



**Mark Golubow**

REFLECTIVE PORTFOLIO

**Fashion Institute of Technology**

**On Line Teaching Certification Program**

1. Define your teaching philosophy.

Teaching, for me, is a student – centered approach. Students are foremost the focus. My ego is left at the door. I consider teaching an honor and facilitating activity where my responsibility is to help collectively create a safe, non- threatening, trusting and interactive learning environment where students can be put into the best possible position to achieve their academic and personal goals.

To accomplish this aim, I use the Socratic approach to teaching, where students are encouraged to learn for themselves through critical thinking about what they read and write. One aspect of this critical thinking approach is to encourage students to raise questions about the material they are dealing with. By having students raise their own questions about assignments, not teacher questions, or responding to questions at the back of a textbook chapter, they take control of what is significant about the material and learning process. So, what becomes important to them to discuss in class, becomes important for me, and others, to listen to and connect to the overall theme of the material, and future assignments.

For example, in an assignment called Life Experience Essay, students are asked to read certain chapters in a textbook, and when they find a concept or term (i.e., stereotyping) that resonates with them (i.e., ah hah, yeah I can relate to this term and its definition...since I have been stereotyped, or have stereotyped others), they write about an actual life experience that connects to the reading. At the end of the essay, they write a question about that chapter (or an extension of topic in the essay itself) they are comfortable with presenting to the class. These essay questions are written on the board, and

as a class, we try to answer them. It is through such open class, collective dialogue and communication that an aforementioned, safe, non-threatening and trusting learning environment is constructed during a typical semester.

With the combination of encouraging students to take responsibility for their work, and grades, and working hard at letting them know I have their best interests at heart (i.e., fair, direct written and oral feedback on all their work, and specific ways to enhance it, if necessary), levels of critical thinking, and class interactions or participation increase dramatically.

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

I can think of two teachers that have had a direct educational impact on me as a student and teacher in over thirty years in academic life. Each professor represented my undergraduate, and graduate. Sorry to

day there was no teacher in my post-graduate work that had much of an influence on me, other than perhaps what not to do as a teacher (i.e., spending three hours with students reading off power point slides,

fielding no questions or engaging in any kind of interaction with us). I digress.

Professor Petrie was one of my undergraduate communication teachers at SUNY at Buffalo. He taught an interpersonal communication class, and it was the first time I was introduced to a Humanistic Psychology approach to understanding everyday communicative life. I recall being mesmerized by Carl Rogers views on human behavior and ways to teach, which emphasized breaking down dehumanizing lecture style teaching methods by involving students more in class discussions and encouraging them to take more control of their own education. Additionally, Rogers touted the whole notion of “client – centered” interactive approach between therapist and client, that was the bed rock of creating a communication climate that was safe, and non - threatening. If successful, the client would naturally open up more about his or her experiences.

So, one can see easily how these psychological views could be translated into a “student – centered” approach to teaching. And Professor Petrie was certainly influenced by Rogers, and the whole humanistic psychological movement at the time, to his own style of teaching. It was the first time as a student I had experienced a teacher so empathic, respectful, and accessible to students. He allowed us to work at our own pace on assignments. Gave solid supportive feedback on these assignments, and encouraged everyone to participate freely with their thoughts and opinions on the materials. Which we did. I thrived in the class, feeling “free” for the first time in my life inside a classroom.

Professor Schmidt was the director of Humanities at NYU for nearly 30 years when I finally took two of his classes in my last academic year at NYU graduate school: Intercultural Communication, and Response Theory.

I had heard that he was a tough grader, and not all that friendly to students. So, many of the communication majors took his classes in their last semester. I found none of this to be true, well the grading part kind of, but not the second, as Professor Schmidt literally became my first and only true mentor in my student / teacher experience. As a future college teacher, Professor Schmidt taught me the necessity of synthesizing various concepts and terms into an understanding whole. He had an uncanny ability to bring together all these theories in a cohesive, integrated whole to better understand the topic at hand. He also did this in a way everyone in class could grasp its meaning. He was not a facilitator, but a traditional lecturer with little interaction with students during the three hours spent in class. At first this bothered me, but then, I just sat back and appreciated this man's amazing knowledge and ability to convey sophisticated theories, and terms in layman terms.

