

# My Teaching Philosophy

**Purpose of Education:** I believe the purpose of education is to give individuals the opportunity to pursue avenues of study so that they can become thoughtful, responsible, and meaningfully contributing members of society and so that they can experience life and the world more fully. This 'becoming' can occur through the acquisition of knowledge and problem-solving skills, and through exposure to the content, process and relationships of higher education. In the right learning environment, I believe education can be emancipatory and that it is a worthwhile process through which to express ourselves both professionally and personally.

**Conceptual Framework:** Primarily, I espouse a positivist epistemology, in that I believe that an objective body of knowledge exists and that truth exists and is to some extent knowable. My positivist worldview causes me to prefer methods of teaching that resemble transmission and reconstruction of



knowledge. However, this preference is tempered by my belief that while some reality is objectively knowable, there is much we do not know and perhaps, cannot know, and that some knowledge permits and even requires a multiplicity of perspectives, causing me to lean towards post-positivism. This preference is also tempered by my understanding that telling is not teaching—the role of the instructor is to create opportunities for deep and meaningful engagement with course material.

**Teaching and Learning:** Learning is the process by which we appreciate, understand, interpret, and grow to be able to live in the world. Perceiving this through an adult education lens, the instructor is a facilitator who guides the learning process and unlocks potential through structured and unstructured encounters. Ultimately, the domain of learning is the responsibility of students. At the same time, there is an implicit responsibility and fiduciary duty of the instructor to share knowledge and experience with students and to create an environment and activities that best foster learning. A mutual partnership exists between instructor and students in which each must adapt to a variety of learning styles in the educational process. There is

a symbiotic relationship among learning and teaching and a conscious recognition that sometimes the teacher must have control and at other times teacher and student can take equal ownership of sharing knowledge and experience. Understanding that the world is constantly changing, I have a responsibility to expose students to new developments and prepare them to be seekers of information rather than mere repositories. Recognizing that adult learners are seeking for ways to apply new knowledge in both professional and personal ways, relevance and application is a core consideration in all of my course designs. Taking a somewhat postmodern stance, I choose to draw on multiple learning theories as I create learning experiences for students, realizing that differences among students and content/process requirements calls for a pluralistic approach. I endeavor to strategically blend structured content with opportunities for students to engage in a meaningful and enjoyable journey of learning.



**Instructional Strategies:** In the classroom environment, I engage students in various types of learning activities to meet their unique learning needs. I have found that student learning improves when I use real-world clinical case studies, group discussions, cooperative learning strategies, active learning, peer teaching, narratives, debates, and games, in addition to visually-supported and engaging lectures. I believe that no single instructional strategy presents a panacea, but that they are used best in conjunction with other methods. I truly desire for learning to be invigorating and stimulating for students, for what they learn to be unforgettable, and for how they learn to prepare them for future learning.



**Assessment of (and for) Student Learning:** Because adult learners need to see relevance in their work, I endeavor, whenever possible, to make assignments and projects both relevant and useful for students. I design assignments to require application and critique level processing to ensure learning is deep, long-lasting and meaningful. I endeavor to give students latitude in how they carry



out their assignments so that they can maximize their learning and follow their professional passions and curiosities. Whenever possible, I utilize a developmental approach to assignments, so that students can improve their work and maximize their learning.

**Teacher/Student Relationship:** I support the notion expressed in adult education literature that views the teacher/student relationship as between mutual partners. I temper this view with the understanding that the instructor has the ultimate determination of course content and classroom environment. With this control, there is a hidden curriculum in any classroom and I am conscious of the social reality that there are power imbalances in any educational setting. I understand that education is never a neutral site, but through course design and interpersonal style, I can ensure a sense of equitability in the classroom. I endeavor to do this by viewing students as, first and foremost, people. I always seek to honour the spirit of the student and to appreciate them as people with unique contributions to make to the nursing profession. I do my best to minimize teacher/student inequality through transparency and shared negotiation.



**Efforts to Improve Teaching:** I am constantly seeking to improve my teaching and my understanding of learning. I am continually inspired by my colleagues at the University and across the country. I readily engage in focused pedagogical discussions with my colleagues and eagerly adopt new ideas that have been instrumental to quality learning. Perhaps most importantly, I learn from my students. I am an astute observer of students' non-verbal communication and a listener of students' verbal assessments of classroom activities. My students have sparked new, exciting and effectual teaching and learning activities which I have adopted to foster learning in future students. In my view, learning is a dance with



students in which we seek to travel across the dance floor of learning—from not knowing, to knowing, and from curiosity to satiety. My role as an educator is to unlock learning and to harness students' curiosities so that meaningful learning occurs.



**Clinical Teaching:** In the clinical setting, I take a developmental and apprenticeship perspective. From a developmental perspective, I rely on learners' prior knowledge and their ability to form associations. My role is to understand where students are coming from in their conceptions and prior knowledge, and to plan learning experiences that will help them grow professionally. From an apprenticeship perspective, I see learning as a process of becoming a nurse. Building on prior learning, the student constructs context-based knowledge while participating in the clinical environment. This learning is intended to produce clinical competence and professional identity. My role in this capacity is to model and demonstrate passion and professional competence, to provide authentic and relevant tasks to promote learning, and to provide appropriate feedback. I desire to tap into students' passions as they strive for excellence. Above all, however, I seek to create a safe and enjoyable learning environment for students, and to honour the spirit of each student so that they can build on their existing abilities, knowledge, skills and beliefs, as they pursue professional competence.



*Life is a journey, and learning is a road everyone travels in their own way. It is my pleasure to intersect the lives of fellow human beings in the context of the classroom and to inspire them to excellence, inquisitiveness, and passion.*