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My Philosophy of Teaching

I am an historian of the United States with extensive experience teaching in the college classroom. I teach both halves of the U.S. history survey and a number of upper-division courses, including some that help students to develop their writing skills. In my current work with students grades 6–12, I use online, digital curricula to teach U.S. history, English, world history, and Washington State History.

My fluency with learning management systems such as Canvas and Blackboard and my regular use of PowerPoint presentations have allowed me to design blended curricula. My history courses feature Canvas-based discussion boards at which students address a new topic every week. I also post videos and short lectures at the course site.

During the past couple of years, I have taught Running Start high school students at a local community college. I have been equipped to succeed at teaching in a dual credit program by my work outside the college environment—as a teacher, tutor, and mentor to high school students. At Edmonds Community College, I would be prepared to build on that success.

As a teacher within one-on-one settings, I have learned to access the hidden strengths of students challenged by ADD, Asperger's, dyslexia, depression, and anxiety. I now mentor my college students in ways I could not before. I better understand the diversity of their struggles and can support them as complex, integrated people rather than simply test takers.

I teach an array of college courses. I teach both halves of the U.S. history survey and a number of upper-division history courses, including some that help students to develop their writing skills. Two of my courses focus on the multicultural history of the United States. These courses are *American Lives: Autobiography and Identity in U.S. History*, and *Tolerance, Prejudice, and Constructing the "Real American,"* an examination of marginalization in American identity formation. All of my college courses are structured to emphasize multicultural history. Oriented toward inclusivity, my courses are relevant to the lives of students across diverse populations.

Putting students at the center of the learning process involves getting them to see that history cannot exist without them. In assignments and class discussions, I encourage students to detect their own present-day concerns lurking behind texts from the past. This reveals to students that the meaning of the past resides largely in our construction of knowledge in the present. Grasping this, they become empowered to trust in their own interpretation of course material.

Throughout my teaching career, I have woven diversity into the very fabric of my pedagogy. In a class last year, I made time for a self-identified queer person to lead a discussion about contemporary discrimination against LGBT people—discrimination that the student effectively tied to historical discrimination toward other groups. I have given similar space to non-native English speakers, students of color, and religious conservatives, all of whom admit sometimes to feeling marginalized within the college environment. Beyond that, I help all class members discover that their own worldview might not be shared by everyone around them. Such recognition ignites intellectual inquiry, as students learn to see through eyes different from their own.

Outcomes

My traditional and online courses are driven by my primary goal as a teacher, which is to enable students to see history not as the product of an objective account of the past but, rather, as a register of diverse understandings. Accordingly, I equip students:

1. to see that knowledge depends on them as interpreters of texts.
2. to see that they contain within themselves a multiplicity of cultural affiliations that gives rise to an indeterminate number of textual interpretations.
3. to understand that various indicators of identity—woman, black, radical, conservative, queer, Christian, worker, American—are social constructs, despite their real-world consequences.
4. to recognize that worldviews both change and persist.
5. to understand what primary documents are, how they can be employed, what their limitations can be, and why scholarly accounts cannot be crafted without them.
6. to utilize primary documents.

Methodology

I employ the facilitator model of teaching. That involves my designing participatory learning activities, full-class discussions, small-group collaboration and multimedia lectures, while continuously offering supportive feedback. I ensure that the online and in-class components of my courses flow seamlessly into one another. While in the classroom, I make clear my expectations for each online activity. All of this maximizes student engagement.

My pedagogy is informed by my vision of cultivating multiple perspectives within each student. To bring this about, I guide class members in the exploration of historical documents that reveal both differences and commonalities between historical actors. I also give assignments that require students to see issues from a variety of angles. From such assignments, class members begin to recognize, all at once, their own subjectivity and their inclusion within the human collective.

To foster this multiplicity of perspective, I conduct collaborative activities. These include role playing in which small groups, acting as one or another of the authors we've studied, write a letter to another course author; working as partners to compose captions to match on-screen images; and meeting as peer groups whose members critique one another's work.

Putting students at the center of the learning process involves getting them to see the relevance of their own experiences. The full-class discussions I lead enable students to see underlying present-day concerns lurking behind texts and events from the past. Very important as well are my "History of the Present" papers in which students uncover personal relevance lying inside a historical text. These activities reveal to students that the meaning of the past resides largely in our construction of knowledge in the present. Grasping this, students become empowered to trust their own interpretation of course material.

Standard Assessments

- [In class] Two exams (not cumulative) requiring synthesis of course materials and analysis of large-scale events and phenomena.
- [Online] Two "History of the Future" essays
- [Online] Two drafts of research paper
- [Online] Written peer review
- [In class] Peer review presentation and discussion
- [Online] Quizzes on readings
- [Online] Participation on discussion board
- [In class] Participation in discussions and activities