

As a teacher-scholar, I am dedicated to creating an accessible classroom community where all students are encouraged to participate in the co-creation of knowledge, work as collaborators and co-conspirators, and critique the role of higher education in upholding colonial, white supremacist, cisheteropatriarchal ideologies. My pedagogy is rooted in intersectional and transnational feminism and is informed by my research on sex work, emotional labor, marginalization, and disability. Student participation in the designing of assignments and course content is not only important to their investment in the course, but to our collective resistance to the banking model of education. I am committed to "...making the classroom a democratic setting where everyone has a responsibility to contribute [as] a central goal of transformative pedagogy" (hooks 1994, 39). Students have an active role from the first day of my courses, working together to create guidelines for discussion and expectations about how I and the other members of our community will interact.

Furthermore, my students and I work together to decide on a few options for final projects and/or deliverables that ensure the most accessibility. In my course "Selling Sex" at Transylvania University, which focused on a history of feminist thinking on sex work, representations of sex workers in media, and contemporary writings of sex working activists, some students created podcasts about different types of sex work for an audience of their peers to try and destigmatize sex work and advocate for decriminalization. In my introduction to GWS courses, students often decide to pursue a topic not covered in the course or to expand further on a topic we have discussed and have created art projects (i.e. painting, music videos, dances), activist projects (i.e. community service drives, protests on campus, flyer projects, zines), and research presentations.

Although I create a course schedule each semester, I utilize bi-weekly homework calendars that give students a preview of upcoming topics. Students are encouraged to request a change in the schedule for topics they're passionate about and suggest readings from viewpoints they see as lacking. I have found that this produces the most flexibility while still achieving course goals. As I continue the process of decolonizing my syllabus, this also serves as an important reminder of my positionality, my privileges, and the perspectives I may have omitted in my course design. Keeping this in mind, I also solicit anonymous feedback through informal surveys at different points of the course so that students can feel free to share critiques and suggestions for improvement. I encourage students to meet with me about classroom issues, ones they do not feel comfortable voicing in front of the class, and to discuss broader issues with me as well. This level of availability, I believe, helps to extend the brave space that I work actively with my students to create.

I work for my students to leave our classroom with the ability to critique larger systems of power, the skills to communicate their analyses, greater empathy, and more confidence in their voice--a firm ability to express their opinions and experiences in their own words. The field of gender and women's studies interrogates topics that make many of my students uncomfortable, and I strive for that. In my most recent Teaching Course Evaluations, one student wrote, "I felt like there were a lot of uncomfortable subjects that we had to discuss in this class and Shawna did an outstanding job at listening to everyone's opinions. Not once did I feel like I couldn't express my opinion...I feel like she presented this course very well and in an unbiased manner which would be hard to do."

I have had the opportunity to teach in three different types of institutions across three disciplines and as a faculty member of the Kentucky Governor's Scholar Program, which has provided me with a variety of classroom experiences that have challenged me to be a more flexible and collaborative educator. Last Spring, I also had the opportunity to take three courses online when both institutions I was teaching for moved to distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Equipped with knowledge and experience with three different learning management systems and some coursework on online pedagogy, I was prepared to transition our courses online while maintaining the community and rigor that students

have come to expect from my courses. My adaptability, flexibility, and curiosity lend to my ability to create new courses and to pivot when our classroom community needs me to.

References

hooks, bell. 1994. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge.

After completing a course with me, if you left with nothing else, it would be the two-thought rule. For example, if I am walking down the street and see a woman in a short dress, sometimes my first thought is judgemental. As a result of growing up in a society that normalizes sexism and misogyny, it is troubling but not surprising to me that I have this reaction. My second thought, however, is that I have no right to police another woman's body. In my own head, I have experienced two thoughts—the first reflects what I have learned to think in society, the second one is who I am or am striving to be.

When describing the rule to my students, I can see the relief wash over them. In recognizing all of our fallibility, I am able to assuage the fear of doing or saying the wrong thing in a potentially intimidating class. It is after the explanation of the two-thought rule and through its implementation that we construct a classroom language. Students can call out other students without personal attacks by simply saying, "Is that a first or second thought?"

Coming from a background in English and with experience in introduction to college writing classes, my courses are discussion- and exploration-based, designed with tiered writing assignments that offer opportunities at every stage of writing for instructor feedback. I utilize a combination of both informal and formal assignments to allow students spaces to work on articulating and processing the assignments, while still helping them to grow as college-level writers. I also structure class discussions in tiers, often beginning class with a free-writing activity that allows students time to silently gather their thoughts. We then use their writing to break into groups and start small group discussions that scaffold in a larger classroom discussion of the issues. In classrooms of fifteen or fifty, this tiered method generates active participation from most students in discussion.