



Teaching Philosophy

Composition and Applied
Linguistics

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TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Caminante, no hay puentes, se hace puentes al andar.
Voyager, there are no bridges, one builds them as one walks.
- Gloria Anzaldúa

PREFIGURING SOCIAL CHANGE

As a teacher of writing, I view communication as a tool not only to interpret the world, but also to change it. Through my teaching, I strive to guide students to learn about and challenge the structures of power and inequality in the(ir) world. In particular, I aim to teach students to be critical of the information they receive from a flawed society, to learn about themselves and their place(s) in that society, and to challenge their predetermined roles in that society through their explorations of themselves, their communities, and their world through critical and creative thought and expression. This work engages deeply with a core value of what Jeffrey M. R. Duncan-Andrade has termed “critical hope,” or, a hope that recognizes the gaps in oppressive systems in which to act, takes up the courage to act, and does so collectively in order to address the conditions that led to such oppression in the first place. Such critical hope helps us to “prefigure the world we want to live in,” as Laurie Fuller and Ann Russo detail in their work on collective accountability (196). In other words, I seek to model and encourage critical hope in my classroom, and in doing so, prefigure the very transformations I hope to actualize.

FOSTERING CRITICAL THOUGHT

As a critical feminist pedagogue, I value nuanced critique and space for different, disparate voices and perspectives in the classroom, making sure that, as bell hooks writes, “no student remains invisible in the classroom” (41). In doing so, I engage with students as complex human beings, upholding their agency and fostering their growth as students and humans. I begin each new course by learning every student’s individual reasons for being in class, and stive over the duration of the semester to help them connect these reasons to their broader goals in and beyond their education. I model methods for utilizing written and multimodal forms of communication to achieve these goals by demystifying academic and other systems students may need to navigate to fulfill their goals. In this work, I aim to foster critical

thought and awareness of the systems with which students may need to engage in order to reach their goals, and providing options and avenues for subversion within these systems. For example, I introduce and model an “or not” option that students can utilize in class; in these cases, instead of, for example, answering structured discussion questions I’ve come up with, students are welcome to pose different questions or engage with the content meaningfully in ways other than what I may have expected. Further, in my Composition II courses, I structure assignments like an “alternative research project” to accompany a formal “research essay” wherein students can approach their topic from different perspectives, apply it to broader community contexts, and share their learning in multimodal and genre-bending mediums.

UPHOLDING LINGUISTIC JUSTICE

In line with my translingual orientation, I believe it is crucial to advocate for and meaningfully integrate epistemologies, languages, and linguistic resources other than “standard academic English” into the classroom. Such moves align better with students’ own existing knowledge repertoires and counter the experiences of shame, alienation, isolation, and insecurity that can and do occur when students do not see their own languages and epistemologies represented and valued in the classroom. This translingual approach is embodied in my classrooms through incorporating translingual texts and facilitating spaces wherein students are encouraged to draw on their own diverse linguistic repertoires and in class discussions, activities, and assignments. In both my Composition I and Composition II courses, for example, I assign multiple texts that model translanguaging, such as essays by Gloria Anzaldúa. However, I do not believe it is sufficient to merely represent translanguaging in course texts, but to weave it through all aspects of the course. For example, I designed my Composition I course, “Crossing Borders: Language, Learning, and Writing Journeys” completely around making translanguaging and transnationalism legible and accessible to first-year writing students, including lessons explicitly around linguistic diversity in/and academic writing.

BUILDING BRIDGES

Returning to the words of Gloria Anzaldúa in the epigraph, I ultimately seek not only to build bridges over the chasms violently carved into our world, but also to teach students how to effectively build such bridges on their own, both individually and collectively, in order to transform our broken world into a more just and equitable one.

Works Cited

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