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Teaching Philosophy

The classroom should be a constructive and dialogic space in which students learn to become creative and critical members of the global community. In all of my courses, the teaching of rhetorical principles is central, whether it is classical rhetorical principles in a writing class, audience analysis in a public speaking class, semiotic analysis in a film class, or deconstructing binaries used in political speeches in a persuasive communication class. Teaching students rhetorical principles helps them analyze the texts they interact with and also helps them produce their own texts that respond to the needs of diverse audiences. Ultimately, I hope that students see writing in its various forms and media as an act of communication that is shaped by the audience, situation, medium, and message.

My degrees in the fields of Professional Writing and English have afforded me the opportunity to teach in a wide variety of classrooms. My pedagogy, whether teaching communication, professional writing, academic writing, film, or multimedia design, integrates traditional rhetorical concerns such as audience and purpose with contemporary investigations into literacy, culture, and identity in digitally mediated environments. The world students will enter after graduation is growing increasingly more global and digital. In order to be effective communicators in this environment, students will need to be able work within digital environments as well as reflect upon and shape them. Because I believe that writing classes should prepare students for participation in the academic community as well as communities beyond the academy, I strive to prepare students in the classes I teach for participation in an increasingly multicultural and digitally mediated world. I do this by (1) having students interact with and produce (“read” and “write”) many different kinds of texts in as many media as possible, (2) asking students to reflect upon their composing processes and how different media shape their decisions, and (3) asking students to use rhetorical principles to analyze the texts they interact with and to produce their own texts that respond to the needs of their audiences.

For example, in my basic writing class, “Literacy, Digitally Mediated,” students read *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy* by James Paul Gee, a book outlining the learning principles employed by video games and arguing that these principles are important for acquiring basic and digital literacies. Because the book deals with the relationships between literacy and community and between literacy and media, I ask students to consider their own literacy development in the context of the communities in which they participate and the media that shape their learning environments.

I have developed a sequence of assignments combining rhetorical analysis, creative multimedia production, and reflective writing to help students explore these issues. The first assignment asks students to create visual representations of their personal identities that indicate how those identities are related to the communities to which they belong. Students then write essays in which they explore how the medium (in this case, Photoshop) and the mode (still image) made a difference in their composing processes and the kinds of stories they could tell or arguments they could make about their identities. For the second assignment, students write essays in which they analyze a genre and propose a concept for their third assignment, a sound project exploring their own literacy practices and values. The genre they choose to analyze for the essay must be the genre that their literacy biography will fit into. For instance, if a student chooses to create an audio documentary, then s/he will analyze a number of audio documentaries in order to define the genre and create a plan for the literacy biography that explains how s/he will employ the conventions of the genre and how s/he will make the project stand apart from the genre (i.e., what his/her unique contribution to the genre will be).

As a teacher, it is my responsibility to provide students with the tools for critical analysis as well as the tools for creative and critical production. I believe that the skills students learn in my classes will prepare them for the work they will do beyond my classroom and help them become critical and creative communicators in a digitally mediated global community.