

Teaching Statement

Black Feminism and the Queer of Color Critique have been essential parts of my teaching practice, as they provide a rootedness in embodied experience, political and historical awareness and contingencies, and transformation. I begin my classes asking what ‘reactions’ students had to certain key moments in a text and follow this with a discussion of specific textual elements that elicited this response. As part of peer review, I require students to note specific elements of their peer’s writing as eliciting a response or question for the reader. This sharpens students’ abilities to create as well as interpret embodied affect produced by text. I use these perspectives to encourage and empower the diverse group of students whom I have been lucky to teach and who have taught me.

My pedagogical approach to teaching writing involves choosing topics-based course materials that students may find ‘relevant’ to their everyday lives so that students remain invested in the course and task at-hand. I find that with this as foundational, rhetorical analysis is implied to be a central aspect of everyone’s lives, regardless of academic major or chosen career path. Topics that I have chosen for my writing studies classes have been in ‘Migration & Citizenship,’ ‘Environmental Justice,’ ‘Power,’ ‘Marxism in America,’ and the ‘Ghosts of American Imperialism.’ Each semester, I use the topic to choose pieces of writing that connect to this theme but which also demonstrate essential skills for rhetorical analysis and academic research. One student writes of the class, “I have improved my abilities to find common ...ideas between two sources as well as tying sources into my own writing. I think this class has done a good job of effectively improving my writing skills, as well as my ability to verbally communicate my own ideas in an academic setting.” This is in particular response to one of my assignments, Throughline Thursday (or simply “Throughline), in which students are meant to connect multiple sources to one another using specific textual evidence. Drawing not only thematic but textual lines across multiple texts, this assignment is meant to develop students’ own research and analytical skills since they must not only understand the content of the text but its relationship to other, similar texts.

By choosing topics students find interesting, I have students invested in the course content while they actively demystify the on-going generic conventions of academic and cultural writing. One of my recent students writes, “The topic was extremely interesting and it kept me engaged. English is a topic that I have a hard time focusing and wanting to get my work done; however, I genuinely did enjoy each assignment we were given.” I seek to demonstrate the integral role that writing studies plays to each discipline in the university by going over the metatextual structure of each piece of writing. I often ask my students how generic norms are used to reach toward political arguments in cultural texts, whether implied or explicit. Comparative genre analysis, then, is a core skill for my writing studies classes. Ultimately, my goal is to introduce the tenets of rhetorical theory even as students gain valuable experience learning and using methods of critical analysis. Students report leaving class feeling accomplished, as we have delved into the multiple compatible and sometimes paradoxical meanings and structures of texts: “I have become a better reader of difficult and theoretical texts,” to “more easily construct ideas about pieces of writing that I read and form those ideas into arguments.”