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REFLECTIVE PORTFOLIO

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Communication is the one thing we do every day but have to work at it to get it right. While it requires the simple exchange of information between one or more parties, the meaning behind a central message can easily be lost in translation.

By nature, the communications field is interdisciplinary and therefore, my approach to teaching it is as well. I make a concerted effort to incorporate the fields of psychology, sociology, political science, economics, and history, as well as others, as part of a way for students to understand both the creative process and the business of communication. For example, we pay close attention to psychology when we study consumer behavior as psychology plays an integral role in the discussion of motivation and needs, perception, beliefs and attitudes. Psychology is just as important in journalism as reporters need to understand how and why people may grant interviews. economics is a critical part of discussions when addressing the launch of a new magazine as well in advertising when we cover media buys and planning. It is equally important to expose students to the creative and business perspective of communication no matter which they decide to pursue as a career. As instructors, we are charged with equipping students with both creative and business acumen to prepare them for the “real world” as well as to get them to understand their role in the communications process.

By encouraging students to be inquisitive, critical thinkers, and problem solvers, students are provided invaluable tools to navigate personal, school, and professional settings. As a lifelong learner, my teaching style is one that also encompasses the use of technology, ongoing assessment, and hands-on instruction.

WHY I DECIDED TO TEACH

Over the course of my journalistic career, I have been fortunate enough to work in a vast number of communications settings— radio, television, newspaper, magazines, and most recently online. I learned from the best in the industry. I began in public radio, interning at WBAI-FM and later WNYC-AM in my senior year of undergraduate studies at New York University. I learned the art of community reporting from the late Jose Santiago, who allowed me to cover a wide range of community issues for the evening news at WBAI. At WNYC, I shadowed broadcast journalist Amy Goodman on her media analysis show entitled, “On the Media.” As her production assistant, I pitched show topics, researched potential speakers, screened on-air callers, and occasionally conducted a man-on-the-street. WCBS-TV gave me the opportunity to intern alongside investigative reporter Mike Taibbi and his then producer,

Pulitzer prize journalist Rose Arce. It is apparent to me now, that working with such talented people would inevitably shape my perception of newsgathering and commitment to inform the public.

As a professional journalist, fashion was the first beat I covered at the now defunct *DNR* and *WWD*, both Fairchild Publications at the time. I covered men's sportswear, outerwear, slacks, the party page, obits, young men's and men's brands/celebrities jumping into the junior's market. I would later freelance for a variety of publications including *Vibe*, *Urban Latino*, *Latina*, *Savoy*, *Sportswear International* and the *New York Post*, among others.

I began teaching at the Fashion Institute of Technology as an Adjunct Lecturer in the Advertising Marketing Communications department in 2002 at the recommendation of a former Fairchild colleague, who also teaches at FIT. It was the ideal next step in my career after leaving publishing as changes in the economy and advances in technology were effecting the business. I had successfully worked on a number of media platforms and was thrilled at the ability to share my professional experience and best practices with students. I earned a Certificate of Continuous Employment in 2009 and currently teach a myriad of courses on rotation at FIT including: Advertising and Promotion (AC111); Fashion Journalism (AC242); Mass Communication (AC171); Introduction to Journalism (AC141); and Magazine Journalism (AC341).

OBSERVATIONS OF A MASTER TEACHER

While I have yet the chance to observe a master teacher in-person, I have had the opportunity to conduct a number of informational sessions with seasons educators as well as observe master teachers through online video links provided by the FIT Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET). The videos offer a sneak peek into the classrooms of CJ Yeh (Communication Design), Daniel Levinson Wilk (History), and Jonathan Kyle Farmer (Fashion Design), all of which teach very different disciplines. Despite the three lessons being very different in terms of subject matters, there are commonalties that viewers could learn from. In all three cases, the teaching methodology incorporated the use of technology, whether it was to demonstrate a point in the lesson or to utilize a photograph/images to illustrate a point. Yeh taught in a traditional lecture style. Wilk took on more of a demonstrator approach. Farmer worked as a facilitator. All three had an interactive classroom, fostered intellectual openness, and encouraged critical reflection. Each complemented his respective discipline and all kept students engaged and connected to the subject matter.

EXAMPLE OF SUCCESSFUL LESSON

In my opinion, successful lessons are those that offer various teaching techniques, address different learning styles, and provide the most-up-to-date information. An example of a successful lesson I teach is my "Media Ethics" lesson for "Intro to Journalism." This lesson is given on week 13, closer to the end of the semester. It is jam-packed with case studies, terminology, and reporter mishaps to avoid in the future. I focused a great deal of my time on a recent case that is still currently in the news. I take every opportunity I can to bring up current events that tie in with thematic topics discussed in class. I take on a hybrid approach to teaching, utilizing a lecturer and facilitator approach to spark critical discussion and to keep students engaged. In my ethics lesson, students are instructed to read the original (discredited and retracted) 2014 *Rolling Stone* article entitled, "A Rape of Campus," by Sabrina Rubin Erdely, the week before the lesson. The class is broken into groups and told to sit in circles to discuss the article's journalistic pros and cons. The class shares its findings with each other and report to the entire class. The class is given a bit of background behind the article and asked to read the Columbia Journalism

