

Teaching Philosophy

When I started graduate school at Texas Tech University in 2003, I was fortunate enough to be awarded a teaching assistantship. I expected this honor to allow me the opportunity to begin work on my degree in playwriting which would facilitate my dream of becoming the next great female playwright. What I didn't expect was for it to change my career goals, my vision of self, and ultimately my biggest dreams.

For the first two years I taught Introduction to Acting to non-theatre majors. I had acted frequently in the past and enjoyed it a great deal, but it wasn't my area of specialization. I compensated for this by reading, researching, and talking to as many acting professors as I could find. I took bits and pieces from everyone I spoke with, every book I read and every show I attended and managed to get through my first semester successfully—measuring my success by the enthusiasm my students showed despite the 8:00am class time.

Each semester my teaching skills improved immensely as I discovered that each class had its own personality and own set of needs while still working through the same course objectives. I found this both challenging and exciting. As I moved on to teach Introduction to Cinema, Theatre Appreciation, and Theory and Practice of Playwriting I found myself continually reading, researching and talking with other professors around the country about these subjects. As I found each class promising its own character and its own requirements, I adjusted. I began to perceive education as a continuous conversation with everyone taking part. I now believe that it is crucial for students to be an active participant in this conversation, and in their learning. I choose to always talk with my classes and never at them. This creates an atmosphere of learning that is far more layered and stimulating. And through this educational conversation, I realize that nothing, not even playwriting, excites me more than teaching.

For me, the best way to motivate my students is by displaying confidence and enthusiasm. I have found that both are contagious and create an energetic environment. I model this behavior in my classroom and am amazed by how easily these attitudes rub off on my students. When they are confident and enthusiastic about learning, we are all successful.

As a theatre educator, it is my goal to share with my students the excitement, growth and satisfaction that come from collaborating on projects with other theatre artists. In order to do this, I believe it is crucial to establish a classroom environment—whether it is an acting class, a playwriting workshop, or a history lecture—where the students feel safe exercising their creativity. The most important thing I do to create this environment is to encourage trust and respect between the students as well as with me. I establish clear rules and manageable objectives. I approach each student as an individual, and give feedback regularly. I converse with the class about current topics of the day and then steer those ideas towards theatre and the projects they are working on. I emphasize the importance of process over product, freeing the students to take more chances and to feel freer creatively. Good theatre and thoughtful learning most often result when their participants feel uninhibited and unbound.