

Teaching Philosophy I bring with me into the classroom professionalism, vast academic familiarity, cultural awareness, and creative methods of instruction. I strive to introduce new topics within the humanities and the social sciences, while recognizing the contributions of students. My primary purpose is to help students to achieve their academic and career goals in order to enrich their lives. I do so through teaching and lecturing, aided by the use of music, visuals, websites, and multimedia technology.

My style in the classroom bridges astute organization, preparation, and I possess the skills necessary to deliver well thought out lesson plans. Well groomed and well dressed, I speak in a confident voice, lecture enthusiastically, and build rapport with my students almost immediately. I am sensitive to the age differences, gender, and diverse social and ethnic identities sitting before me. I advise, teach, and mentor all students that come before me, regardless of their social, religious, political, and sexual orientation. I encourage and challenge all students to: (1) recognize the historical and personal events that have shaped their thinking; (2) read, write, create, and learn beyond the given; and (3) pursue their academic and career goals relentlessly until one day they will achieve their dreams.

A first generation Mexican-American, I am culturally diverse, identifying with two national identities, and I am conversant in the history of both Mexico and the United States. This background allows me to relate well to a diverse group of students. In the classroom, I not only respond to the academic needs of the student body, but also understand further the social barriers that can impede their personal development. Violence, hardship, disease, and illness are not only national dilemmas, but also human conditions that require solutions through education, counseling, and modern medicine, and not solely by force, aggression, or political tampering between people, groups, and nations.

An anthropologist by training, I am invested in studying the human experience in its most unique context. I am familiar with the underlining social, religious, economic, and political themes that define complex cultures both ancient and modern. To ask questions and arrive at solutions I pull from my knowledge of the human body and its environment, the interpretation of cultural remains (artifacts), the use of language, and the observation of people's behavior. In the classroom, my lectures, activities, tests, and presentations challenge students to think critically about society, and encourage the student to describe their personal histories as contributions.

Within teaching, I strongly believe that teachers who actively research topics within their discipline benefit by developing new ideas and teaching material. As an active researcher, I strive to include new information within my lesson plans, in addition to fundamental concepts and historical facts. This allows me to learn from my students, and, in the process, allows students a teaching space of their own. My research is concerned with the social identities, religious, and economic activities of the non-elite, primarily during Mesoamerica's Formative period (1400–900 BC), an ancient Middle American period of the New World. In turn, I compare and contrast the human experience of yesterday with today, to help solve contemporary problems within our society.

My teaching philosophy ultimately stems from a desire to impact the lives of students and their families. Subsequently, my Mexican-American background allows me to identify with the struggles, victories, and passions of a diverse student body. Coupled with my research experiences, I strive to introduce new teaching materials and creative methods of learning every time I enter a classroom setting. I am an educator first, a researcher second, and an academic administrator third. Thereby, I invest my energy in the classroom, for the students, and for the academic and career goals set by the students themselves.

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