

Statement of Teaching Philosophy  
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My teaching echoes my research by examining aesthetics and cultural practices with an attention to media specificity. I show my students that traditional humanistic modes of inquiry remain necessary for understanding and for improving our relationships with others and with technology. Students learn to engage, as humanities scholars, with the technical media and social systems that operate often in the background of their daily lives. Close readings of novels compose the bedrock of my pedagogy, and I guide students in tracking concepts and problems across fictional, historical, and theoretical texts. When reading Octavia Butler's *Dawn* (1987) as part of a course on the science fictional imaginary of capitalism beyond Earth, for instance, my students learned to interrogate the apparent naturalness of biotechnologies and patriarchal ideologies that consolidate the power of contemporary capitalism. Discussions range from the Marxist critique of creative destruction to the bricolage of sci-fi tropes in the *Mass Effect* video game trilogy. In my course on the history and contemporary relevance of cyberspace, we tracked the surprising ubiquity of psycho- and noo-tropic drugs in novels like Pat Cadigan's *Synners* (1991) and Chuck Palahniuk's *Rant* (2007), which in turn foregrounded the primacy of embodiment for computation and its representational space. As indicated by my exceptional course evaluations, I maintain the same level of intellectual sophistication and writing practices as in my research, and the students readily rise to the occasion.

My courses have attracted undergraduates predominantly in STEM majors, so I am familiar with introducing literary analysis and critical modes of reading to students unpracticed in them. In my "Technics and Galactic Capital" course, for example, one physics major began class feeling out of his depth in relation to other students more familiar with the ideas discussed. Outside of class, I reassured him that his training in the sciences would adapt to the specific rigors of literary close reading. He soon came to his own assessment of science-fictional protagonists as being the most familiar, ordinary character to the reader, making them ideal conduits through which to depict alien worlds. To foster this confidence and capacity in all my students, I treat the first meeting as an introduction both to the course's themes and to the kind of work we will perform for the term. For instance, in the cyberspace course, I begin by assigning two short stories written by William Gibson in the early 1980s. They serve as examples that help to unpack the first theoretical text, Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media*, and then to frame the historical documents tracking some developments in graphical user interfaces and computer networks. I begin slowly, analyzing a text with line-by-line deliberation, in order to establish the fundamental themes and approaches that will be elaborated throughout the course.

I am above all interested in improving students' writing and fostering their capacity for original, critical thinking. Good writing begins with, and returns to, the ideas communicated in class. To foster participation from my students, I implement several techniques. First, I always use a student's name; this engages them personally and encourages other students to speak with each other directly rather than through me. Second, I wait for answers. Even twenty seconds of silence might feel unbearable to some, yet the pause is necessary for students to reflect and be creative in complicated conversations. Third, I move around; in a small seminar room this might only be writing on the whiteboard, while in a lecture room I frequently walk around so as to engage my student's attention. Fourth, by assigning short written responses posted on the course website, students come to class with a point of departure for discussion as well as a position from which to approach their peers' contributions. Web-based participation is at most a catalyst, never a replacement, for in-person participation. It has been my experience that daily work in the humanities is as much a social endeavor as a solitary one. A significant element of my teaching

philosophy aims to impart this balance to my students. They learn to write and to think for themselves as well as for their class.

For some students, longform paper assignments provide a better platform than in-class discussion to develop their ideas about the material. I provide very open prompts, typically motivated by a concept discussed in class, with at least half a dozen short questions or narrower topics to motivate a student's thesis. The prompt is a teaching tool: on one hand, it acts as a condensed syllabus of the ideas pursued thus far, while on the other hand, it directs students away from ready-made right answers and toward intellectual exploration. For their final project in my cyberspace seminar, a student who practiced the visual arts hand painted and then digitally edited an image of a human figure. They wrote a reflection on its simultaneously fragmented and united composition, drawing on class discussions of gender and the material specificity of technologies in Marshall McLuhan's media theory, Donna Haraway's "Manifesto for Cyborgs," Cadigan's cyberpunk novel *Synners*, and Judy Wajcman's *Technofeminism* (2004). I consider this a triumph of the final project prompt because it coordinated a student's talents and specific interests with a novel exploration of course themes.

Additionally, because I want my students to become better writers, I encourage them to turn in substantive rewrites for an improved grade. There is a short window for learning from mistakes, so I provide students with feedback on written assignments as quickly as the class size allows. Regardless of the grade, every paper receives thoughtful, positive commentary from me, so that the student recognizes that their writing can engage others to reflect critically. Both in class and when grading, expressing my commitment to the students' ideas is one of my most used and effective teaching tools. To quote one of my student evaluations, I "have a genuine care for [my] students and making sure they have a grasp of the material while also facilitating an engaging environment."

This commitment applies no less to my own development as an instructor: I am dedicated to improving my pedagogy. During the summer of 2017 at the National Humanities Center in North Carolina, I collaborated with other instructors and mentors to compose lessons informed by our doctoral research. My lesson, "Written Experimentations in Laboratories and Role-Playing Games," translates the specialized discourses of science and technology studies and media theory into undergraduate course material. It will be available online for free use by instructors. Similarly, my chapter in *Post-Cinema: Theorizing 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Film*, "The Error Image: On the Technics of Memory," was written to be accessible to undergraduates. The book is freely available online for this purpose, and my essay has already been used by Assistant Professor Shane Denson of the Department of Art and Art History at Stanford University.