My teaching philosophy is rooted in the belief that education should be liberatory, dialogic, and grounded in care. I am guided by the words of bell hooks, who writes: "As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another's voices, in recognizing one another's presence." This captures my commitment to fostering learning environments where students feel seen, heard, and valued. Teaching, to me, is not merely the transmission of knowledge—it is a co-constructed, relational process that requires sustained attention to community, equity, and personal transformation.

Informed by the work of hooks, Paulo Freire, and Stephen Brookfield, my pedagogical practice draws from critical, experiential, and existential traditions. I treat the classroom as a space where theory meets lived experience, and I structure courses to encourage curiosity, collaboration, and critical reflection. My assignments invite students to connect course concepts to their own lives—for example, asking students in *Interpersonal Communication* to analyze their favorite television or film character's relational behaviors, or having *Business Communication* students craft pitches for imagined startups that align with their values and aspirations. In *Media Literacy*, students keep weekly "media journals," where they critically annotate media texts they engage with and reflect on how these artifacts shape their understanding of identity, politics, or wellness.

I use strategies like "rose and thorn" check-ins to begin class with intentional presence, and "exit slips" to end with reflection—asking students what resonated most, what questions they still have, or how the material connects to their own world. I integrate collaborative learning through peer workshops, group discussions, and rotating roles (e.g., discussion facilitators, media curators, or connectors) to support student ownership of the classroom. When teaching public speaking, I offer both formal and informal speech formats, encourage students to co-design rubrics, and provide multiple formats for practice, including video responses and in-class low-stakes feedback rounds.

My own experience as a chronically ill, working-class, white, first-generation student informs my commitment to inclusive and responsive pedagogy. I offer flexible assignment deadlines, scaffold major projects into manageable steps, and provide multimodal resources (videos, transcripts, readings, podcasts) to support different learning styles. I use anonymous surveys throughout the term to gauge students' needs, revise the syllabus collaboratively after the first week, and meet one-on-one with students to discuss not only academic goals, but personal learning strategies and community care practices.

Building trust and rapport is foundational to my teaching. I learn each student's name within the first two weeks, use name tents and rotating seating to encourage peer familiarity, and assign small groups that change across units. I intentionally design moments for students to share their stories—whether through autoethnographic writing, voice memos, or creative media responses. Students often describe my classes as welcoming, participatory, and reflective spaces where they feel intellectually challenged and personally supported.

To grow as an educator, I actively engage in reflective practice. I participate in teaching workshops, read widely in pedagogical theory, observe colleagues, and incorporate student feedback into course revisions. I've adapted trauma-informed strategies, such as offering content warnings and alternative pathways for emotionally difficult topics, and developed "care contracts" in some classes to collectively shape expectations around participation, flexibility, and mutual respect.

Ultimately, my goal is not only to facilitate learning, but to cultivate a sense of belonging and possibility. I want students to leave my classes not just more knowledgeable, but more empowered to ask difficult questions, to care deeply about their communities, and to imagine more just, compassionate futures.