

Teaching Philosophy

Teaching is a practice, or profession of a teacher. I derived my philosophy for teaching and learning from two theoretical models of teaching. The Socratic Model is an approach that encourages self-discovery and asserts that the teacher's responsibility is to "tap into the common stock of ideas already known by the students" (Howard University, 2005). The Eisen and Bonwell's active learning model which places emphasis on the process of learning rather than the product. In this model, students are given the autonomy to facilitate discussions on class content (Howard University, 2005).

Using these two models as a foundation, I employ an approach to teaching and learning that forces students to look and think beyond the obvious by challenging them to question what they have already learned. There is an expectation that the student will take an active role in the facilitation of their learning as well as in each other's learning.

In this philosophy, I have a set of assumptions regarding the instructor, the student, and the classroom. The instructor must be willing to be a student remaining open to new ideas, especially those ideas of his or her students. He must be willing to engage continuously in scholarship for the purposes of personal and professional growth. The student must be committed to learning not just for the sake of a grade but also for the benefit of acquiring new knowledge to confidently and competently operate and communicate within their respective discipline. The student must also be an active agent in the learning process and willing to make a personal investment in their learning. The classroom should be a place where students feel safe to take risk and to test newly acquired skills with the instructor as well as with each other.

In addition to the acquisition of knowledge, one goal is to allow students to become active participants in the teaching and learning relationship by encouraging them to think critically about the content being presented and to openly express their ideas about this information both in writing and orally. A second goal is to create an atmosphere where students can feel free to engage in authentic dialogue about the subject matter with both the instructor and their classmates. I accomplish this goal by acknowledging that students bring to the classroom [their own] knowledge and experience and assuring them that they are valuable contributors to the teaching and learning process.

My method of teaching comprises lectures, group exercises, and open-discussions, online discussions and interactive learning activities, experiential learning and Project-based learning pedagogy (PBL). I utilize lectures to provide students with general information on a topic. Group exercises increase student participation and to encourage critical thinking. For example, provide students with vignettes and ask them to present to the class their findings, thoughts, opinions and implications for the profession of social work. Open discussions allow students to introduce opinions and to solicit advice from other students. It also allows the opportunity to observe and evaluate how students process information. Through experiential and PBL I use community base organizations as "experiential learning spaces" for students to acquire and test knowledge in real time.

In sum, I see teaching as a joint effort that involves both the student and the instructor. The instructor, however, is ultimately responsible for and accountable to his or her students.