

STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

My twin goals in teaching theatre and performance are to demonstrate the myriad of ways in which this artistic discipline continues to have relevance to the contemporary world, and to utilize the study of this art form as a method of honing students' skills in critical thinking and writing.

Theatre and performance are pervasive in American culture, reaching far beyond the institutional theatre stage, and so I believe it is crucial for students to learn to recognize and understand the workings of performance within daily social and political life. I challenge students to develop their own questions and observations about performances we examine in class as well as performances they encounter on their own, and I undertake to inculcate in students a great appreciation for the greater depth of understanding that research into social, historical, political, and generic contexts can provide.

I strive to serve as a continuous source of inspiration for my students, both in terms of artistic accomplishments and in regard to rigorous critical thinking. I build my syllabi with the goal of aiding students both to grasp the importance of previous theatrical milestones, and to envision how they might play a role in contributing to future innovations in performance. In my lectures, I present methods of inquiry as well as factual information, and I also share the struggles and conclusions that have arisen in my own experiences as a practicing theatre artist. Additionally, I endeavor to offer the same "generosity of spirit" in my verbal and written advice to individual students, in my office hours and commentary on student assignments, that I have always attempted to share with my artistic teams in the course of my artistic work as a dramaturg and playwright.

But I also believe that I am not the only source of inspiration from which students should draw, and to that end, I do my utmost to place students into direct contact with the inspirational work of a wide range of theatre artists, whether through video, audio, written, or live sources of drama, performance, designs, archival documentation, or criticism. I seek opportunities to reduce the distance between the classroom and the artistic practice of theatre, and as part of that effort, to bring Guest Artists and Scholars into the classroom. Furthermore, I emphasize classroom discussion and small-group brainstorming and workshopping, so that students have repeated opportunities to re-charge their internal motivation from the wellspring of their fellow students' contributions. Likewise, I try to create opportunities for students to share their work with others outside each particular class, whether through the coordination of publications or play festivals, or simply by relaying appropriate internship, volunteer, job, or play submission opportunities. In each of these strategies for undergirding and reinforcing students' inspiration, I emphasize the practice of listening, attentiveness, and active curiosity.

Beyond inspiration, I aim to encourage students to become independent thinkers. To achieve this goal, I assign independent reading and require students to write individual responses before the material is discussed in class. Furthermore, I consistently assign larger written projects within a flexible skill-building rubric, to enable students to conduct research, examine performances, or develop their artistic crafts according to their own interests, and then to develop those initial interests into more sustained lines of questioning or craft-

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building. Finally, I believe that critical thinking is developed through the ongoing practice of writing, and therefore, I insist upon a dedicated focus by students upon revision and augmentation of their work. In all of these teaching practices, I endeavor to show students how their theatrical and scholarly work mirrors theatre and performance by, at its best, creating and communicating relevant meaning.