

I love to teach writing, whether the course is freshman composition, technical writing, creative nonfiction, or editing and publishing. On the one hand, writing is a skill, a tool that can always be sharpened. On the other, it's a means of hearing the varied perspectives of people who are unfamiliar or unseen, and expressing one's own perspective among those voices. In still another way, writing is a tool of power, and often violence, with the ability to forge connections or rend them. As such, the teaching of writing is a necessary, challenging, valuable endeavor. I impart to my students that we can only see through our own eyes and hear with our own ears, but when we consider our audiences as real people with real experiences, our worlds can open up. This world opening is rarely a pleasant experience. The world is messy, differences are real, and issues are rarely clear-cut. My students move within violent public discourses and a culture that can encourage silence and insularity. My goal is to provide an educational space where they can ask questions and look for answers, while challenging their own eyes and ears.

On a recent unit evaluation, a student expressed frustration that when students ask me questions during class, I often open the questions up to the class instead of answering. This student wanted to know the "right" answer, my answer, but I only give my answer when absolutely necessary. I'd rather hear the answers of my students, and I want them to hear each others' answers. I want them to realize that though they attend the same university, they are not all the same, and those perspectives shape how they approach writing, research, and argument. I want them to see that difference is a benefit, not a detriment. The majority of my teaching experience has been at PWIs, and so I encourage dialogue about difference and power while prioritizing supporting and encouraging the marginalized students I have. I ask students in my classes to discuss challenging ideas openly, respectfully, and with care for all present.

In my classes, students will likely encounter both ideas and projects that frustrate them. While I emphasize the value of good prose, I also ask students to do unconventional work. In my argument class, students create visual maps of the relationships between sources on a particular issue. In my inquiry class, students create collaborative faux-Wikipedia pages that require attention to design, image, and genre conventions, as well as citation and factual accuracy. In my creative nonfiction class, students convert their personal essays into audio essays, paying attention to pacing, pauses, and vocal tone as much as the words they are saying. And in my technical writing course, students conduct usability tests on their peers' instruction projects, as students teach each other how to make flight plans and pour-over coffee. These projects invite students to think about composition in different ways, particularly the needs of the audience and constraints of the genre. Students have to try, fail, and try again, which is why I always provide students with the opportunity to revise. I want students to keep trying, knowing they will become better composers, thinkers, and writers along the way.

As Krista Ratcliffe says in *Rhetorical Listening*, a teacher's ethos and pedagogy is "not just based on his/her style but also on individual students' needs as well as on the historical moment, the institution, the assigned course, and even the events in the teacher's life at that particular moment" (145). For this reason, my pedagogy is flexible, given the time, place, and class of which I am part. This flexibility requires being attentive to the emotional aspect of writing. The frustration and anxiety my students sometimes feel when encountering a new project is part of the writing process, and not one I disregard. This emotional component is particularly evident in my work teaching in an online adult degree completion program, where my class is often one of the first students take on their second try at a college degree. I ease the various concerns of my students by addressing and validating their emotions outright, both in class and in my feedback on their work, while also indicating my hope that they can find ways to

work with and around those emotions. I also value being present with my students, whether through a check-in email when I know an online student's child has been sick, or a student conference that begins with project requirements and ends with the rhetoric of the reality show *Survivor*. Lastly, I work to create classroom communities in which everyone is heard. I encourage this by planning various forms of large and small group discussion and activities, recognizing that different personalities will engage differently.

I also engage the emotive side of writing by inviting students to write about their passions. I rarely dictate what students should write about for their major projects. I would rather hear what students want to write about. Hence I have gotten papers about the writing practices of a computer programmer, the intelligence of octopuses, and the culture of a small town model train club. In my argument class, I also do not require a particular form for their final project; instead, that form should be dependent on the argument and the audience. Their arguments must be well-reasoned, well-supported, and well-cited, but they come to me in many forms: PowerPoint presentations, infographics, videos, and op-eds.

While I hope that my work is ultimately impacting the trajectory of public discourse for the better, I seek to ground myself in my goal of "teach[ing] little things best," as Quintilian proposed, for "no [woman] rises to such a height in greater things that lesser fade entirely from [her] view." I find that grounding larger conversations about systems, power, and privilege in little things, small forms of intervention and action, can help students see how writing well is crucial to both navigate and impact whatever rhetorical worlds they participate in, whether in their workplaces, dorms, or personal relationships. I try, however possible, to ask students to consider audiences outside of our classrooms. We discuss the risks and the responsibility of any public engagement, and my hope is that students will take this melding of passion with productive discourse for external audiences beyond my classroom.