He also taught me to be a deeper thinker. And not look at the world in a surface manner, but instead understand the complexities of how life works, or in my case as a communication major, how communication processes work, because only until you are able to understand the complexities of social interactions, for example, and what people do and say, do things become clearer and simpler. So beautiful, eh? It is not until one understands the complexity of something, do things become simpler. So, in fact, he not only turned the whole notion of ignorance is bliss on its head, but also the notion of looking at teaching communication courses in a "how to" fashion. Many communication textbooks teach students "how to" resolve relational conflicts for instance. But what Professor Schmidt understood was that first one had to understand the root of the conflict, or "how it works" before one can implement how to resolve it.

Many of the things I mentioned above that I learned from Professor Schmidt were not just from classroom observations but many cherished one to one sit downs in his office that lasted hours sometimes. In sum, this remarkable person, teacher, mentor taught me the value of being accessible to students, integrating and explaining difficult theories in layman terms, and not fear looking at the world and my role in it in a deeper complex fashion. All of which I do to this day inside and outside the classroom.

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

Several years ago, I created a classroom activity that had students raise questions from their readings and subsequent life experience essays that they wanted addressed in class.

These questions were to be written at the end of their life experience essays, which were triggered from a term or concept in a textbook chapter that resonated with their own lives.

Students were broken off into small groups of 3-5 where they shared their stories, and voted on two questions to be put on the board. So, once this part of the activity was done, there would be roughly six to ten

questions for the class to look over and respond to. One student would start the discussion rolling with choosing a question that perked his or her interest. From there the interaction took off. Each student needed

to face each other, address each other's thoughts directly, while the class listened. Other students could chime in as well. I was not the focus. I listened as well to everyone's replies. They had to figure things out on their own.

When I did this activity for the first time, the energy and talk was dynamic. Students were addressing issues or questions that were important to them, not from the teacher, nor some chapter question to

answer written by the book's authors. My sense is the reason for the success of this activity was that students genuinely felt they are in control of the educational process. They were now responsible for the dialogue,

on their own terms. I would be in essence a background, shadowy figure that would add his two cents into the conversation or tie together certain theories or lines of thought from students into a cohesive logical

conclusion. My instincts were confirmed a week later when I asked the students about the activity. Majority of the class felt they were doing what they wanted to do in leading a class talk, and answering questions

that were important to them in order to try and better understand how the material related to their own lives. They appreciated my input when appropriate, but liked that I stayed out of most of the talk.

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

It was more like an entire semester. When I was a graduate adjunct at NYU, the first course I ever taught was called Speech Communication. It was a weird hybrid of an introductory communication course

and learning the principles of public speaking. Anyway, the semester I taught this course I implemented many of the humanitarian teaching principles I learned from Prof. Petrie in my undergrad days, and reading from Carl Rogers, the humanistic psychologist. This course went very well. Students were highly open and participatory.

However, the next semester I tried doing the same syllabus, and approach with a new class. A disaster from day one until end of term four months later.

Hardly anyone spoke, shared their thoughts, or even handed in work on time. There were 30 students in the class. Imagine looking into 30 faces, 60 cold blank eyes, every week.

Well, I was devastated, by also very curious to understand the reasons. I read my teacher evaluations carefully at the end of the semester, and simply learned my teaching style could never be the same

With each semester, and new group of students. I also found out I was not conveying messages or activities in a way that students could relate to, or felt relevant to their lives. This meant I had to learn

how to convey messages in way students would be motivated to listen to and learn from. For instance, does the student or class as a whole want more visual stimulation, physical hands on approach to learning, or

more auditory, or lecturing type of messaging. Well, I quickly learned that a syllabus, and my conveying of information would entail a combination of all types of messaging. By learning how students wish to receive

information played a vital role for me as a teacher to this day.

