

Teaching Philosophy

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I believe that a Liberal Arts education is important and that history is a crucial component. My teaching philosophy strongly reflects the five criteria found in Adrian College's Ribbons of Excellence .

Learning Throughout a Lifetime: I believe it is necessary for professors to continually reflect on their teaching in an effort at constant improvement. I feel that my role as a professor is to create a learning-centered environment. The teacher-student relationship is a partnership in which, as the senior member, I must guide and advise, but also listen. Lecturing to students is just one small aspect of my teaching process, and just as important is the time that I invest in creating effective ways of reaching students and encouraging a love of learning and a respect for historical perspective. I feel that in this way I can make them interested partners in our relationship. In order to do this, I must educate myself on the latest developments in my field and in teaching.

Developing Creativity: Since I believe that students have diverse learning talents, I strive to give them a multitude of learning experiences. This means that it is imperative that, in addition to maintaining an awareness

of current pedagogical techniques, I must constantly imagine new ways of reaching my students.

Crossing Boundaries and Disciplines: For me, offering students a multitude of learning experiences means exposing them to different ways and tools for interpreting. I believe that history courses should challenge students to understand past politics, economics, societies, and cultures. Thus, my students are asked to understand aspects of political science, economics, sociology, anthropology, literature, and art history. I require them not only to analyze textual remnants of the past, but also music and art. Crossing boundaries and disciplines creates students who are better equipped to understand the world.

Caring for Humanity and the World: In addition, I strongly feel that exposure to different cultures should be a cornerstone of higher education. Cross-cultural comparison is important in giving the subject broader meaning and a sense of usefulness. I hope that the challenges that I give my students assist them in gaining a greater appreciation and respect for diversity. I also think that by using cross-cultural comparisons I can gently coax students into looking at our own society from another's perspective, and develop greater caring for humanity.

Thinking Critically: Diverse assignments and exposure to different ways of seeing help students develop their critical thinking skills for the long run and encourages them to break out of their current paradigms of thinking. I believe that my history courses should challenge students to develop skills for understanding the past in a way that is meaningful for today. I am less interested in having them memorizes minute details of dates and names, and more concerned that when they read primary and secondary sources, they are able to discern meaning in a sophisticated way.

I believe another aspect of critical thinking is to become a better communicator. Therefore, I provide frequent opportunities for speaking and writing. I train students to develop insightful questions, compile data to answer those questions, effectively analyze that data, and to relay that data to others. In order to do this well, a teacher must offer frequent feedback, and allow students a chance to improve.