

Many experiences have contributed to shape my teaching philosophy. My first forays into the world of teaching were as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. As a resource for the community in which I lived, I provided classes to adults on subjects ranging from improving nutrition to family planning. I taught English to elementary school children using a Total Physical Response approach. I found that in order for effective learning to be facilitated, experiential involvement rather than rote memorization was essential.

I continued to work in the Marshall Islands as an intercultural liaison and trainer, following my service as a Peace Corps Volunteer. I worked for an American company delivering training on their process improvement program, which required me to translate the documents and materials into a language and culture that was only semi-accommodating to the concepts involved. Company guidelines limited the ways I was able to deliver the training, but I was able to make it as interactive and dialogic as possible despite its lecture-oriented format. I took the subsequent step of working closely with small teams to practice using and devising ways of applying process improvement techniques in ways that fit their work styles and work environments.

Because of my unique skill set within the company—being fluent in the Marshallese language and deeply familiar with its culture—the Community Education department approached me to offer classes for both Americans and Marshallese. I developed and offered introductory, intermediary and advanced courses for Marshallese Language over a two-year period. Understanding language means understanding the experience of the speakers of that language, so I naturally integrated cultural understanding as part of the course. I also drew upon my previous experience teaching English to the Marshallese students and incorporated interactivity and physical responsiveness in the language courses. Community Education also solicited me to begin offering basic skills courses in computer usage and word processing, which I taught in Marshallese. This latter experience, along with process improvement training, turned out to be key to my later success.

I learned in my master's program, following my time in the Marshalls, that interactivity was a key component in effective learning. I drew upon my experience to develop intercultural training programs and materials for both international and domestic contexts. And though my master's degree was focused on developing training programs focused on interpersonal communication in intercultural contexts, I was able to take these lessons and apply them to the learning of technology as senior instructor for customized software training. I realized that despite my title as instructor, I became actually a facilitator of learning rather than a deliverer of training, as I began to instinctively draw upon the experience of the learners through the use of Socratic methods to facilitate their learning and understanding of their new information technologies and systems as part of their familiar business processes.

I am currently a Graduate Teaching Fellow for the Information and Organizations course in the College of Information Sciences and Technology at The Pennsylvania State University, where I am successfully applying my teaching philosophy. My ratings for my first offering of the Information and Organizations course were 5.59 out of 7 for *overall quality of the instructor* and 5.22 out of 7 for *overall quality of the course*. Now, as I am working in an academic setting and teaching young adults without very much life experience, I find that

a combination of guided experiences and reflective questioning is effective in eliciting the critical thinking skills necessary for them to be successful in their chosen path. Although they are younger, the diverse students in IST require just as much, if not more, flexibility on my part to accommodate their learning as have the adults and seniors I have taught previously in Community Education and corporate training classrooms. I find the challenge of constantly adapting the learning materials and activities to meet the goals for the course to be stimulating and rewarding.

My teaching philosophy consists of the following points: motivation, interaction, participation, hands-on work, thinking, and feedback. In order to motivate my students, I outline the benefits and objectives of the course in the beginning of the semester and reiterate them throughout. Most importantly, I frequently ask questions to my students when I teach; this interaction gives me feedback about the level of their understanding and allows me to guide their learning effectively. In order to let the students participate more actively in the learning experience, I provide them opportunities to work on team projects and to make short presentations. There are plenty of opportunities for practical work in homework assignments and in-class teamwork. I like my students to learn by thinking and researching a new problem. Students often need guidance beyond the basic academic course subject, and I enjoy mentoring them whenever I have the opportunity. The learning of technologies or cultures is a very interactive process in which the student should have a global view and at the same time be aware of the details that are so important to successfully implement envisioned solutions.

My teaching methods include using visual resources, such as power point slides, printed materials and short videos to better illustrate core concepts and help the students' expand their understanding of them. For instance, I used a video of research on ant colonies to illustrate the concept of organizational structure, and a video of a student proposal to stimulate discussion about the complexity of ethics in corporate environments. I also like to design in-class activities, such as team challenges or debates, to strengthen the assimilation the core concepts. Another teaching method I constantly use in class is to draw, from my professional experience, examples and simulations of real-world problems. I have found that classes wherein I was able to facilitate the connections between the core concepts and the learners' experiences have been valued highly by the learners.

I believe that interdisciplinary projects can enhance the students learning, as they allow a variety of collaborative approaches and draw upon concepts and ideas from many courses. I am particularly interested in bringing to class my own research and some of the state of the art research in media technology and culture to motivate the students to learn, explore and propose solutions to potential needs in societies. This problem-solving approach can help to prepare the students to take initiative, set their own plan, find information, and build solutions.

I would enjoy teaching courses in the areas of culture, ethics, social media, and in the philosophies of technology or information. In addition, based on the experience and the knowledge built during the process of doing my dissertation and pursuing my research interests, I would also be interested in developing new courses in areas that support both the practice and the research of ontological integration, semantics, knowledge representation, intercultural communication and cultural identity.