Graduate School of Journalism report on what went wrong with the article the day of the class. <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/a-rape-on-campus-what-went-wrong-20150405> Students read it and further discuss the Columbia findings as well as what students might have originally missed as journalistic errors. The viewing of the following TV's special then follows: <http://abcnews.go.com/2020/deepdive/how-retracted-rolling-stone-article-rape-on-campus-came-print-42701166>. I conclude the case study with updates to the ongoing defamation lawsuits in court. I utilize a PowerPoint Presentation (embedded with photos, news links and YouTube videos) to discuss other case studies including that of the former *New York Times* reporter Jayson Blair, former *Washington Post* reporter Janet Cooke, *ABC* anchor Peter Jennings, and *NBC Nightly* anchor Brian Williams.

At the end of my lesson, students are assigned an ethics homework assignment. They are asked to either give a reporter complete clearance to write a story, a semi-go ahead or inform a reporter that the article is killed all together based on a series of "facts" that reporter presents to them.

EXAMPLE OF UNSUCCESSFUL LESSON

Lessons that I deemed unsuccessful were ones that were modeled as straight lectures in my early days of teaching. While I provided the students with plenty of theories and facts, students became bored and disengaged in the learning process due to my presentation format. A variety of teaching and learning techniques must be administered to keep them from drifting. Multiple teaching methods seem to work best. I've discovered that technology is a great way to keep them engaged and interested as well as lively discussions, group work, in-class activities, guest speakers and trips related to the subject matter being studied. Visual and multimedia elements such as the graphics, charts, pictures, social media, and videos, have given me great results across communication disciplines.

INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY

While all of the classes I presently teach at FIT are face-to-face, I have always been a strong proponent of actively using technology to enhance learning. From the beginning of my 15+ academic career, I strategically incorporated technology into my teaching whether it was utilizing Blackboard, Angel, and/or MyFIT as a classroom resource to the use of digital recorders, PowerPoint, films, YouTube, social media, skype, online newspapers, and other media-related tools to better support lessons.

My purpose in using technology has been two-fold: to enhance in-class/after-class learning as well as to stay current with innovative teaching trends.

This becomes especially important when it comes to teaching a wide range of courses. I am a working journalist so my students know I am speaking from a very current space/frame of reference. I am a contributor for Remezcla.com, an emerging Latin music, culture, and entertainment online publication. I can speak directly to online writing and how technology has changed the newsgathering business. I also work full-time as a communications coordinator at a CUNY college, which allows me to work on website content development and management, manage social media accounts, conduct advertising campaigns and media buys, as well as handle public relations efforts. Through both work experiences, I am able give my students current information about media planning, buying, ad development, publicity, and how to use social media to promote a central message.

EXPANDING THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

The Teaching with Tech Certificate one-day workshop opened my eyes to the additional ways an instructor can utilize technology to further enhance learning. My objective moving forward is to make better use of Blackboard and the available resources. I adopted the use of the digital syllabus, VoiceThread, LibApps, and Lynda.com, this spring 2018.

The digital syllabus is a clean, simplistic, easy-to-follow guide highlighting course content and up-to-date college policies. It also allowed for closer attention to syllabus design such as information organization, layout, and typography. I found it easy to use and incorporate into my teaching practice. I was also drawn to VoiceThread as a powerful tool to introduce the course, instructor expertise, lesson enhancements, as well as actively engage students in visual discussions in and outside our classroom. Lynda.com is another tool I've added to my Blackboard course. I can now point students to specific how-to videos on photography and videography when teaching Intro to Journalism rather than rely heavily on YouTube. I see tremendous opportunities with the use of VoiceThread for homework assignments, including having students record their radio news stories as well as their television stand-ups.

The most obvious and valuable learning lesson of the program was how to incorporate LibGuides as part of our teaching practice. What better way to get students to take full advantage of our online library resources than to point them directly to use it through targeted lessons and assignments. These available tools will positively impact the student learning experience, as well as my own.

EVALUATING USE OF TECHNOLOGY

While Blackboard is a complementary tool I use to enhance my face-to-face classroom, I do make it a mandatory part of my course. I conduct an anonymous class feedback survey at the mid-semester point every semester than will now incorporate specific questions designed to obtain technology feedback. This will enable me to gauge tool popularity, student's perception of effectiveness, and obtain valuable feedback for course improvements. I will also run reports through Blackboard to see how often students log on, which days are most popular with students, length of time on Blackboard, and overall site effectiveness.

I have already learned a valuable lesson from using new technology and getting new students to try it, "say what you mean, mean what you say." I introduced the class to VoiceThread on the first day of class. I asked students to record a video to introduce themselves by responding to my short video. A student asked if she could instead use any of the other response features and I agreed. To my surprise, *all* the students decided to use the text feature. It seems making a video response is a bit more intimidating than I imagined. For future VoiceThread tasks, I will alternate the response mechanism to eventually get students comfortable to record a video and audio package as part of future homework assignments.