, feedback was always clear, and she was always available at office hours to help us understand any misunderstandings. Thanks for a great semester."

*Summer 2016, Ital-S 190:* "Julianne, oh, Julianne -- the pinnacle of Italian sarcasm and humor in American form. What would my summer have been without her? A lot less funny and definitely lacking in philosophical understanding, that's what. Julianne could convey Kantian aesthetics like she it's a casual conversation, but she does it with a conviction I haven't seen before. When I want to decompress anything abstract, she's the right person for the job -- an extremely effective and enjoyable educator."

"I love Julianne!!!!!! She makes us feel at home and comfortable all the time. At the same time, she challenges us to think more deeply on the topics introduced by professor in lecture. Julianne has helped me to make a lot of improvement."

## TEACHING AWARDS AND HONORS

---

Harvard University Department of Romance Languages and Literatures Teaching Prize 2016

Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning Certificate of Excellence Fall 2015

Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning Certificate of Excellence Spring 2015

Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning Certificate of Excellence Fall 2014

Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning Certificate of Excellence Fall 2013