

Reflective Teaching Portfolio

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1. Define your teaching philosophy.

Several philosophies inform my teaching style, which, of necessity, would make me an eclectic. First, my focus has always been interdisciplinary: Hence, my ending up in my primary field of human sexuality—what I call the most interdisciplinary of subjects. Sexuality encompasses almost all the natural and social sciences, the arts and humanities, the law and religion, to name just a few general areas, either historically or in their current manifestations. I always say, astrophysics may be the only field that does not have even a small hint of sexuality in its theory or practice. I started my undergraduate years as a chemistry major, switching eventually (too much, I gather) into psychology, philosophy, and journalism over six years (without getting a degree). In the meantime, I started volunteering with Planned Parenthood, first doing pregnancy tests, then doing some speaking on basic sex education and contraception, then (getting some training along the way under Title X), doing some birth control and abortion counseling, finally getting hired by them as their full-time librarian and media specialist in their education department. I went on to create an alternative marriage council, which connected me with many of the pioneers of the day, one of whom ended up introducing me to one of his former students who was the head of NYU's Human Sexuality Program. That led me to be accepted as a "special" (non-matriculated) student in their doctoral program. In the meantime, as well, I got involved with different journalistic and typesetting and graphic design entities—as well as the work-study program at NYU, which got me involved with using the first microcomputer in my school (after I was hired full-time as a secretary because I could type). (Of course, I had to jump through some hoops to be officially accepted to the NYU program, since I didn't have a bachelor's degree.)

The forgoing highlights a second aspect of my teaching philosophy, which derived from later work on my dissertation on sex in space: Chaos and complexity theory and systems perspectives, which I continue to bring to all of my classes, since I was basically living it. I also was living a life of triage, which was a necessary adaptation to the uncertainty and time constraints of working for a Ph.D. that I was never meant to have as a working-class kid.

Finally, my teaching philosophy emphasizes international perspectives on sexuality, because of my becoming involved with one of my friend/mentor/colleagues' *International Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, which would garner several awards. I also began using music in all of my classes to illustrate the various ways that sexual ideas were expressed in musical lyrics. All of the above were also true of my Health and Stress classes, although to a lesser degree.

2. Have you ever observed a master teacher? If the answer is yes, what do you recall most from the experience?

Early on in my Planned Parenthood years, I was introduced to the use of values clarification methods of teaching, because we were training the trainers at local hospitals to teach nurses, social workers, doctors, administrators, and others who were implementing family planning

clinics under Title X, which also funded experts to come in to train us. Some of those expert teacher/trainers were master teachers, whose influence still informs my focus in my classes on values clarification, where, because of the nature of many health fields, especially sexuality, one needs to be nonjudgmental of clients seeking such services.

3. Give an example of your most successful lesson. Why do you feel it was successful?

My demonstration (show and tell) of my collection of various contraceptive devices (some of which are now historical), and the nature and instruments of abortions have been among my most successful lessons, because many students are not aware of the many types of contraceptives that once existed—or now exist, but they've never seen one, like the female condom. They get to see them and touch them, which helps me to explain how they work. This demonstration highlights the performance-artist aspect of teaching that I often use in discussions.

4. Do you have an example of an unsuccessful lesson? How did you address the challenges?

Sometimes, I have found that straight lectures of mainly biological aspects of health and sex can get to be boring for students, which I've alleviated to a certain extent with showing videos to make those aspects a little more engaging.

5. Why are you introducing and/or expanding the use of technology into your teaching?

I continually try to expand my use of technology in my classes. I was one of the first faculty members when I began here as an adjunct in 1995, teaching just the Human Sexuality course, to bring in my computer from home to demonstrate the use of email and the then-rudimentary World Wide Web to get information about sexuality. I was also the first sexologist in the country (maybe the world) to have my own website, SexQuest.com.

6. How do you feel these technology innovations will affect the student experience? How do you think it will affect your experience?

As a pioneer myself in technology, and still having a greater breadth and depth of technological knowledge and experience than almost anyone else at FIT, I believe I made a great difference in many students' educational and professional development by introducing them to the future way back when. I believe I also made a difference when I innovated in my early online courses in Health and Stress, by requiring students to create oral presentations online (to parallel the live oral presentations in their face-to-face-course counterparts), using the recording of their voices into PowerPoint slides, which I would convert to Flash videos for posting on Angel and later Blackboard.

