

Teaching Philosophy
Elizabeth D. Brissey

My philosophy of teaching is based on a foundational belief that the workplace is not the student's sole endpoint on a linear timeline of development. Students must be equipped with a wide variety of skills and tools with which to succeed in the workplace; however, the ability to construct and modify understanding, formulate and articulate opinions, and participate ethically and responsibly in a democratic environment are of paramount importance. With this in mind, I strive to design and innovate in each class in ways that prepare students for a future they will actively build themselves.

In my classes, students engage in inquiry, collaboration, and writing with the understanding their work can and does have an impact. With the understanding that composition and literature are distinct fields, I apply similar principles to both classroom settings. In each, I strive to build a curriculum that is responsive to students' needs, bringing students into collaboration with each other and bringing their work to a larger audience. My classes are designed so that students' classmates comprise an audience that is both real and socially meaningful. In my classes, this foundational principle is manifested in a variety of ways: we interrogate and evaluate cultural artifacts, we locate and question underlying assumptions and structures of thought in our primary and secondary sources, and we present our findings for open discussion.

However, as process, progress, and improvement are key to learning, I implement my curricula with the understanding that an institutional setting should also be a safe space for the development, expression and exchange of ideas. Because learners direct their inquiry and composition toward a large and diverse audience, I design my lessons with collaboration and multivocality in mind. Collaboration helps to develop skills that transfer across disciplines and transcend institutional settings. Student projects utilize various genres and media, and the goal of this framework is that students gain a deep and nuanced understanding of the textuality and intertextuality of their world. Students interact not only with texts, but with art, history, science, and each other to build a contextual and intertextual understanding of culture and historical moment.

Just as it is important for students to engage with each other and their unique perspectives, it is equally integral that students engage critically with themselves. As we examine texts and cultural artifacts, students are encouraged to examine and question their personal ideologies and assumptions. I implement reflective writing in my classes as a way for students to engage with themselves and their own development as readers, writers, thinkers, and citizens. I scaffold projects and implement assignments in ways that are designed to encourage reflection, self-examination, and metacognition at various stages within the inquiry and compositional process.

I also hold myself to these same expectations. With each unit and course that I teach, I reflect upon the implementation, efficacy, and effectiveness of my content, methods, implementation, and expected outcomes. I frequently solicit both formative and summative feedback from my students, and I interact frequently with their journals and other reflective writing to gain further insight into my teaching. I engage in frequent conferences and workshops with students with the goal of assisting my students in their development as well as investigating ways in which I can improve as facilitator, colleague, and mentor. For both myself and my students, I emphasize the importance of recursivity and the integral role that reflection and metacognition play in the development of skills, critical thinking, social awareness, and individual agency.