

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

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My philosophy of teaching has evolved from years of teaching experience in higher education settings across a variety of courses and contexts, as well as from my own interests related to design and creativity. As I reflect on my beliefs regarding teaching and learning, I find that my philosophy as a teacher encompasses several key points:

- Deep/meaningful engagement with content
- Learning by design
- Care/concern for student experience and learning

It is important to note that in practice these themes are often deeply integrated with each other. In the sections below I provide a brief introduction to the themes and seek to illustrate them with examples from my teaching. The examples are taken from a doctoral seminar with both face-to-face and online students, a fully online master's course, and a face-to-face master's level course.

Deep and meaningful engagement with content:

I believe that learning is most powerful, and most likely to make a lasting difference in the lives of students, when it requires students to engage with the content in meaningful ways. This means going beyond surface level engagement, so that students not only receive content in the form of readings and direct instruction (which are valuable and a part of my teaching), but also that they do projects that push them to work with content at deeper levels, and in ways that are relevant to their lives and interests. I frequently plan activities and projects in which students work with the materials and content from the readings, discussion and lecture, and then go on to engage with these ideas to create projects that have applicability to their own professional, research, and educational interests.

For example, in one doctoral seminar, Knowledge Media Design, my co-instructor Punya Mishra and I created a series of assignments designed to instantiate the students' readings in meaningful ways. After a reading by Csikszentmihalyi about the social meaning of objects in our world and our lives, we had students create photo essays about the social meanings and life of an object (or kind of object) in the world around them. After a reading about the process of design, students went out and interviewed working designers to create a podcast about the process of design – blending the ideas from the reading into real-world experiences with technology. These, and similar types of creative assignments, are something I aim for in pushing ideas to the next level.

Learning by design:

I see teaching as an act of design, and feel that learning can be powerful through the process of design-based activity or inquiry. One of my goals is always to encourage creativity in students, in the hopes that as teachers themselves they will also seek opportunities and find ways to apply this in their professional work and thinking. Seeing learning as most powerful through the lens of design I look for activities that will allow students to create something (an educational artifact,

teaching tool, lesson, video, podcast, or anything that will be useful in their own thinking, teaching, or interests). I feel that the process of designing something helps students internalize the knowledge they acquire along the way, and learning occurs more organically.

For example, in a set of face-to-face courses that I recently taught for our Masters in Educational Technology Program, students read a text by Daniel Willingham, which covered different aspects of cognitive psychology relating to classroom teaching. Rather than just reading and discussing the text (which we did as a first step), students also worked in groups to create short videos covering the reading. These were called 3x3x3 videos, because students had to identify 3 summary points from each chapter, along with 3 practical applications, and then design a video that captured these points in 3 minutes. By the end of the project, students had designed a full set of videos synthesizing the readings, which was tweeted to (and retweeted by) Daniel Willingham. Again, this is just one example of many such projects aimed at spawning creativity and constructive learning, by asking students to create or design something around the subjects of education and technology.

Caring/concern for student learning:

A key attribute of my approach to every course that I teach is a strong feeling of concern and caring for students' learning and their experience in my courses. I mean this not merely in the sense of empathy or feeling for the students (which is of course important), but in my primary concern that they have a positive learning experience, feel more empowered about their learning and knowledge of education, technology and similar issues, and that they leave the course having learned skills, ideas and approaches that will serve them well going forward. Whether in online, hybrid or face-to-face teaching, I make it a point to know each student and their work. I provide extensive personal assistance to students, both with technology skills, and with larger-scope ideas of shaping their projects and interests, and encourage them to communicate with me personally and regularly throughout the course with questions or with any academic needs.

This principle of teaching is extremely important to me, though it is a bit difficult to exemplify in one specific project. Since using technology for creative projects can make some students a bit nervous in online environments, I use several strategies to make the technology skill learning more comfortable and supportive. I maintain frequently online communication with the class at multiple levels, and from day one, every communication from me encourages students to contact me with questions (big or small) and/or let me know if they need to discuss any questions via Skype, phone, or whatever mode is convenient. I offer office hours on Skype for online courses (as well as flexible by appointment office hours), and create either a Facebook group or an online discussion area aimed specifically at troubleshooting technology questions, and one for broader course questions. Several things I always aim to be consistent on, with regard to concern for student learning include: being highly responsive to questions; providing sensitive replies and encouragement; offering timely and detailed feedback on each project to enrich personal progress; showing enthusiasm for the content and applications; and seeking opportunities to make the process fun and engaging.