

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY:

In developing my teaching philosophy, I have drawn heavily from my own student and teaching experiences. As an undergraduate at a small, high quality liberal arts college in Michigan, and then as a graduate student at the University of Maryland, I was constantly challenged by faculty teachers and mentors to pursue excellence, to expand my horizons by experimenting and exploring, to think critically, to communicate well, and to reflect seriously about what it means to be an educated person and a responsible citizen in today's multi-cultural world. My experiences teaching as a graduate student at a large university, as a wilderness educator for Trinity College and Kalamazoo College, and as an experienced faculty member at Grinnell College provided me with the opportunity to experiment in and out of the classroom with multiple teaching styles as well as to work with and learn from students in a variety of capacities.

The sum of these experiences has made me a teacher committed to helping students prepare for lifelong growth, both intellectually and professionally, and to do so with a focus upon transparency as a pedagogical tool. In doing so, I strive to provide students with a vibrant and rigorous academic program in which experiential learning, critical thinking, and problem solving are major components. By providing students strong course content, course learning goals, and my methodology behind assignments and course projects, I seek to assist my students in building agency to engage their current talents, confidently experiment with new materials and approaches to learning, and pursue the strongest possible learning outcomes. I strive to introduce students to perspectives different than their own and encourage them to analyze, understand, and appreciate those perspectives. I strive to make learning a collaborative process in a mentoring environment, and to instill in students a recognition that learning from each other is a continuous process. In short, it is my goal not only to teach theatrical design and technology but also to provide my students with a strong foundation that they can build upon long after leaving my classroom.

I believe it is my duty as a teacher and mentor to strive for excellence myself and to ask for a similar commitment from my students. With this expectation in mind, I try hard to create for my students an environment in which they can excel. I believe that environment includes:

- A supportive atmosphere in which students can challenge themselves, each other, and me as their instructor without feeling threatened or embarrassed.
- A place in which all members of the course embrace and encourage the value of diversity of thought, experience, and practice.
- An understanding that all members of the course learn from each other and grow through an inclusive and collaborative process of teaching and learning.
- A place in which students are encouraged to embrace and utilize critical thinking skills.
- A place in which questions are encouraged.

- A place where students can introduce and incorporate knowledge from their other classes and life experiences that can provide alternative contexts for understanding course material.
- A place in which class information, discussion, and theoretical discourse are balanced with experiential education and opportunities for practical application of course material.
- A feeling of excitement and dedication to exploring course material.

I feel extraordinarily lucky to have had the opportunity to hone my craft at Grinnell College while continuing to seek opportunities to learn new methods from my exceptional colleagues. Theatre, dance, and performance provide opportunities to regularly work with new colleagues, new content, changing visual aesthetics, and engage in new processes of teaching and learning. I am passionate about theatre as a teaching tool because of the diversity of opportunities it presents and the way it excites students and draws them into an examination of what it means to be human.

I am fascinated and energized by theatre's all-encompassing subject matter. To be sure, theatre entertains, but more importantly it provides a lens through which we can creatively explore our humanity and confront the compelling issues of our time. A play like *Copenhagen* allows us to look at the moral implications surrounding the birth of nuclear weapons; in *A Prayer for Owen Meany* we can examine the effects of one's faith in God upon another; in *Miss Evers' Boys*, issues of race and medical ethics are intertwined with the dynamics of personal relationships. In looking at plays such as *The Recognition of Sakuntala* and *Información Para Extranjeros*, we gain insight into the differences – and commonalities – of other cultures and the struggles and successes of their unique histories.

The process of studying and making performance reflects the complicated, diverse, contentious, challenging, joyous, painful and enriching aspects of our lives as individuals and as world citizens. As a teacher of theatre, it is my responsibility to help students use their creative talents to illuminate these themes as they are expressed through the vision of the playwright and production team. As a teacher of young people, it is both my obligation and my privilege to go beyond the technical proficiency inherent in craft to help my students shape their own visions – to gain a greater knowledge of themselves and to express that knowledge as theatre artists in our global culture.