

Teaching Philosophy

Kevin Patton, Ph.D Candidate

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Inspiring Intellectual Exploration and Development

My teaching philosophy is centered on nurturing intellectual curiosity and fostering brainstorming, as described by Kerry Walters. I aim to cultivate a classroom environment where students can develop essential skills in reading, writing, and critical thinking, while feeling encouraged to explore and share their ideas creatively and confidently. My concrete steps to ensure such courses meet these goals is described below.

Nurturing Foundational Skills in Introductory Courses

In introductory and lower-level courses, I prioritize helping students acquire reading abilities, writing skills, and foundational critical thinking skills. Each week, students engage with assignments that require a thesis submission for one of the readings and annotated notes for another. We discuss three of these theses at the beginning of every class, promoting active engagement and deeper understanding.

To support diverse student backgrounds, I provide structured handouts that detail the format and expectations for thesis statements and papers. This clear guidance helps all students, regardless of their educational, linguistic, or cultural backgrounds, to organize their thoughts and meet academic standards. Additionally, museum assignments encourage students to apply course content to real-world contexts, fostering a collaborative relationship with the museum and enhancing their learning experience.

Exams in introductory courses consist of both at-home and in-class components. The at-home portion focuses on writing skills, while the in-class portion requires students to assess scenarios using stipulated theories, enhancing their critical thinking and spontaneous explanatory abilities. This approach not only mitigates concerns about plagiarism but also builds students' confidence in their analytical skills.

Deepening Analytical Skills in Advanced Courses

In advanced and upper-level courses, I expand upon the foundational skills developed in introductory courses. Students submit new abstracts of each reading, accompanied by annotated notes, and every three weeks, they provide summaries of one reading's sections. Each class begins with students presenting formal arguments from the day's reading, fostering rigorous discussion and critical analysis.

To support diverse learners, I emphasize non-standard argument representation. Students creatively express their understanding through flow charts, drawings, songs, poems, comic strips, or short stories. This approach encourages critical and creative thinking, ensuring that students can articulate complex ideas in various formats.

Addressing Plagiarism and Encouraging Authentic Work

Given the challenges posed by generative AI tools, I prioritize assignments that require hand-written, in-person submissions. Introductory courses feature in-person exam components and annotated notes, while advanced courses include representation assignments. This approach reduces the likelihood of plagiarism and ensures that students develop genuine analytical and creative skills.

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Emphasizing Transparency and Support Through Scaffolding

Teaching literature plays a significant role in my course design. I am committed to providing explicit and transparent explanations of grading criteria and assignment expectations. In introductory courses, the difficulty of readings gradually increases, applying scaffolding principles to support students' learning. In advanced courses, while readings are challenging from the start, I ensure clarity and transparency in assignments and provide curated feedback.

Scaffolding is particularly beneficial for students from diverse educational, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. By starting with simple assignments and progressively increasing complexity, I help all students build confidence and competence. This structured approach ensures that every student, regardless of their background, can achieve success and feel comfortable engaging with the material.

Fostering Brainstorming and Intellectual Growth

My goal is to create a classroom environment conducive to the kind of brainstorming described by Kerry Walters. I encourage open-ended thinking, creativity, and the free exchange of ideas, helping students develop the skills and knowledge needed for advanced academic pursuits. By fostering a supportive and intellectually stimulating environment, I strive to empower students to reach their full potential and prepare for future academic challenges.

Conclusion

My teaching philosophy revolves around inspiring intellectual exploration and fostering brainstorming. Through structured assignments, diverse representation methods, and a focus on scaffolding, I aim to support all students, especially those from diverse backgrounds. By creating an inclusive and engaging classroom environment, I help students develop essential skills and a passion for philosophical inquiry.

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Educational Anchors	Introductory / Lower-level Courses	Advanced / Upper-level Courses
Foundational Skill Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Weekly thesis submissions and annotated notes- Class discussions on theses- Paired readings for basic and in-depth understanding- Museum assignment for real-world application and collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Weekly abstracts and annotated notes- Section summaries every three weeks- Formal argument presentations and discussions- Paired readings for complexity
Advanced Skill Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- In-class scenarios for real-time explanation- Focus on fallacies and critical thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Creative representations (e.g., flowcharts, drawings, songs, poems, comics)- Deep analysis and creative thinking integration
Integrity and Academic Honesty	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Hand-written, in-person exam components- Annotated notes to reduce plagiarism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Annotated notes and creative representations- Weighted grades to offset possible sources of plagiarism- In-person assessments where necessary
Evidence-Based Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Explicit grading criteria and clear feedback- Scaffolded difficulty in readings and assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Clear and transparent assignments and grading- Curated feedback for skill development
Fostering Genuine Brainstorming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- AI generated scenarios for theory assessment- Implement discussion ground rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Preparation for graduate-level work- Development of skills for advanced academic engagement