

Teaching Philosophy Statement

Dr. Leo Gilling

My teaching philosophy is grounded in the belief that education is a transformative force, one capable of not only developing individual potential but also reshaping communities and dismantling systemic inequities. As an educator, I am committed to creating learning environments that are rigorous, inclusive, and centered on both academic excellence and human development.

Having taught courses such as *Contemporary Issues in Domestic Violence* at Jamaica Theological Seminary and *Forensic Psychology* at Washington Adventist University, I've learned that students thrive when they are challenged to engage deeply with complex social realities while being supported through culturally responsive pedagogy. My classes encourage critical inquiry, ethical reasoning, and practical application, equipping students to not only understand systems of justice, trauma, and deviance but also to envision and lead change within them.

Education is a collaborative journey where my role is not to impart static knowledge but to co-create understanding alongside students. I utilize discussion-based learning, real-world case analysis, and reflective writing to engage students as critical thinkers, problem solvers, and emerging leaders. Informed by my Caribbean roots and diasporic experience, I also integrate global perspectives and decolonial frameworks that validate diverse voices and challenge Eurocentric norms in criminological and psychological discourse.

Outside the classroom, my leadership in the Jamaica Diaspora Taskforce Action Network (JDTAN) has enabled me to expand education beyond institutional walls, designing mentorship programs, emotional literacy initiatives, and professional summits that connect learning with real-world experiences. These engagements reinforce my conviction that education serves as a powerful vehicle for liberation, especially when it is community-driven and technologically enhanced.

Ultimately, I teach with the conviction that every student possesses a unique capacity to contribute meaningfully to the world, and that it is our responsibility as educators to unlock that capacity with compassion, structure, and vision. I am dedicated to helping students become not only knowledgeable professionals but also thoughtful citizens who are prepared to lead with integrity in their communities and professions.