

Teaching Portfolio for the Certificate in College Teaching

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## Table of Contents

Introduction

Philosophy of Teaching and Learning

Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning and My Own Teaching

Diversity Statement

CV

Appendices:

Previous Syllabus

Original Assignment

Faculty Evaluation

FCQs

Examples of Student Feedback Surveys

Teaching Experience

## **Introduction**

I am creating this portfolio foremost as a cumulation of my teaching and learning throughout the past five years to become certified in college teaching. I am looking to teach as a professor at the college level in the future. This portfolio acts as a precursor to my job applications in the next year.

I introduce my teaching philosophy and demonstrate my use of it using concrete examples from my lessons and feedback from students and faculty. I explain my activities, training, and theoretical approaches. I also discuss the varied approaches to each class and how I improve them. This philosophy centers my approaches to grading and inclusion. I employ formative evaluation often to check students' learning and comfort. I use many types of flexible evaluative grading to ensure success. I am transparent with students about my background and incorporate many viewpoints that are not my own, including from underrepresented groups while meeting the needs of students from a variety of backgrounds.

I have included my CV to demonstrate my activities further. I have also included a syllabus to describe my inclusive approaches to grading, leaning, and course design. The example assignment further clarifies the goals and standards for evaluative grades. I have included feedback from a faculty evaluation and qualitative and quantitative student evaluations to support my teaching philosophy. Finally, I have included a chart indicating my teaching experience for reference.

## **Philosophy of Teaching and Learning**

I found my teaching philosophy foremost on creating space through rigor, accessibility, and respect that allows for academic and sociological growth. I foster honest connections between and with students to promote critical thinking and enthusiastic engagement. I do so foremost by employing universal and inclusive design. This approach, of course, looks a bit different for each class I teach. A 20-person summer class will have different styles of engagement compared to a 65-person fall course. I do my best to adapt to the needs of each classroom dynamic. For the Sociological Research Methods classes I have co-taught or taught, this looks like allowing creative approaches to empirical projects within students' interests. One SOCY 3201 student reported, "[X let us work at our own pace and treated us like adults." For both Sex, Gender, and Society and the Social Construction of Sexuality, I structure these classes as introductory sociology courses scaffolded by gender and sexuality. They are more accessible in that I work to build a foundation conducive to students producing their own sociological analysis.

I look to support my students and foster productive discussion in several ways. I employ appropriate honesty in the classroom. For example, early on, I tell my students that I am from a low-income background and that I have dyslexia. Students seem to appreciate this candor, with one noting, "I love how she comes from a background where she worked during college. I work two jobs and go to school full time and some professors do not take into account how difficult that can be!" I often check in with students individually. This ensures they understand that I am supporting them and looking to help them reach their potential in terms of success and learning in the classroom. Students often note how quickly I learn all of their names. I take treating them

as individuals and with respect incredibly seriously. Student feedback suggests that students are aware I am looking to take complex sociological theories and concepts and have them relate their own experiences and knowledge. One student said, “Everything we were made to do in the class was extremely intuitive and constructive for what we were learning.” I use a mix of accessibility and rigor to foster these intellectual connections.

I seek out ways for students to engage with content. One student said, “X has me thinking [about] her class long after I get out of it and stay excited about the content.” In both upper and lower division courses, this means using concrete examples when first explaining concepts and subsequently encouraging students to employ their own sociological analysis. In introductory classes, I do this through structured writing assignments. In Sociological Research Methods, I guide student projects by having students collect and analyze their own data on topics they find most important.

I frequently use discussions in my classroom to check understanding and foster learning. They are rarely uncomfortable but often challenging. The vast majority of my students often note they feel respected and can share their viewpoints. One feature of my classroom that often surprises me is how comfortable students feel taking risks and subsequently getting answers wrong in discussion. I actively model this. I tell students when I do not know an answer and will bring up corrects in the last class if I have given incorrect information. A student echoed this: “I think one of the best things you do is when you correct someone, you never really make them feel like they're wrong. Especially when someone says something that could be hurtful or disrespectful, you're able to correct them in a way that is truly educational.”

I strive to mentor and support students beyond the classroom. Two undergraduate students have worked with me as research assistants and received internship credit for doing so. Both are from underrepresented groups in academia who often are not afforded an opportunity to gain research experience. Student X is a nonbinary autistic student whom I have helped to begin their honors thesis and has recently received a UROP summer grant. Student X is a former foster youth whom I connected to a paid internship working with children with behavioral difficulties due to trauma. She is now graduating and pursuing further degrees in education. I have helped students more informally to find opportunities, such as becoming sociology majors and minors. I am happy to report two of the undergraduates I have nominated to be the sociology commencement speakers have been selected.

I care deeply about teaching in the sociology department and have taken concrete steps to improve graduate student teaching experiences here. I worked as the Center for Teaching & Learning lead, and I engaged in the usual representation of the department and support of graduate teachers via consults. This allowed me to support my peers and act as a resource to them in rewarding ways. I have led workshops on teaching the first recitation, transitioning to GPTI role, and supporting undergraduate students facing adversity. I created the TA guidelines, which will be used as a standard for expectations for new teaching assistants in the department. I have been able to garner feedback from both committees and fellow graduate students.

