Scott R. McMaster- Teaching Philosophy

Today, the ubiquity and variety of technological tools available to enhance and facilitate post-secondary learning is astounding, as are the implications for understanding how we produce, consume and share information in a globalized and online context. During the course of my teaching I wish to transform students from casual or passive consumers and creators of information and various texts into active researchers, critical thinkers and media literate scholars.

Essential to adult learning and development is an engaging environment where students can be motivated, challenged and evolve as individuals. In addition to providing students with the fundamental theoretical and technical skills and tools necessary to achieve the desired course outcomes, I also want to instill confidence, self-awareness and trust. I believe in constructivist, collaborative and student-centered approaches to learning and teaching and feel there is much to be gained each time one enters a classroom, on both sides of the equation. In addition I want students to become creative, self-directed learners drawing from their experiences to express opinions, reflect and guide themselves along the path of their own development.

I have been very fortunate to have taught and interacted nationally and internationally with students from all over the world and this diversity, whether in a workshop, classroom or informal discussion is a great strength to open up our preconceived notions, pose new questions and better comprehend the complexity and multifaceted nature of our cultures, biases and place in the world.

Although I will lead group discussions I think each student also has the potential skills of both teacher and leader, which is why after covering new concepts and technical skills I like students to pair up and review or discuss the topics and brainstorm or mind map, to challenge, build upon or possibly take the lesson in a new direction. Essential to our group discussions will be constructive and critical discourse about the history, culture and politics of the liberal arts and humanities, with a key emphasis on local and global ways of knowing and how these ideas fit into various frictional theoretical and methodological paradigms and impact our learning and daily lives. Part of that discourse will come from selected readings and research, additionally students will also write their own research or educational statements, to reflect deeply on their understanding, ambitions and critical reasoning with regards to the education and knowledge they seek. To begin to analyze and employ self-reflexivity is a difficult but vital part of being an artist, educator, researcher, or contributing member of society.

Assessment in my courses is both summative and formative and can take many forms; online portfolios, presentations, papers, creative works and research projects.

Projects are broadly based and incorporate individual interests according to the specific faculty and program goals or technical proficiencies required. Clear objectives, examples, demonstrations as well as student-developed measurements help to instill personal responsibility and value the learner's input in a shift towards student-centered pedagogy. Beyond mastery of basic concepts related to the discipline and a formidable understanding of course concepts I look for change, willingness to experiment and fail and the ability for students to realize their bias, critically reflect and conceptualize in an independent and productive fashion.

Each semester I enter a classroom and know that I will finish having added more to my understanding of teaching and learning. Essential to being an effective teacher is to be a life-long learner and consummate student as well, realizing that one is never at the pinnacle of their skills is a humbling but crucial realization. This is why feedback from students, peers, and colleagues is invaluable to evolve as a teacher in addition to participation in conferences or exhibitions and hearing multiple perspectives on familiar and new topics. Advancing one's skills and training on new technologies is also part of my professional development and personal interest, discovering new ways with which to merge, cross over or elicit transdisciplinary thinking are particularly fascinating. Each class, each semester brings anticipation for who I will meet and excitement for they will accomplish.

Above all I want to equip my students with the practical acuity and applied skills to take their knowledge and learning from the classroom and find it validated it in their everyday lives in real world applications; to help them become successful and adaptive social scientists, artists, educators, and professionals in our technology driven age of information.