

Teaching Philosophy

My Philosophy

As an instructor, my goal is to create a learning environment where students can build essential skills through a balanced blend of hands-on experience and theoretical exploration. My teaching philosophy centers on inclusivity, integrating diverse perspectives and learning styles into every aspect of the classroom. I am committed to making space for multiple ways of knowing encouraging students to appreciate the unique contributions of each classmate. By fostering respect for diversity and promoting collaborative, positive interactions, I guide students to see diversity as an opportunity for connection, understanding, and a shared sense of belonging.

Student-Centered Approach

Guided by the principles of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) Theory, I focus on identifying the range between what a learner can accomplish independently and what they can achieve with the guidance of an instructor. Understanding where each student falls within their ZPD is essential for supporting effective learning. This allows me to create scaffolded learning experiences that provide support while promoting student autonomy. To help students progress within their ZPD, I employ several key strategies. One of these is modeling, where I demonstrate how to solve a similar problem or complete a similar task. Additionally, I emphasize building on prior knowledge to encourage students to connect new ideas to their existing understanding, foster a stronger foundation, and make complex topics more accessible and easier to grasp while also creating new mental models. These combined approaches enable me to facilitate meaningful learning experiences tailored to each student's needs.

My role as an instructor extends beyond instruction to mentorship and guidance. I want to be a resource who guides students in their academic and personal development. My goal is to create an atmosphere of trust where students feel encouraged to ask questions, express challenges, and take risks in their learning. My definition of mentorship means being available, approachable, and responsive to students' needs. I listen actively to their concerns and provide thoughtful, constructive feedback.

My dual role as an instructor and a lifelong learner shapes my teaching philosophy. This unique perspective allows me to draw from my experiences and empathize with students' challenges. In my position as the Instructor of Record for *Introduction to Public Speaking*, when covering the topic of presenting speeches online, I could relate to the topic and directly to students' experiences of transitioning to remote learning during the pandemic. This informed how I taught the class and my learning outcomes and objectives, having faced similar challenges; because of my dual role, I am able to bridge theory with practice, demonstrating communication concepts in ways that connect to students' lived experiences.

Learning centered approach

Drawing on the principles of Bloom's taxonomy, my aim is for students to move from knowledge and comprehension of communication techniques to application and analysis of these techniques, using this acquired knowledge to solve problems and develop more skills in new situations, breaking the concepts learned apart to determine how they all relate and making these parts whole before ultimately presenting communication concepts after critical thinking and questioning of evidence.

While teaching *Introduction to Public Speaking*, I start by introducing core concepts like speech structure, vocal delivery, and body language to build a solid knowledge base. As students gain familiarity, they apply these techniques in structured exercises, such as delivering a two-minute self-introduction, where they begin translating theory into practice within a supportive environment. Next is analysis, where students critically examine sample speeches and explore how techniques like tone and pacing influence audience engagement. They also practice creating speech outlines, which are essential for writing and delivering speeches and public speaking. Finally, in the synthesis and evaluation stages, students develop and deliver persuasive and informative speeches that integrate all they have learned. They engage in peer reviews and critically analyze their peer's work by analyzing the quality of the speech to refine their skills. Through this structured progression, I aim to help students grow from understanding and practicing techniques to becoming confident, critical-thinking, and skilled public speakers and communicators.

Creating an effective learning-centered environment necessitates transparency and clarity in course syllabus and design. Informed by educators like David Whitten on learning-centered course design, I focus on establishing clear learning goals, objectives, and outcomes that reflect

the transformation I aim for in my students through their learning experiences. In developing my course syllabi, I employ the backward design model to align each unit and activity with the broader learning goals of the course. My process begins with defining the essential knowledge, skills, and understandings I want students to acquire by course completion. Rather than jumping into lesson planning, I first identify these desired outcomes with these specific objectives in mind. Then, I establish criteria to evaluate how students will showcase their mastery of these goals. After I define the learning goals and assessments, I plan instructional activities and resources that support students in achieving these objectives.

My classes emphasize diverse learning experiences, as highlighted by educators like Jeff Gregory, who accentuate the importance of integrating various strategies to ensure active learning. I integrate a blend of techniques across all my teaching engagements to promote interaction and adapt to high-tech and low-tech environments. I implement high-tech activities like live audience-response tools like Kahoot to solicit feedback after class quizzes and midterm preparations, gauging student understanding in real-time and stimulating discussion. After class, I utilize asynchronous tools like discussion boards, encouraging students to reflect on what was learned. For low-tech strategies, I assign pre-class readings to encourage critical thinking before the class discussions. By emphasizing learning outcomes over content coverage, I create a cohesive learning experience that seamlessly connects each lesson, activity, and assessment, leading students toward a deeper mastery of the course material.

Assessing learning

To assess student growth and learning effectively, I prioritize clarity and support through grading rubrics and tailored feedback. I believe assessment should go beyond simply measuring student performance; it should also serve as a tool for building students' confidence and deepening their understanding. When assessments are designed with clear criteria and constructive feedback, they help students see where they are succeeding and identify specific areas for improvement.

Drawing on the importance of rubrics from educators like Benjamin Taylor, Flora Kisby, and Alice Reedy, I recognize the value of rubrics as tools for enhancing performance, especially when clearly introduced and applied. Rubrics establish specific performance benchmarks, reducing student anxiety by clarifying expectations and demystifying grading criteria.

To maximize their effectiveness, I use rubrics in a formative, developmental manner, breaking down assignment points and linking them to learning objectives. By distributing and discussing rubrics before assessments, I guide students through incremental learning activities that build toward achieving the course objectives.

I provide selective, developmental feedback tailored to each student's needs. Rather than giving generic comments, I focus on specific, actionable areas for improvement. Drawing from patterns in student work, I craft efficient and meaningful feedback, guiding students in refining their skills and deepening their understanding. This approach to assessment transforms rubrics from a compliance tool into an active, supportive component of the learning process, fostering a transparent, collaborative, and growth-oriented environment.

Conclusion

Teaching, for me is about encouraging students to take charge of their own learning journey. Beyond simply imparting knowledge, it involves igniting curiosity and love for learning that inspires students to engage deeply with the material. Effective teaching creates an environment where students feel empowered to explore, question, and connect ideas independently, fostering a lifelong commitment to learning that transcends the classroom. This approach gives students the knowledge, skills, and mindset necessary to navigate and thrive in an ever-evolving world.