

Teaching Philosophy

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Growing up in the Rio Grande Valley, I witnessed communication as an everyday practice that bolstered relationships across languages, cultures, and communities. My parents, both public school principals, frequently brought me to their campuses, where I observed teachers adapting to students' needs, families seeking reassurance, and schools functioning as spaces of trust within their communities. Those experiences revealed that education depends upon relationships cultivated through a bona fide commitment to the success of others. My own educational journey reinforced those early lessons. I entered college at 14 through an early college program created to expand educational opportunity for students from historically underserved communities. Completing my associate's degree at 17 fundamentally shaped my understanding of education. Moving through higher education at such an early age taught me that confidence develops alongside challenge and that rigorous learning requires educators who remain attentive to the individual experiences students bring into the classroom. Those experiences continue to inform the teacher I strive to become. As a scholar of communication, I understand teaching as an intellectual practice that prepares students to think carefully, communicate thoughtfully, and participate ethically in public life. My philosophy is guided by three commitments: curiosity, stewardship, and discernment. Together, these commitments cultivate habits of inquiry, intellectual responsibility, and rhetorical judgment that remain with students long after they leave the classroom.

Curiosity serves as the beginning of learning. I encourage students to approach unfamiliar ideas openly and to examine assumptions that have become commonplace. Whether students are analyzing a speech, preparing a presentation, or examining a contemporary controversy, I ask them to remain attentive to complexity and to approach communication as a process of interpretation. Education should invite students to expand the boundaries of their own thinking while developing the confidence to engage perspectives different from their own. Stewardship reflects my understanding that education is a shared intellectual responsibility. Learning flourishes within communities where students recognize that their ideas contribute to the growth of others and where faculty remain committed to cultivating each student's intellectual development. I strive to create classrooms characterized by mutual respect, thoughtful dialogue, and high expectations because students develop most fully when they understand themselves as active participants in a community of inquiry. Stewardship also extends beyond the classroom. I encourage students to recognize that communication carries responsibilities to their professions, communities, and the broader public conversations in which they will participate throughout their lives. Discernment represents the culmination of this educational process. Every day, students encounter competing arguments, contested evidence, and rapidly changing information. My responsibility as an educator is to help them develop the rhetorical judgment necessary to evaluate those ideas ethically. Discernment requires students to distinguish evidence from assertion, recognize the historical and cultural forces that shape public discourse, and communicate with integrity even amid disagreement. These habits prepare students to become thoughtful participants in civic and professional life.

My scholarship and teaching exist in continual conversation with one another. My research examines the rhetoric of Latinidad, borders, and agency by investigating how communication shapes belonging, public participation, and collective identity. Those same questions inform my pedagogy. I encourage students to examine how rhetoric influences the ways societies construct knowledge, negotiate difference, and respond to social and political challenges. These commitments shape the design of every course I teach. In Public Speaking, students learn to analyze audiences, develop arguments, and deliver speeches that respond thoughtfully to contemporary issues. In Rhetoric and Civic Controversy, students examine public discourse, analyze competing perspectives, and consider how communication influences democratic decision-making. Across courses, I ask students to investigate rhetorical artifacts, interpret public controversies, conduct community-centered analyses, and reflect upon the ethical dimensions of communication. These assignments cultivate habits of inquiry that encourage students to connect rhetorical concepts with the sociopolitical realities that surround them. Mentorship, furthermore, remains one of the most integral dimensions of my work as an educator. Much of the learning that students remember occurs outside scheduled class meetings (e.g., office hours and after class). My experiences as a former communication consultant and mentor have strengthened my commitment to supporting multilingual students, first-generation students, and those navigating higher education for the first time. These interactions remind me that education depends upon relationships built through unwavering trust and encouragement.

Ultimately, I hope students leave my classroom with the curiosity to continue asking difficult questions, the stewardship to recognize their responsibilities within the communities they inhabit, and the discernment to exercise sound rhetorical judgment throughout their civic lives. These commitments define my work as both a scholar and an educator, and they continue to shape the kind of classroom community I seek to cultivate. The world my students inherit will ask difficult things of them. My hope is that they meet those moments with the conviction that thoughtful communication can still widen the possibilities of our shared future.