

My purpose as an educator is to guide students as they develop thinking and writing skills that transfer to any academic or professional context they may encounter in their future. In light of that purpose, my main teaching objective is to construct an environment where my students develop the ability to synthesize information of all types and effectively engage their chosen audience(s).

I have extensive experience teaching writing at the undergraduate level, having taught composition, creative writing, and English at (in this order) Boston University (BU), Wentworth Institute of Technology, Bunker Hill Community College, UNC–Chapel Hill, NC State University, Franklin University, and Ohio State. I have taught introductory and advanced composition, creative writing, professional writing, analyzing style, literary surveys, and Shakespeare in film, among others; and I co-taught BU's famed graduate Literary Translation Seminar with Professor Margaret Litvin. I also taught extensively as the first Graduate Research and Instruction Assistant at the NC State Libraries Innovation Studio: I designed and led workshops on subjects ranging from Afrofuturism to speculative microfiction, and I curated lessons and presentations for special courses in departments across the university (personal favorites being Computer Science and Applied Ecology).

Self-awareness is, in my opinion, the most universally transferable skill I can offer my students regardless of the course level. I try very hard to help them recognize their individual strengths, identify current weaknesses, and set reasonable goals for working in relation to both. The first assignment I give my students in every class is a self-evaluation. I provide some structure, but I want students to push themselves to generate multiple examples of strengths and weaknesses, expound on those examples in detail, and provide specific examples from past assignments and writing experiences to illustrate their points. This exercise gives me a baseline against which to measure each student's progress over the semester, and students learn to be proactive in their development as scholars and professionals. As we meet for individual conferences throughout the semester, I touch base with students about their progress and help them tweak their personal development plan for my course and the courses they will take as they progress through their major(s).

I hold myself to the same standard of self-awareness and development I expect of my students, so I seek to evolve the content and approach of a course every time I have the chance to re-teach it. I began doing this as an adjunct faculty member at BU where I taught a composition course titled "Insanity in Literature" for three years. Although it started as a run-of-the-mill writing course based around a handful of unreliable narrators, as I gained teaching experience I worked to deepen the complexity and opportunities for student engagement in the course. Before long, students were examining historical portrayals of insanity in literature and film, analyzing and educating others about ableist language, and classifying and hypothesizing about possible ailments of narrators and other characters backdropped by the DSM-5. These activities allowed students to synthesize principles taught in class and rounded out their ability to transfer these skill sets to contexts beyond the scope of our course. I have continued this habit of devising multifaceted course activities ever since. A few elements from recent courses that were well-received by students include (1) completing a public science project alongside an early-semester paper, (2) performing a visual rhetorical analysis on written work (and vice versa), and (3) designing and creating an installation art piece (with an abstract of their term paper as its information plaque) for an end-of-semester exhibit. I was very pleased to learn that I'll be teaching Digital Media in English Studies (ENG 4569) again next semester, as the Spring 2024 section was particularly fruitful from a course activity standpoint. I had multiple students disclaim their artistic abilities the first week of class, and by semester's end I was all but begging them to let me replicate their final projects. Hard to beat a 3D printer.

Underlying all of my writing and communication pedagogy is a desire to allow students to act autonomously. My ideal role as an instructor is not that of a traditional teacher in the “sage on the stage” role (for lack of a more terrible term) who simply hands over knowledge and encourages practice; rather, I offer structure, motivation, support, perspective, and feedback as students engage with course projects and each other. While I am required to take on the role of the judge at the end of the semester, my main focus is empowering my students to make decisions about their scholarship. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory as championed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan at the University of Rochester, I seek to give students control over a large amount of the learning process. This allows them to develop intrinsic motivation for the reading and writing that is so integral to their learning. A little agency goes a long way, so I offer as much as I can.

I couple student agency with interactive, experiential activities. I ensure that all students get outside the classroom to see (and, ideally, see through) the persuasive power of writing in the world. It’s easiest to achieve these outcomes when students experience first-hand the value of combining sources of information and modes of presentation. Different combinations of content and presentation influence different audiences, and rhetoric is the process of figuring out which combinations work best, so I also supplement in-class instruction with experiences such as guest speakers and field trips. These activities do more than break up the routine—they allow students to engage with concepts in new and unfamiliar contexts where professionals put our learned principles into practice. On-campus art museums are perfect for this type of experience. As deliberately designed and organized cultural spaces, they illustrate how real-world objects stand up to individual interpretation: they’re spaces students can practice ekphrasis, analyze artifacts in relation to each other, and conceptualize ways writing influences physical space. The Wexner Center for the Arts, the Thompson Library Special Collections, and the nursing school’s Innovation Studio have become my go-to field trip destinations at OSU, and I’m excited to expand my list soon (looking at you, Orton Geological Museum). These field trips are the best way to demonstrate the power and reach of a diverse intellectual community. Ohio State’s shared values are impressively composed, but the rubber really hits the road in the spaces many students don’t know about or don’t know they have access to. Hearing Professor Olsen talk about things in class is one thing, but watching humans and words at work in professional habitats is next-level, and I’ve found that student buy-in takes care of itself when they see people solving real-world problems in real time.

Always hoping to practice what I preach (an element central to my teaching philosophy), I have constructed a personal program of pedagogical growth to add to my own self-awareness, autonomy, and experiential learning. In keeping with this program, I completed two certificates in my PhD program: the Teaching and Communication Certificate and the Graduate Certificate in Digital Humanities. Additional workshops taken along the way—things like “Accessibility in the Classroom”, “Libraries Support for Instructors and Students”, and even “How to Avoid Death by PowerPoint”—help round out my teaching and keep me up-to-date on best practices. I was the recipient of an “Outstanding Teaching Assistant” award from the NC State Graduate School and the “Thank a Teacher” award from the NC State Office for Faculty Excellence, both of which were nice reminders that I can continue to grow my teaching skills. I’m continuing that growth trajectory here at Ohio State: I recently completed the Drake Institute for Teaching and Learning’s New Faculty Foundation, Impact, Transformation (FIT) program, and I am looking forward to participating in the upcoming English 3304 instructor training (I’ve taught professional and/or business writing a handful of times, but a refresher is long overdue). I legitimately love teaching, and working with students is a revolving door of incentive to stay on top of my game.