

Teaching Statement

I have witnessed far too many students turn away from their education. Whether they felt like the instructor was a bad teacher or that the material was too difficult to learn, students can and will drop out from school. Even though I cannot hope to prevent this from occurring, I will encourage those who enter my classroom to work hard and excel in their studies. As an educator, I will have many responsibilities, but my number one focus will always be instructing students and discovering creative and innovative ways of teaching.

As an educator, the focus of my classrooms is on learning and encouragement to excel rather than grades. I accomplish this by holistically grading, which rewards improvement and effort, and by offering help whenever my students need assistance. It is important to support their growth as they experience new concepts and ways of seeing the world. One manner in which I support educational growth is by keeping the syllabus and lesson plans flexible—they must change to fit the students' needs. With each new class, changes are made to reflect the dynamic and individual makeup of the students. Depending upon the level of knowledge and experience, different points of the class will be highlighted over others.

I am a firm believer of collaborative education. My students are co-teachers of the course. Their assessments and evaluations throughout the semester are taken seriously. Any suggestions for improvement are implemented if possible. My classroom is a community of scholars. Through large group and small group discussions, students learn to trust their peers, which encourages individuals to voice their opinions rather than sit quietly in the back of the room. Students also keep learning journals, have peer review sessions, and make presentations. Classroom activities vary from mock trials to debates to Jeopardy games. Variation depends on the materials being taught.

Though I highlight collaborative learning techniques, I also give students individual assignments to promote independent learning. Some assignments include research papers, teaching sessions, and quiet opportunities to self-reflect on their individual growth. Students learn to take an initiative in their education, becoming participants in what they are learning instead of always being told what to learn.

Supplementing my collaborative and independent learning techniques are critical pedagogy theories. Students are expected to take what they are learning in the classroom to a new level of analysis by relating it to current events in the world, either locally or globally. Many of my lesson plans give opportunities to connect readings with current events and utilize media tools such as newspapers, magazines, the Internet, and television. Students are also pushed to critically analyze and question all types of writing, which will vary depending upon the type of course I am teaching. Comments during class discussions and on writing assignments constantly ask students to self-evaluate their knowledge, pushing them to answer the age old question: Why? Utilizing literary lenses, such as postcolonial, cultural, feminist, and Marxist, also draw students into a new level of study.

Unfortunately, this statement only offers a glimpse of my teaching styles and techniques. To truly experience them, you must enter my classroom. I utilize collaborative and independent teaching styles that highlight a critical pedagogy approach to learning. Through these methods, my students and I make an English class that is exciting for both majors and non-majors.