

Parkland College

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Teaching Philosophy Statement

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I believe that there is great intrinsic value in history; in learning from the past. It is a value that goes far beyond the cliché of “those who don’t learn from history are condemned to repeat it.”

Yes, it is learning from the past, but the subject of history can also be a great foundation on which to build a liberal arts education. I believe one of the greatest benefits a college education can bestow upon its students is to teach them to be “thinkers.” Students cannot be effective problem-solvers unless they have a foundation of knowledge and life experience to build upon. Studying history can (and should) be part of that foundation.

I understand, however, students’ impatience in not seeing the immediate return on studying abstract events like the Babylonian Captivity or the Black Death. That is why I am also a strong promoter of writing in my courses. I sell students on the immediate tangible of becoming a better writer and researcher. This also enhances their critical thinking skills, which is an attribute many employers are looking for when they insist “college degree required” in filling a position.

Creating a classroom environment that is engaging and welcoming is a priority. If an instructor cannot find some way to convey material in a relatable 21st century concept, the learning will be less impactful. I approach my class with the realistic expectation that a number of students will procrastinate in reading the text – so I must take the proverbial bull by the horns and liven up the lessons through good pedagogy and a little bit of razzle dazzle thrown in.

I have taught at Parkland College for seven years. In that time I have been very impressed with the college's efforts to define itself as institution and to communicate that definition to prospective and current students and to the public at large. I have stressed the core values of the college in my classes, explaining to students the damage done to all reputations, the guilty and innocent, when cheating occurs.

Students are under significant pressures these days. There are temptations to take the less-than-honest route in this age of the internet. As an instructor, I believe that we must emphasize accountability as well as make clear the rewards of doing the work honestly. I think most students appreciate this approach, and even the resistant ones eventually bestow a grudging admiration for being held to a standard.

I believe it is important to constantly seek out peers and share new or modified learning strategies. With each new semester, the drumbeat is louder for more incorporation of online elements in the traditional classroom setting and for discovering ways of making an online classroom more of an interactive community.

I believe one of my strongest attributes as a history instructor is my ability to make the subject matter relatable to my students. My student evaluations have consistently stated that, while I’m a bit of a pain about attendance and I make them do too much writing, students find me to be one of the better instructors they have had in their college careers.