

MY PHILOSOPHY [ON TEACHING]

I entered the classroom with the conviction that it was crucial for me and every other student to be an active participant, not a passive consumer...[a conception of] education as the practice of freedom... education that connects the will to know with the will to become.

Learning is a place where paradise can be created.

+bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, NY: Routledge, 1994.

I teach because I have been called to do so and as an educator, I follow this model set out by bell hooks. I do not enter the classroom as the "knower of all things." It is my job to guide students to their own higher understanding and to assist them to critique and analyze information, whether it comes from a book, film, or their lived experiences, in a way that transforms their understanding.

I work with students to help them understand that their backgrounds, who they are, and where they come from are vital to knowledge construction. While most students have been taught that they are not central to their education, I dismantle that by working with them and showing them that who they are is central to their understanding, dissecting, and ultimately remixing what they have learned.

Teaching both in the classroom and in informal community settings allows me to use my interdisciplinary degrees, as well as my formal training as a museum/inquiry based educator, to challenge conventional notions of race, representation, place/space and creativity. This helps students to become independent thinkers; critical thinkers who can then go on to question the words, actions, and mindsets of those who create cultures and institutions where disenfranchisement and marginalization are par for the course.

Fundamentally, true education is tantamount to liberation. As an educator, it is my privilege and duty to create an environment based on mutual respect, one that honors inquiry, creativity, self-expression and full engagement. My teaching style is learner-centered, as I understand that all students learn differently -- sometimes in a multiplicity of ways -- therefore I provide a mix of activities including small group discussions, facilitated discussions, and group projects. I seek to minimize lecturing by assigning readings that instigate robust, active class discussions.

My desire to teach is spurred by my desire to be a catalyst for social transformation and my effectiveness has been illustrated based not only on traditional evaluative methods by both students and colleagues, but also by the connections forged with my students and the work they go on to do academically and within their communities.

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