

Dr. Sarah R. Warren

Teaching Philosophy

My instructional philosophy grows out of an interdisciplinary background and passion for the written word. Because I have experience teaching all genres of classes in English, reading, and writing at both the secondary and post-secondary levels, I find that though these subcategories of classes may have different focal points, they are all inextricably linked. My goal is, through innovation and collaboration, to help students understand various forms of communication, become better communicators, have an appreciation for the written word, and develop a strong command of language.

With the advent of social media and stimuli from multiple mediums woven into the fabric of daily life, it is increasingly crucial for students to move effortlessly between disciplines through written and verbal communication. It is important that students know how to think critically about arguments presented to them, whether in daily life or in an academic setting. To be fully involved with the modern world, students must know how to read and translate arguments of all forms, and also how to be critical of source credibility.

One of the biggest challenges in a composition class currently is the prevalent use of artificial intelligence. Though my current system of evading an completely AI-generated assignment response is a work in progress, I believe the best practices for working through this technology timeline include teaching students how to use AI properly; create open-ended assignments that require multiple drafts and both instructor and peer feedback; and provide opportunities for students to create their own research questions.

Visual rhetoric is a critical medium in our society, and students must be taught how to read the visual just as they are taught to read words. For this, I incorporate analytical projects using a variety of visual texts (photos, advertisements, street art, paintings, sculptures and graphic novels, for example) as well as provide assignments that allow students to create their own visual argument(s) based on current issues. As I strive to teach the future of literacy in our fast-growing technological world, I want my students to understand the true importance of their individual voices within it, and then how to use them to create the world in which they want to be.

Student-centered learning is central to my teaching philosophy. For every class, I incorporate cooperative activities in some way (whether in-person learning or fully online), from small-group analysis of an article or song to partner collaboration on issues in current events. Students learn best when they are co-creators of their education. In most cases, I believe that students learn the most from each other with the instructor remaining far less a lecturer and much more a facilitator and mentor.

For students to be successful and truly learn in the classroom, there must be an environment established in which they are comfortable expressing individual thoughts, experiences, and opinions. What contributes to this kind of environment is a dynamic classroom structure that accommodates a broad range of learning styles. To achieve this, I pace my classes such that time is allocated not only for cooperative group work with three to four students working together, but also periods of instructor lecture or modeling of best practices, full-class discussions, and relevant multi-media clips, film, music, or any other genre that reinforces the objectives for the day.

Since I have taught secondary students as well as college students, I have insight regarding where my students have been in the spectrum of academia, and where they are headed. It is imperative that I meet them where they are, knowing that each student comes into my class with different experiences and prior knowledge – and that they walk away from my classroom as practiced critical thinkers who know how to apply what was learned in the classroom to the ins and outs of adult life. Ultimately, I hope to instill in students my own passion for the written word and the dynamic power that language offers. I want my students to *want* to write and study literature for themselves, especially in this televised, fast-paced society in which we live, and above all be able to communicate in a strong voice for themselves in class, at work, in their neighborhoods, communities, and beyond.