

From Theory into Practice: Developing Students' Awareness

My 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. I engage with students in learning as we work to become more just, more aware, and more effective rhetorical agents. Student success requires learning who my students are as people and working together, with them, to identify goals to reach the outcomes of the class. I see the labor of every class—from first-year composition to rhetoric to the history of text technologies—as developing students' agency to interrupt the world and act critically as we work towards social justice. To create engaged classrooms that work toward social justice, my teaching is student centered, collaborative, and playful.

Student-Centered Networks

I like to open each class period by asking my students how they are doing, first as people and then as students. My teaching and my teaching philosophy are student centered with a focus on developing thinkers and writers who are intentional and impactful with their languaging practices. Students work with a variety of texts, theories, and technologies as they inquire into their roles as people and as agents in a world of interconnected and fluid language. My teaching is structured on the idea of a rhetorical ecology—that we make meaning about the world through our interactions with each other, our technologies, and our languages in network on intersecting relationship. Each class that we are currently in is one node on an ever-expanding web of connections radiating from the students. Students already bring their experiences, insights, and needs into the classroom, and I incorporate them into lessons, readings, assignments, and revisions to the class. Students are encouraged to explore the ways their interests and knowledge intersect with the content of the class, and to seek ways to bring their learning into the world.

This ecological framework encourages students to develop connections between what they want to say with the resources and technologies that are available to them, including the right mix of modes, mediums, and composing tools to meet those goals. Students in my Writing and Editing in Print and Online course work through their own ecologies as they enact a viral marketing campaign with print and digital materials. Working in teams throughout the semester, students identify a community, construct a proposal, and collaboratively enact an impactful DIY marketing campaign. Through guided inquiry, students seek out connections between each other and resources on campus such as the library, writing center, and digital maker spaces in their work. Many of my courses feature an ePortfolio, developed throughout the semester, to explicitly provide students the opportunity to connect the content of the class to their practices and learning through the selection and reflection upon their work and learning and presented in a cohesive way for an outside audience.

Dynamic and Collaborative

Students are challenged to move beyond their comfort levels in my highly dynamic classes through discussions on readings, group and individual exploratory activities, and assignments focused on student inquiry and exploration. From the first day, I foster a collaborative environment by engaging

with and alongside students as they work together and individually through content. A cornerstone of my approach to teaching is small group discussion, where I pose questions drawn from the content for that class period and have students work through their own inquiry to guide the class. Oftentimes the questions are drawn from students' discussion in prior classes and from informal writing ahead of and during the class period. 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 collaboratively with guidance, structure, and questions from me. For example, in my History of Text Technologies class, students collaborate in small groups and across the class to curate items for an online archive of text technologies and propose and develop exhibits out of the crowdsourced archive. I have students work to select their groups, to identify artifacts, and to create rhetorically and historically impactful exhibits.

Playful

I aim to be playful in my approach to classes, 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 to identify and respond to different contexts inside and outside of the classroom. For example, within Rhetoric, a class that focuses on the history and development of the western rhetorical tradition, I have students engage in an activity where they write and stage Platonic dialogues with a variety of rhetoricians, placing contemporary theorists in conversation and debate with ancient ones. And in my sections of Research, Genre, and Context—a sophomore-level college composition class—students remediate their research projects into three new genres to see and experiences their choices and agency as composers, working across a number of constraints in materials and delivery to reach new audiences. I encourage students to think creatively and intentionally as they *make* with language and reflect on their experiences, and have students articulate their experiences within theoretical frameworks to support their learning.

Social Justice

Finally, as I developed as a teacher and scholar, I intentionally and consciously seek to create classrooms that work for social justice. I adopted labor-based grading contracts within my college composition classrooms, drawing on the anti-racist pedagogy developed by Asao Inoue. In doing so, I focus on student labor in the class as the basis of their grades instead of an adherence to a subjective and hegemonic standard. 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 in all of my classes, with scaffolded drafting, workshopping, and guided development of students as savvy and critical readers that are able to best work with other writers. Students are encouraged to view their work in my classes as part of their learning process and development as writers and thinkers who 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 prepared to take action in the world.