

Teaching Philosophy

My concept of teaching and learning is very much a dynamic process that is interactive, energizing and personal. I believe that teaching and learning is two different sides of the same coin. To teach is to embark on a continuous process of learning and learning naturally elicits the desire to pass/teach what knowledge you have attained to others. Teaching is not the sole responsibility of the instructor and learning is not the sole responsibility of the student. Both student and instructor are learners and teachers, which can be a difficult structure to maintain in the classroom, given the hierarchical history of teaching. For example, my best courses as a student has been when my fellow classmates openly share their thoughts, feelings and experiences even when they were in opposition. It is powerful and invaluable when the instructor facilitates such class process through modeling and assigning/asking reflective questions. For me, it is when the instructor has allowed appropriate time and space for this open dialogue and processing, shows respect and appreciation for multiple interpretations and perspectives, plays devil advocate and ask questions that stimulate creative thinking, increase awareness and require more complex and out-of-the-box thinking. In addition, when the instructor provides learning strategies and resources in order to help students digest and realistically apply class material has been most impactful for me. This is the teaching style in which I aspire to. McKeachie and Svinicki (2013) states “we now know that it is the interaction of good instructional practice with students tactical use of learning strategies, motivational process, and self-regulation that results in positive learning outcomes” (p. 291). I feel it is this dynamism that motivates students on a personal level and provide not only class material but ways of interpreting, understanding and applying it. Learning strategies (e.g., self-reflection, experiential class activity) helps to internalize the material which encourages the development to be self-regulation learners. Through this perspective, I feel that students become active learners as well. Active learning “involves students in the active process of incoming information” in order to assist them in “paying attention to relevant information, organize it into coherent mental representations, and integrating representations with other knowledge (McKeachie & Svinicki, 2013, p. 39)” which typically occurs during discussion.

Fostering and Open and Inclusive Classroom Environment for Discussions

In order to have effective discussions in class, I feel that it is the responsibility of the instructor to first model what that looks like. For example, at the beginning of my classes, I discuss my personal goals in teaching the course, my concerns/fears and some personal history such as my family size, my interests and/or hobbies. Then, I encourage my students to do the same. I practice openness and transparency throughout the class particularly when it comes to class discussions. I also use circular questioning frequently and request that during discussion that students uphold specific ground rules: (1) no talking over one another, (2) treat your fellow students as you would like to be treated and (3) what is discussed in class stays in class. When it comes to fostering a sense of inclusion and cultural competency, I discuss multiculturalism, power and privilege in my class. I invite students to talk about their culture, how it may differ from their fellow students in the class and, when necessary, connect students with resources on or off campus.

Managing Challenges in the Classroom

Teaching entails classroom management which includes dealing with students who may become angry, anxious or have personal issues that may manifest in the classroom in one way or another. As an instructor, I feel my role is primarily to support my students and engage them respectfully, with curiosity and an apparent willingness to work with them to resolve their issue. For example, many students in my Marriage and Family Interaction course performed poorly on a midterm writing assignment. These students expressed their grievances initially via email. I used the class time to openly process their frustration, gave the class clear and specific feedback on common problems that lowered students' grades, provided resources (e.g., the APA manual) and specific examples on how to correct each major reoccurring problematic trend, and allowed students to correct their assignment with the potential to earn 100% of their points. I invited students to see me after class if necessary or schedule time with me during

my office hours. Students asked if I would curve the grade due to the consistency of low performance on the paper. I respectfully but directly denied the request.

Insuring High Performance and Education for Students

Teaching entails a high degree of professionalism, authenticity, strategic engagement and resourcefulness. Professionalism includes being timely, available, proactive, creative and flexibly structured. Teaching entails not only creating dynamism in the class but also understanding the culture of the institution, college, program and ways in which the course has been taught in the past. Professionalism is also bringing relevant local and societal issues into the classroom particularly relating to intersectionality, multiculturalism, power and privilege. Strategic engagement entails meeting students where they are while continuing to hold them to higher standards. It means facilitating activities within the context of the class that allows for students to engage with one another in active, interesting, challenging and novice ways. Being resourceful includes using the various forms of technology (e.g., video conferencing, smart boards...), teaching styles (e.g., learning-centered teaching, content-centered teaching or the transmittal and constructivist models of teaching as needed) and/or techniques (e.g., restructuring class every 20 minutes) which makes for great learning experience.

References

McKeachie, W., & Svinicki, M. (2013). *McKeachie's teaching tips*. Cengage Learning.