

Teaching Philosophy

Teaching is a creative profession, not a delivery system. Great teachers do [pass on information], but what great teachers also do is mentor, stimulate, provoke, engage.

Similar to the late Sir Ken Robinson, I see my role as an instructor to not merely deliver content, but engage students in a community of living and learning, stimulate learning through care, and support students beyond the confines of a classroom. Importantly, I rely on student feedback in order to evaluate the effectiveness of my approach to teaching.

Throughout my graduate career, I have served as a Teaching Apprentice for four different courses, alongside four different instructors, as listed in my Curriculum Vitae. In addition, I have given guest lectures on a variety of topics related to higher education – including on *The History of Minority Serving Institutions* and *Student Voting across the Country* – and facilitated various workshops – ranging from *Using Nvivo in Qualitative Research* to *Writing for the Public*. Whether a semester-long course, a guest lecture, or a four-hour workshop, I seek to meet learners where they are and enable learners to apply the knowledge to their own work. In meeting learners where they are, I practice caution with the jargon I use – clearly defining any words which may be new for learners – and employ conversational tactics to ensure learners are following along with each lesson. In enabling learners to apply the knowledge to their own work, I use my own work as an example of how certain materials may be applied in research and practice, and regularly carve out time for learners to bring their own interests into the classroom through activities and discussions. As one former student in a course evaluation shared: “Tyler helped to seamlessly blend the text with real-life situations! Sometimes I felt lost in class with much new terminology and concepts. He helped me recognize how the text can be applied to my current work!”

Similarly, at the core of my teaching philosophy is the notion of *classroom as community*. In turn, I have moved away from what Paulo Freire calls a *transmission model of education*, instead limiting my lecture time and spending far more time in conversation with students. I strive to create an environment in which each student feels as though they have a voice and that their voice is heard and considered. Moreover, through my instruction, I challenge students to be confident in their responses and to be open to others’ perspectives, especially those perspectives that counter or disagree with their own. Importantly, not only do I recognize diversity as central to the learning process, but I also situate diversity as a resource, strength, and benefit. Thus, I firmly expect all individuals in my classes to treat each other with respect *and* appreciation. In the words of previous students, my classes allow “for students to feel most comfortable sharing out on course topics that some might have strong thoughts/opinions about” and enable students to feel “valued when speaking in class.”

However, the notion of *classroom as community* goes beyond merely learning together – it also centers living together. It is vital for me, as the instructor, to recognize how happenings beyond the classroom may make their way into the classroom and to not shy away from such influences. In turn, I regularly provide time to check-in with students at the beginning of every course, even if unrelated to the content for the day. Similarly, I acknowledge how course content may affect students differentially. For example, at a program meeting in Autumn 2019, many students of color shared their experiences of being in courses that frequently discussed issues of diversity in higher

education – issues that were often very personal for them and would leave them to feel helpless at the end of each day. To address students’ concerns, when I co-taught courses in Spring 2020, at the end of every course, I would regularly carve out time to check in with students one-on-one to listen to any concerns they may have. Additionally, I would leave time at the end of each class for students to reflect, such as in the form of journaling, in order to enable them to process the content of the day. As one student shared at the end of that semester: “[Tyler] was able to empathize with our experiences and worked to alleviate stress.”

Beyond engaging students in community, I demonstrate care and responsiveness to students’ needs in a variety of ways. Strategies toward this end include coming prepared each and every day, remembering and recalling students’ names and interests early and often, and providing feedback on students’ assignments in a timely manner. When communicating with students, details matter, and showing care in the details contributes to creating an environment in which students want to engage. In prior courses I have taught, students took notice of these practices in course evaluations, often sharing sentiments such as: “[Tyler] was extremely responsive to all questions inside and outside of class, and not only in a timely manner, but almost instantaneously” and “Tyler was willing to put a great deal of thought and time into his feedback and 1-on-1 meetings with students.”

Finally, I aim to support students in their scholarly and professional efforts beyond the classroom. I prioritize making myself available for meeting with students. For example, prior to COVID-19, I regularly practiced an open-door policy, wherein if my office door was open, I was available to chat. Given the current circumstances, I am reimagining what this open-door policy may look like in a virtual setting, including providing regular check-ins with those students that I mentor and engaging students in virtual spaces such as the American Educational Research Association Division J Graduates’ Slack community. My support for students also shows up in other academic spaces, including connecting students with colleagues in the field and potential organizations of interest and hosting regular writing groups that double as support communities for graduate students during this time. Indeed, teaching and mentoring take a great deal of time, but I firmly believe that these activities are worth the investment, as I prioritize my role in shaping the next generation of higher education scholars and practitioners.