

**Statement of Teaching Philosophy and Practice**  
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As a teacher of writing and rhetoric, I employ *praxis*, what critical educator Paulo Freire calls in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* “a movement back and forth between action and reflection.” This melding of theory and practice manifests in my classroom through four ideas and principles: 1) classroom culture; 2) shared authority; 3) primary research; and 4) reflection.

Creating a positive, decorous *classroom culture* is foundational. I want the students to experience our classroom as welcoming yet intellectually challenging. Because every class consists of learners with different strengths and learning styles, I “learn the students” early on through providing them with daily opportunities to demonstrate writing, speaking, and thinking proficiency. Group activities enable learners to get to know classmates and to feel comfortable expressing themselves verbally and textually (e.g., comments on peers’ discussion posts). To help those less prepared for college-level work, I model theory through practice by sharing my strategies and as a researcher and writer, and inviting and coaching learners to develop their own. Giving students opportunities to practice process within a positive discourse community encourages them to improve themselves as researchers, writers, speakers, and thinkers. Together, we build and share knowledge. Kenneth Bruffee’s scholarship, by theorizing the social construction of knowledge, influences my collaborative pedagogy, implemented by creating a classroom culture of discovery and dialectical thinking.

By using the terms “teachers-students” for teachers and “students-teachers” for students, Paulo Freire emphasizes the importance of *shared authority*. Students choose topics, research methods, genres, sources, and technologies.; and they address rhetorical situations beyond the confines of classroom walls. These choices provide opportunities for autonomy in their learning, eliciting a personal investment that increases the passion of their practice, the depth of their research, and the quality of their compositions. They build ethos through taking ownership of process and producing substantive texts that emerge from passionate engagement with their work. I scaffold assignments and thereby learn how learners compose via their semester-long efforts to design and execute research projects and other compositions. This pedagogy eschews the “banking concept of education” Paulo Freire denounces, in which students are passive receptacles of the “knowledge” deposited by professors who foreground teacher-centered lessons.

*Primary research* accomplishes a number of goals in our classroom. As Lynée Gaillet and Michelle Eble point out in *Primary Research and Writing*, primary research methods such as archival artifact analysis, ethnographic observation, surveys, and interviews empower students to craft original, meaningful, and rigorous compositions. These methods not only increase student engagement but also preclude plagiarism. In my first-year classes, novice primary researchers create work about the Auburn Family, a body of scholarship soon to be curated and presented on a website. Majors have produced articles for the *Encyclopedia of Alabama* and materials designed in collaboration with local non-profits. Elizabeth Ervin in *Public Literacy* and Nancy Welch in *Living Room: Teaching Public Writing in a Privatized World* observe that these methods move student writing from classroom to public sphere, part of the “public turn” in our field. Writing for “real” audiences and purposes teaches students that their writing holds the potential of changing minds and catalyzing actions.

My focus on *reflection* leads students to perceive their learning styles to optimize strengths and target weaknesses. Every lesson incorporates reading, writing, thinking, and speaking. This pedagogy puts theory and practice as well as reading and writing in interaction. We know that the best writers read avidly. Like Toby Fulwiler in *The Working Writer*, I teach my students to see writing as both process and product. Through metacognitive freewrites, classroom discussion, conferencing, and portfolio assessment, I challenge students to try and to assess the worth of new strategies to hone their study, research, writing, and presentation skills.

Classroom culture, shared authority, primary research, and reflection represent the primary principles that drive my classroom practice with the goal of meeting course goals and serving students’ needs.