

## 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 want to be able to surprise and delight students, while also engaging with them in learning as we work to become more just, more aware, and more effective rhetorical agents. Student success, for me, requires learning who my students are as people and working together to identify goals to reach the outcomes of the class. I see the work and 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 towards 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, is student centered with a focus on developing thinkers and writers who are intentional and impactful with their languaging practices. I create classrooms that are collaborative, playful, process focused, connected, and action oriented. Students work with a variety of texts, theories, and technologies as they inquire into their roles as people and agents in a world of interconnected and fluid language. My teaching is structured on the idea of a rhetorical ecology—that we making meaning about the world through our interactions with each other, our technologies, and our languages in relationship to each other—with the class that we are currently in as 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 bring their interests into the classroom, explore the ways they 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 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. Students in my Writing and Editing in Print and Online course work through their own ecologies as they propose and compose a viral marketing campaign with print and digital materials. They propose the campaign for an identified group—either imaginary or community based that they have been working to write and edit for all semester—and collaborate to create an impactful DIY 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 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 through course materials. 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 will pose questions drawn from the content for that class period, 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, 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, identify artifacts, and work to create rhetorically and historically impactful exhibits.

### **Playful**

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. 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 theories. And in my college composition classes, so that students can see and experience their choices and agency as composers, students remediate their research projects into three new genres, 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. In encouraging reflective composing where students articulate theoretical frameworks that are supporting their own work.

### **Social Justice**

Finally, as I have developed as a teacher and scholar, I have intentionally and consciously sought to create classrooms that work for social justice. I have adopted labored based grading contracts within my college composition classrooms, drawing on the as an 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 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 prepared to take action in the world.