

SAMPLE TEACHING PHILOSOPHIES

Please do not copy or distribute without express permission of the author, as this is their intellectual property and to be used only as an example. Contact information for each author is included.

Teaching Philosophy

Alexandra Everley (aneverley@eagles.usi.edu)

I like to use literature as an avenue to talk about culture and students' lives and to think critically about society. I want students to develop skills to help them become critical thinkers of life and become more than just passive consumers of information. Our ability to analyze, manipulate, create, and make meaning of our world is what makes us human. Failing to use our own brains and human-ness is an insult to evolution, a Creator, or whatever you think made us the way we are. I want my students to learn how to hone their powers as individual humans and apply them to the world around them. To achieve this goal, my students and I will pose questions about literature and society to critically think about the world around us.

I believe in using all types of literature in the classroom, from classics to young adult literature. All genres and time periods have merit for the classroom. I love reading "classics" with students to show that people long ago were not so different from how we are now. I also think that literature is a great way to teach history. Writing of a time period either reflects or rebels against ideas of the time, and revolution begins with access to knowledge and development of new ideas. But what are ideas if they are not put in print? I use history in conjunction with literature to show students how literature influences a time period and is the key to perpetuating new ideas. I also love reading YA literature with my students. Many of these books present good ideas and are very accessible to middle and high school students. Using them in the classroom lets students know that the books they are already reading are worthy of critical thought. Young adult literature in a classroom helps students realize that good literature does not have to be written before 1940. Reading literature from such a broad spectrum with my students helps them develop ideas about what books actually deserve literary merit and helps them see how they can apply critical thinking skills to many areas of life.

My beliefs are reflected in my sample work provided in my *The Fault in Our Stars* [unit](#) and in my [short stories unit](#). The assignments I developed require students to challenge themselves and the world around them. In my [short stories unit](#), I start with teaching how to do a close reading and present the video "Charlie Reads *Twilight*." Though humorous and entertaining, this video provides academic merit by sending students the message that everything they read or do is meant to be evaluated, even pop-culture phenomena such as *Twilight*. Also in my [short stories unit](#), my students and I will explore aspects of different perspectives with my a photo essay assignment, in which students will take photos that portray different perspectives and will write an essay that explains the photos. This assignment teaches students to critically think about the world by looking at different objects at different angles, reinforcing the idea that looking at situations from different points of view can completely change our ideas about it. In my *The Fault in Our Stars* [unit](#), one of my main focuses is on critical thinking, especially since the book lends itself to that lesson. As a critical thinking activity, in my assignment for chapter two my students and I will think about different cliché expressions and evaluate whether or not these expressions are actually true and evaluate what the expressions imply. I also include Socratic circles in the unit to give students a chance to talk about ideas in the book among themselves in a smaller group. I ask them to provide their own questions for the circles, giving them the opportunity to think about the book and develop and articulate pertinent questions.

With my ideas, I hope students can connect with the materials I present and that their feedback and ideas can guide the classroom. Ultimately, I want them to learn that their lives, their ideas, and the things they like *do* matter and that those things deserve evaluation and merit.