

## Teaching Statement

Teaching writing successfully requires evidence-based approaches and a foundation in the scholarship of the field. In twenty years of teaching writing at a wide variety of institutions of higher education and immersing myself in the scholarship of the field, I have arrived at three core teaching principles. These principles apply whether I am teaching a first-year writing class, an advanced undergraduate course in rhetoric or the public humanities, or a graduate seminar in rhetorical and pedagogical theory. In all my classes, I 1) teach for transfer, 2) design for authenticity, and 3) interact inclusively with students.

The idea of teaching for transfer emerged from research in a related field but Writing Studies has taken it up with great enthusiasm for over a decade. To teach for transfer is to design courses and assignments with one eye on the classroom task at hand – on the product in the present– and with the other on how students will carry new knowledge with them into the future. One teaches for transfer by offering students multiple contexts in which to apply the same knowledge, for example, or by encouraging self-aware decision-making when writing. For instance, sometimes I will assign a reflective analysis alongside a major class assignment, describing it as a kind of cover letter. Students answer questions about their own work, such as, “How and where in this text do you appeal to your audience?”; “What aspects of this text are the strongest and why do you think so?”; and “What would you continue to work on if you had two more weeks?” Teaching for transfer activates students’ abilities to complete tasks in the moment, to attend to the abstract ideas behind those tasks, and to imagine how they might adapt their writing to a different context in the future.

Designing for authenticity in a writing class requires stepping beyond the traditional academic contexts and forms of writing. In a way, “designing for authenticity,” is my adaptation of George Kuh’s “high impact practices.” The key idea is that students must grapple with the genuine ambiguity and messiness that they will find when writing outside of the classroom. For me, designing for authenticity means inviting students to write in real genres that they have selected and studied themselves, often for public audiences. Students write individually in my classes, of course, but also sometimes in teams, as they will so often in the workplace. Writing assignments in my classes also often incorporate problem- and project-based learning approaches, in which students write not simply to convey their understanding of ideas I have presented to them, nor to mount purely academic critiques, but to generate new knowledge, answer important questions, or bring people together around shared issues of concern. Designing for authenticity intentionally and carefully introduces a little more risk into the writing classroom, but this risk is counterbalanced by my own guidance, support, and feedback, as well as the higher reward that comes with accomplishing tasks that have stakes outside of class. When students write in a class designed for authenticity, they learn more deeply about writing and themselves.

The third principle of my approach to teaching is to interact inclusively with all students and to create learning environments in which they interact inclusively with each other. Inclusive teaching has rightly received growing attention across the higher education landscape. At bottom, inclusive teaching centers students’ differences of identity and ability; it understands student difference as a feature not a bug of pedagogical design. Sometimes I enact inclusive teaching through technical and even mundane practices, such as offering students multiple modes through which to interact in class: verbally, visually, aurally, etc. Combining high and low stakes writing assignments throughout the semester is another important example of inclusive teaching, as is ensuring that students receive feedback on high stakes assignments with time to revise before receiving a final grade. And at other times, teaching inclusively leads me to

engage with students where they are and to foreground their own interests and goals. In the context of a writing course, this often manifests as a writing assignment in which students propose a project they would like to pursue, identifying the aim of their writing, the audience to which they would like to direct it, the form it will take, and modes of necessary research. With my expert guidance, students then achieve the goals for the course by writing an advanced and rhetorically sophisticated text, subject to rigorous and transparent evaluation, but which also emerges from their interests, prior knowledge, and goals. These techniques for inclusive teaching make my classes equally accessible learning environments for all, and one in which students feel welcome and valued as people.

These three principles – teaching for transfer, designing for authenticity, and interacting inclusively – have coalesced throughout my career. These were not always my core teaching principles, but they have evolved because of the omnipresent feedback loop that each semester provides, my own research, and the work of others in the field. These principles reflect what we currently know about writing and how students learn to be effective and agile communicators.