

Statement of Teaching Practice

Classroom Practices

Community Building: The classroom is a small community, and it is a teacher's responsibility to shape the norms of that community in ways that foster student learning. I aim to establish a community of respect. I model this by making an effort to learn and use my students names and be aware of issues that may affect their learning in class. I show respect for their learning process by enabling students to make mistakes safely, without ridicule or humiliation. I encourage students to get to know one another and to communicate frequently about the course material.

Lecture: I believe that lecture is an important part of the classroom tradition. A well-prepared lecture will provide an overview of the subject matter, embed issues in their historical location, give concrete examples of abstract concepts, and connect these elements with the assigned readings. I view lectures as a teacher's homework; they show that the professor has made a commitment to student learning.

Today's lectures no longer need to follow the boring model of passive students listening to hours of talk. Modern lectures are interactive, incorporate new technology, and benefit from the research being done into differing learning styles and attention spans.

Quizzes: If I have done my homework, I expect the students to do theirs too. Weekly quizzes on the assigned readings reward students for staying current. Quizzes also enable teachers to identify poor work habits, confusion about the subject matter, or a personal crisis before they turn into a failing grade.

Cooperation: While competition can be a strong motivator, I believe that cooperation builds better character, and reinforces the qualities we value in future colleagues. Cooperation can be fostered through group discussion and team exercises. E-mail lists and online education forums can be a valuable medium for sharing articles, carrying on discussion, or asking questions. The opinion of our peers is an important part of scholarly life. When possible, I attempt to reflect this on the classroom level, by incorporating peer editing into the essay assignments.

Essays: The ability to construct a well-written essay is key to communicating our ideas to others. For this reason, essays make up a significant portion of the student's grade. Depending on the course content and level, assignments may include a major essay or several smaller papers.

In some cases I may assign a short essay in the first few weeks of class. This serves three purposes: 1) it establishes that the course will entail work, and a time commitment on the part of the student; 2) it enables me to get to know students as individuals who care about particular issues; 3) it provides a barometer of the skills my students already possess.

Ultimately, I aim to help students adopt the practices of critical thinking, clear communication and responsible scholarship that will serve them in any future field.