

When asked why I want to teach, I said I wanted to make a difference. I have learned over the years that, outside of one's own actions, one of the best ways to truly make a difference is by making others more aware of the world around them and educating them on how they can become change agents. As such, my teaching philosophy is developed around three goals. First, assist students in developing practical skills that include issues of diversity. Second, help them develop awareness of real problems and possible solutions. Third, encourage the belief that they can intervene and change the world for the better, no matter what they choose to do.

I once heard that education is learning to become and training is learning to do. I believe both of these aspects are relevant in teaching. For instance, I can train students how to read and think critically, but it is through education where I can show them how and why intersecting markers of identity matter. These insights inform the variety of teaching/training techniques I use within my courses. I consider several things in constructing this type of classroom. First, I believe everyone brings in their own set of knowledge, skills, and experiences that influence what they need and want to learn. By recognizing this, not only do I get the opportunity to share my knowledge, resources, and experience; I get to learn from my students. By utilizing the backgrounds that students bring with them to class, I can develop teaching plans that allow me to help students discover the depth and breadth of what they know. We can then work together on ways to employ and apply this knowledge to multiple aspects of our lives.

Second, I believe that everyone learns differently. This realization has freed me to use my background in training and development, my personality, and my creativity. I employ a variety of teaching/training techniques including: discussion, demonstration, practice, reflection, sharing partners, and group work. These techniques allow students to engage in the material in a variety of ways; they have the chance to teach and learn from each other, to develop particular skills (critical thinking or consciousness raising), and to positively modify or change their behavior (becoming more aware of diversity or managing conflict).

Finally, no matter where life takes each student, they will always be confronted with issues of diversity. Students must become critical consumers of the messages they receive and send. By listening to my students, I can help them to both locate themselves in a particular subject matter and understand how it relates to them. For instance, I may have students review a website or publication material from a university and ask them how or where they fit into the university message. By listening and learning from students, I show them they matter to me; through the course activities I demonstrate why the subject should matter to them. One activity I like to use is mid-semester oral and/or written class assessment. Through this activity, I challenge the students to evaluate how the course is working and suggest ways *we* can improve. I have frequently made changes based on suggestions, including such things as providing demonstrations of speech types or allowing students more time to work together in class prior to answering difficult questions. Additionally, techniques like partner sharing and role-playing let me observe and listen to how students understand the material and allow me to give immediate feedback if changes are needed. Using homework assignments as a basis to start discussion allows students the opportunity to engage with the material before the lesson begins. Traditional classwork allows me to assess the skills each student develops over the course of the semester. Ultimately, I aim to help my students grow their knowledge and develop their skills to do and become whatever they choose.