### **Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning and My Own Teaching**

My outlook on student success relies heavily on supporting students to maximize their potentials individually. I strategize with students who are struggling in my classes to improve their trajectories and engagement. A SOCY 1006 said of my individualized approach, “I appreciate how much [X cares] for [her] students. When [she] saw I got a bad grade on my exam, [she] emailed me to see how I was doing.” I track students’ grades throughout the semester and individually email students if they are doing markedly worse or better in the class. This has held to better attendance and engagement, but also more confidence in academic arenas.

I employ a variety of tools in the classroom to engage students. These structures vary slightly depending on the structure of the course. I have taught maymester, which is three hours a day, every day for three weeks, and traditional classes that meet for fifty minutes three times a week. I have traditional lectures with Powerpoint slides as a tool to go over facts, studies, and definitions. A modified version of these slides is available to students and has sources in the notes they can access. My lectures are broken up by frequent discussions. I use a program called Polleverywhere, which is an anonymous application that can generate word clouds, polls, and long-form answers. I employ this to start conversations on topics students might find contentious. I often use media in the classroom. I break up lectures by using commercials, scenes, and other videos to start discussions or as examples. Previous students have suggested many of the videos. I use two documentaries (*She’s Beautiful When She’s Angry* and *The T Word*) consistently.

I firmly believe that I must connect to students’ differing styles of engagement and learning to be a successful teacher. There are many kinds of grades in my class. In Sociological Research Methods, students are graded on projects on both dimensions of data collection and analysis. In introductory courses, I have daily or weekly activities (depending on the length of the course). Some are individual free writes or group activities where they are tasked with finding a law or a policy. Some involve the whole classroom. I employ a matrix of masculinity and femininity/biological essentialism and social constructionism where students place traits and explain what stereotypes create their framing. Similarly, I have a timeline of LGBTQ rights events in the United States where students select events and place them where they think they happened. This introduces them to events but also corrects their assumptions about the historical trajectory of a group they often do not learn about in other settings.

I use evaluative grading on many dimensions to ensure students succeed even if they do not excel in specific ways. My tests are not cumulative and are worth fifteen points each. My assignments are flexible to accommodate students with varied types of learners and backgrounds, but also rigorous and structured enough to provide clear goals for students to meet. For example, for the final paper in my introductory-level courses, I offer three prompts with three levels of structure. I have two smaller worksheets due beforehand to demonstrate expectations to students.

I take student feedback very seriously. I collect data using surveys I design in Qualtrics both at the midpoint and end of the semester. These surveys have both qualitative and quantitative dimensions. They can be anonymous if the student wishes, and I do not read final feedback until final grades are submitted. I have altered the course to meet students’ needs. For example, when many students were struggling with reading quizzes, I moved them online and open-note, which led to higher engagement with the readings.

I use both formal and informal assessments frequently to gauge student comprehension, interest, and pace of the course. I do this verbally in discussion. I make myself available before and after class in addition to office hours to clarify student questions. I do routine “check in-s:” these are at the end of every unit where students tell me 1. Something new they learned, 2. A topic they feel confident about, 3. A concept they are struggling, and 4. Anything else. This encourages students to think critically about their own learning. It also is how I discern if I need to clarify the material, as students are often embarrassed to tell me this in person.

### **Diversity Statement**

I do not believe I am exaggerating when I say inclusive practice is the backbone of my teaching. I have attended training through SASC and the GTP program on this topic specifically to challenge myself and support my students. I have outlined the ways I teach to engage my students to help them meet individual success. Additionally, I work to support students of color, queer students, disabled students, and students from low-income or first-generation backgrounds. I do some of this naturally through universal design; explaining office hours or providing notes and videos benefits many of my students. I am careful to include scholarship, topics, and people who are often left out of mainstream education. My outside readings are written by scholars of many backgrounds often who are marginalized in academia. I lecture extensively on race, religion, LGB histories, transgender subjectivities, and disability to provide my students with a critical foundation to explore gender or sexuality through these communities.

Similarly, since I often teach introductory classes that involve students’ first contact with the social sciences, I am careful not to represent stories that are not my own. I use a variety of media and informational mediums, including documentaries and guest lectures. I invite fellow graduate students to lecture on their research topics and others from underrepresented or understudied groups to speak about their experiences. For example, I have an autistic woman lecture on gender/sexuality and autism in my introductory courses. One student said, “I really like the extent to which disability is being highlighted in relation to sexuality in this course. I have taken gender/women’s/sexuality classes in the past and this has not been covered.”

All of my students are important to me. Access to education has not always been guaranteed for me, and I am solemn in my commitment to meeting the needs of marginalized students. I am honest in the classroom about my experiences of oppression, both as someone who has experienced poverty and has a learning disability. I am honest about what is not my experience but work to represent groups that have been maligned in both higher education and sociology with humanity to instill empathy in my students.