7. Please describe new teaching ideas you plan to implement as a result of this technology certificate program.

VoiceThread and Lynda are just two of the technologies I plan to introduce soon, along with major overhauls of my face-to-face and online courses that I've been slowly changing over the past few years. Among the existing technologies that are built into Blackboard is the Wiki feature, which I used some time ago, that I have revisited this semester in my Human Sexuality course to allow students to choose unique countries from my *International Encyclopedia of Sexuality* to read and report on for their oral presentation project—thus eliminating the need for them to email me their choices for my approval and my having to

respond back: They'll know immediately what countries are already taken and what's still available, gaining immediate feedback on which country is theirs. I will also again be using Blackboard's ability to embed YouTube videos from among the new ones I found in last semester's development project. Adobe Spark is also a new technology that I find intriguing that I would like to learn and utilize in my courses.

I will also be expanding a practice I started a few years ago that I began to work on more diligently for last semester's development project, which is: including subtitles of song lyrics in the music selections I play in class, so students can read them while listening to the songs. This not only improves accessibility for those who might have hearing impairments, but almost everyone, including me, has some level of difficulty understanding the words to new songs that they are hearing for the first time. In listening to our favorite music, we tend to need the repetition of hearing the songs many times, especially if the lyrics are not clearly articulated to start with, which is often the case, to actually begin to understand and anticipate the correct words and their meanings.

An example of an assignment using Lynda might include these: "Time Management Fundamentals" and "Publishing on LinkedIn for College Students and Young Professionals," although I would need to explore a bit more to see what fits best within the Blackboard environment that also has relevance to my courses and their time constraints. I was originally thinking of something along the lines of "Presentation Skills – Individual," (a Lynda.com-curated playlist) to help students create better PowerPoint presentations at the most basic level (like, don't use fonts smaller than 18-point or so in your slides), but many of them can go for one or two hours or more, so I'm not sure yet.

A specific idea that I've come up with for VoiceThread includes short instructions on how to interpret demographic statistics, such as in the *CIA World Factbook* on cia.gov, which I use in all my face-to-face classes, to discuss life expectancies and population sex ratios in different countries, for example. Most of us, student or not, have some difficulty grasping the concept of, say, 1.05 males/female, because fractional people don't exist—they only exist as integers, i.e., whole people we can see in our minds as in real life. But explaining the trick of moving the decimal point two places to the right, ending up with 105 males, is something everyone can picture. Then, explaining that, even though there is no number for the females in the original mathematical expression above, the number one (1) is understood, so we also need to move the decimal point two places to the right there in our heads, so we end up with 100 females. Thus, we can all make sense of the expression that says that there are 105 males per 100 females.

8. How will these new technology tools/approaches contribute to your classroom practice?

They will give students some new technologies that they're familiar with to provide my content in some new ways, such as by providing activities that focus on many students' unique learning styles that are enhanced by more visual or interactive methodologies.

9. How will you evaluate the success of your activities?

I will discuss with face-to-face classes, and devise surveys for online students. I will also evaluate responses in Blackboard discussion posts to determine how well the students have understood the specific points I was trying to make, and what I might need to revise to better facilitate that understanding if needed. I have also been planning to implement clickers in my on-campus classes to give better demonstrations of research, as well as to facilitate

discussions of some of the very sensitive topics that often come up in my classes. I always say that all of my classes are “trigger” classes.

10. What do you consider to be the bigger picture items with regard to technology and learning?

Technology is the future, and students—and faculty—will have to adjust to deal with it. Because of my years on the cutting edge of technology (I apparently bought one of the first scanners in New York City when they first came out, for example, for OCR in my typographic design and editorial work—well before they had the ability to scan images), I believe I have unique skills in introducing new technologies to students. In my early years at FIT as an adjunct, I also taught the use of computers to retirees for UNITE (the former ILGWU) at the Consortium for Worker Education just down the street on 7th Ave. From Fall 1998 through Spring 2000, as an adjunct, I chaired the then-Division of Liberal Arts Distance Learning Committee under the Dean of Liberal Arts, during which I also wrote my existing Human Sexuality course (that I was originally hired to teach) as one of the first Liberal Arts online courses under the then-SUNY Learning Network. My online Human Sexuality course was approved all the way through the College-wide Curriculum Committee (so I got paid the \$1,000, or whatever it was, stipend for writing a new course as an adjunct, which was nice). But it was shot down by the Dean’s Council or somewhere above that, because, “it did not fit the mission of the School.” I would go on to quip among my closest colleagues, “What didn’t fit the mission of the School? Sex? Or Liberal Arts?”