

Teaching Philosophy: Teaching is Affective

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Learning is when a student takes the practical and conceptual information necessary for a career and makes it matter in his or her heart. This foundational philosophy shapes how I conceive of the teacher's role, the goals I have in a classroom and how I enact those goals.

The teacher serves as a coach—pointing students toward the information they need, challenging students to be successful in the midst of their failures and cheering students in the midst of their successes. Coaching also assumes a level of personal interaction with students, as well as a stake in their success. A professor has an unprecedented amount of influence to help students achieve their dreams. And by granting a personal touch to what one does, a professor can help make that happen.

The intimate nature of the coaching role also helps inform my research. Understanding new forms of popular media and new trends in news media can help me learn the ways in which media paradigms operate in the adoption and rejection of media forms. And as I have learned just as a beginning teacher, students are many times more versed in the practicalities of new media forms than I.

In the media classes I have taught, the goal has always been the same—to help students get a sense of why the media looks the way it does. This requires helping students learn to think critically about news, sports, video games, and the broader mediated world. By learning to think critically about content and getting a sense of the structure, economics, history and culture of the media, students develop the skills they need to better citizens and better media consumers.

There are two primary ways in which I address those goals: through one-on-one meetings with students and experiential learning. One-on-one meetings give students a chance to talk about what they care about, look at the problems raised in the class critically, and help them see how concepts from class apply. This is also the forum in which students provide examples about emerging media forms that I can examine in class and in my research. Experiential learning helps put this application into action. I'm a true believer in the Missouri Method: learning by doing. As a faculty member who oversaw experiential learning in Washington, D.C., I would have my journalism interns spend several days at soup kitchens and homeless shelters in historically poor districts. This was a way for them to apply the concept that the people of the city, not just government officials, had great stories to tell. Students amazed me with the stories they would draw out of their experience and then publish in their internship.

Teaching to the heart rather than just the mind ensures that long after classes have concluded and degrees are distributed, students have concepts and skills inside them they can take to share with others.