

Statement of Teaching Philosophy for Kristopher Oliveira

My pedagogical approach to teaching is informed by my experiences as a student, scholar, activist, and higher education practitioner. As such, I design and lead classrooms and seminars that are student centered, applicable, goal-oriented, forward-thinking and pragmatic. My teaching philosophy has been crafted through my lived experiences and it highlights the ways that I view student learning, the learning process, and my role as an instructor each of which places students at the center of the learning process.

As an undergraduate student, I studied music at a mid-size university. No two pieces of music were ever the same, and this is what made music so interesting. The same cannot be said for every course in every discipline in which I studied, but I was fortunate to take courses with sociologists who varied their teaching strategies and the ways that students approached course content. Thus, **through my teaching I make every effort to vary the ways that I teach the content matter to appeal to different modes of learning, because I believe that students learn best when they are not just reading, listening, and taking notes - but doing.** In the classroom, I employ a student-centered approach which involves interactive creative activities, lectures, media, current events, and pop culture. For example, after reading half of the material for a lesson on sexualities in my introductory course, students participate in a 'coming out stars' activity which links gendered expectations to structural understandings of hegemonic heteronormative masculinity. In this example, students have read the material and can now see sociology in action, which often fosters deeper and more nuanced conversations.

Each scholar has an area or areas that they are passionate about, and so do our students. Students come to the class with different motivations; from a pre-requisite to the sociology major to a personal interest in a new way of thinking about what is going on in the world. With this knowledge, **I develop courses that are applicable to all students so that they can apply skills learned in class to their individual lives and careers. Students learn best when they can see their stake in the game.** I begin each semester by live-polling students in class to determine who is in the room. As they text their responses to the demographic questions, they get a real-time glimpse of who is in the room. Throughout the semester, I reference back to that information so that we come to an understanding about how our stories fit into the larger narrative. At the end of the semester, I poll the students on the opinionated questions from the beginning of the semester and show them how their responses have changed. For example, at the beginning of an introductory course which contained mostly education majors, most affirmed that 'if high school students tried hard enough, they could go to college.' By the end of the semester, their responses changed, and their writing assignments reflected their understanding of how education functions as a mechanism of sustaining and reproducing social inequalities. Although not all students in my classes will become sociologists, they leave with the knowledge of how sociology impacts their lives and careers.

While guiding students through the learning process and after reflecting on my time in the national LGBTQ movement, I believe that teaching is similar to the chordal triad theory of social movements which shows that movement activists examine past experiences to make sense of the present movement and strategize about the future. By embodying this framework through my teaching, I am able to revise my classes by determining successes and reconsiderations from past classes and courses, to understand the direction of my current classes, and to strategize about future class sessions and semesters. **I believe that my role as an instructor is to grow and learn alongside my students to improve the overall quality of my teaching and scholarship.** For example, in my first year as an instructor, I wanted my students to write an outline for each chapter so that I could check for reading

and simultaneously help them develop a study guide to prepare for their examinations. When asked on a formative evaluation if they found that the outlines were helpful, they shared that they learned more from the lecture notes and the activities than their own study guides. In my strategy for the next semester, I dropped the outlines from my syllabus and implemented applied writing assignments to better align with my goal that students will be able to apply the sociological imagination and sociological concepts/principles to their own life to participate actively in civic affairs.

As a higher education scholar and former student affairs professional, I have seen the learning that takes place inside and outside of the classroom. Student development theory shows that students who are involved outside of the classroom and who feel connected to their institution do better in their courses and are more likely to progress through graduation. **As an instructor, it is my responsibility to design classes that involve partnerships with other university or community programs so that students are either doing sociology or enriching their career trajectories.** In my upper division classes, students are required to volunteer in a local social movement of their choice and to write a brief essay about their involvement and understanding of the inequalities being addressed through the movement. In my introductory courses, I offer bonus points for students to participate in a new club or organization. I also invite campus career services to class so that students begin to make a connection between their coursework and future careers through internships and professional development. By facilitating cross-collaborations between my classroom and campus services, students are linking sociology to their personal lives through the exploration of their career trajectories.

Students are centered in the learning process in my pedagogical teaching style and through each course they are able to apply sociology to their lived experiences. As scholars and instructors, I believe that our goal is to guide students through the learning process and to refine our craft as scholars and practitioners as we teach and research. For this reason, I believe that I am successful when I have helped students to employ their sociological imaginations to thoughtfully consider the experiences of others and to be successful in their lives and careers.