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

The times they are changing. On line learning, teaching has been around for decades. But often meet with educational skepticism and credibility concerns. Count me that group.

Plus, never felt on line teaching was compatible with type of communication courses I teach; interpersonal, intercultural, gender, group and theory classes, as well as public speaking (biggest course challenge), which

work best when there is a lot of small and large group interactions to go over materials written and read.

But with the Pandemic, all teachers are going to have to adapt deeper to these remote changes, and embed this technology into their collective DNA.

Online teaching is the future. And likely will be a permanent part of the educational environment regardless when we go back to in person classroom interaction. Which I do not believe

Is happening anytime soon.

So, I am looking forward to learning and mastering all I can to incorporate creative teaching modality strategies that best suit student's way of receiving, interpreting, and breaking down information. And

Once the pandemic ends, and we can go safely back to teaching face to face, this newfound technological information can only make the classroom activities and interactions stronger and more creative.

Additionally, it will most definitely make me a more efficient and well rounded teacher.

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

This a question I grapple with. My initial sense is that students are adapting to this change to remote learning faster than me and other teachers who have had no prior experience teaching online.

Students can be very pragmatic when it comes to achieving academic goals. Most student I have talked to prefer in person classroom experiences, however, as I do.

How effective this type of learning is for students I am honestly not sure. As I said, and as I have been told by students, they will do what they have to do to get a good grade, whether on line

or inside a classroom. But in general, students prefer to learn when other people are physically or face to face present.

It is an adjustment for me. I prefer in person interactions with students. It is more fun, and lively. But I am adapting. And wish to learn the technological skills to create that safe, nonjudgmental, and Interactive learning environment that is best for students on line. I mentioned in question and reply above what I think learning and mastering on line technologies can do as a positive, creative compliment to in

person classroom activities when they resume, and for me personally as a teacher.

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

More visual learning; more face to face interaction with students on line; more student small group "break out" room sessions, rather than simply assigning work to due and upload those material

Onto blackboard.

So, more Zoom classroom discussions, for example, on the materials being read and written about. More use of break out rooms, where students can share their work among themselves, and bring back these

chat room talks into a larger classroom discussion. More use of communication videos that compliment the readings and talks, in order to make such on line classes more enjoyable and relatable.

My challenge is to transfer all the knowledge I have of how students wish to receive information (those multiple sensory modality strategies; tactile, visual, audio) into an online creative learning Experience. This is what I want to learn more than anything else, at the moment (well, also freaking learn to draw or write things clearly...notes, questions...on a white board screen to share with student!). What I am excited about here, is that on line teaching likely has many new unfamiliar ways to creatively engage students, and enhance participation, that I would like to learn.

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

Similar question to previous two.

It will create a desirably interactive, student centered learning environment for this moment in time. And act as a strong complimentary tool to eventual in person classroom teaching when it resumes.

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

I use both qualitative and quantitative measurements to evaluate how the class is going. Additionally, I always provide feedback on things students do. This feedback enables students

at times to go back and revise certain assignments in order to get a better understanding of the material. Believe feedback and revisions of particular assignments is a learning tool

that deepens critical thinking, and puts students in a position to succeed.

A movie analysis is an end of semester quantitative measuring activity that brings together all the materials students have read and written about. It shows how well students understand and apply

communication terms and concepts to everyday social interactions. Qualitative measures in gauging material content comes through class room discussions and life experience essays.

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

Last few answers address similar previous questions. Please look at them for a deeper detailed reply.

In sum, however, the nagging question remains is online teaching an effective method of teaching students? Not sure, yet. Am optimistic. Since my belief it is the future in education for every teacher, at

every grade level, I can state with assurance on line teaching is not going away. It is the big picture. And therefore, it is in a teacher's best interest to be open to something new (for many, not all); adapt to and master

this form of learning technology to the best of their abilities, to not only survive in a profession they love, but to do the best they can in making sure students receive the best education possible.