

Statement of Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy is to stay up to date on industry trends and best practices, with the goal of integrating these into my teaching and preparing students for careers in today's complex media industry. Some of the principles that guide my teaching are being cognizant of the different ways students learn, designing courses to be both engaging and relatable, pushing student to realize their potential without them being intimidated by the course material and expectations, and making myself available within reason for issues they might run into on the go. Utilizing this approach has allowed me to build strong relationships with my students. Helping them to exceed their self-expectations and grow into talented journalists has been one my most rewarding experiences in academia.

When our students enter the workforce, they will be expected to work as one-man-band storytellers who have command of various skill sets and can publish across multiple mediums with little supervision. In this environment, students must understand the fundamentals of journalism, while becoming skilled at using the technology that powers the digital landscape. My goal is to facilitate the learning of these skills and fundamentals, while helping them to develop the sharp critical thinking skills necessary to stand out in a competitive job market.

While writing is still at the heart of journalism, today professionals must excel at "writing for the web." SEO, hyperlinks, multimedia presentations of their work, the length of their stories, distribution through social media, hashtags, being responsive to article comments — today's journalists spend nearly as much time on these aspects as they do on their writing. Likewise, visual journalism is changing to adapt to shorter audience attention spans. Journalists utilize mobile devices for rapid production, creating videos that give the audience a glimpse into the situation being reported. Content is consciously produced in a way that allows it to be easily viewed on smartphones. Student mastery of these new skills is instrumental to their success as modern journalists and I work to incorporate them into my courses whenever possible.

I believe the way a course is designed is one of the key elements to evoke student motivation and progress. Therefore, I put extra effort in making my class activities and assignments as engaging and participatory as possible. For instance, in my Photographic Communication course, after a brief introduction of fundamental tools, I take my students out to practice what they have been learning. Additionally, I offer students the option of creating a short video diary outlining their progress on assignments as a form of self-critique. Giving some different options that align with individual learning styles allows my students to form a more personal relationship with my course.

I try to be actively mindful of the fact that students don't learn in one single way. I work hard to observe each student's skills and knowledge early on in the semester, then try to cater to individual needs as best as I can. I have been very successful in accomplishing this in skills based courses taught in smaller groups, which gives me more one-to-one interaction opportunities. In larger courses, office hours have proven a good opportunity to identify and address individual student's needs.

Within reason, I also try to make myself available outside of office hours to assist with issues that are easily fixable, but require an instructor's guidance. This helps students get past their minor hang-ups and technical issues back to focusing on the task at hand. Learning how to troubleshoot during tense moments is an essential skill that will be valuable in their careers as journalists given the difficulty of anticipating the issues that arise in the digital environment.

While I push my students to excel, I am also mindful of their skill level. I want them to improve, but I don't want to set expectations so high that students get intimidated and discouraged. Throughout a semester, I intentionally break major assignments into smaller pieces, giving students more opportunities to soak up each skill individually and produce better work. Working collaboratively on small wins throughout the semester, rather than having their grade dependent on one large project submission helps students to be less anxious and positively affects learning.

Overall, I work hard to ensure that my students are equipped with all of the skills they need to succeed as modern journalists. Through being mindful of their needs and expectations, as well as, the expectations of the industry that they are about to enter, I provide a balanced education that bridges the two. Teaching is an extremely rewarding aspect of my academic career which gives me the opportunity to contribute to the future of journalism and I look forward to continuing my evolution as an educator in the years to come.