Michael Healy – Teaching Philosophy

In my teaching I want to create classrooms that are collaborative, playful, process focused, connected, and action oriented. My own teaching philosophy has been shaped by my own varied experiences in rhetoric, composition, creative writing, and technology, which I seek to bring meaningfully into my classes. My teaching philosophy is student centered, and I work to bring their experiences, insights, and needs into the classroom in meaningful ways. I strive to create highly dynamic classes that push students beyond their comfort levels to see and experience both the content of the class and to bring their own learning and experiences into the classroom. I also work to create connections between classes, into curriculums, and beyond the university walls. I want to be able to surprise and delight students, while also engaging with them in learning as we all work to become more just, more aware, and more effective rhetorical agents. In doing so, my teaching philosophy is first focused on the students as people, and working to engage care of the whole person, inside and outside of the classroom.

I work towards creating a highly collaborative classroom by engaging with and alongside students as they work together and individually through content and making within the classroom. A cornerstone of my approach to teaching is small group discussion, where I will pose questions to the content, and have students work through their own inquiry to guide the class. I work to affirm their insights, individually and together, and to challenge the assumptions that they bring. Much of the labor of classes is done together, with guidance and questions from me. For example, two of the major project in my junior level advanced composition class, Writing and Editing in Print and Online, are collaborative projects completed in semester long

teams. I have students work to select their groups, identify exigences, and work to respond together rhetorically. In my History of Text Technologies class, I have students individually curate artifacts for a digital archive that is shared with the class, and then used as the basis for collaborative exhibits.

I aim to be playful in my own approach to the class, my assignments, and activities. I see play as serious intellectual work, and vitally important for teasing out and experiencing the rhetorical nature of composing. I encourage students to make and remake with a variety of materials and technologies as they work through identifying and responding to different contexts inside and outside of the classroom. I encourage them to think creatively and intentionally as they make with language and reflect on their experiences. In encourage reflective composing, I have student articulate theoretical frameworks that are supporting their own work.

I see my teaching philosophy as always being in process, and always under revision. I seek student feedback daily, and work to adjust the classroom based on their experiences and expectations. I also practice process in my assignments and pedagogy with scaffolded drafting, workshopping, and guided development of students as savvy and critical readers that are able to best work with other writers. I also encourage students to see their work in my classes as one part of a process of their own learning and development as writers and thinkers that are able to act meaningfully as they engage in their worlds. I always want the work of a class to continue to simmer with students as they go to their other classes and out into the world.

My teaching philosophy is one that seeks connections. I see the basis of much of my teaching structured on the idea of a rhetorical ecology, with the class that we are currently in as one node on an ever-expanding web of connections. I see to have students develop connections between what they want to say with the tools and technologies that are available to them, finding

not only the right materials for an intervention, but also the right mix of modes, mediums, and composing tools to meet those goals. I want them to seek out connections between each other and resources on campus such as the library, writing center, and digital making spaces in their work. I encourage them to bring their interests into the classroom, and to take their work from class back out into their own worlds. Many of my courses feature an ePortfolio, and provide students the opportunity to select and reflect upon their work throughout a semester, drawing connections between the content of the class with their work and trajectories.

I want my students to leave my class with the ability to do some action in their world in a meaningful way. I see what we do in any class—rhetoric to composition to the history of text technologies—as informing how they can interrupt the world and act critically as they us their agency to make the world a more socially just place.