

Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy is one of viewing knowledge as a co-constructive process. I do not position myself in the classroom as the holder of the “truth”. Rather, I provide students with critical readings and lead involved class discussions so that students can understand that there are many ways of understanding educational issues. In my teaching I use a form of critical pedagogy, that my colleague and I have renamed it as coalition pedagogy, as a teaching tool that allows me to connect to my students, and especially with students of color. Because I want students to work on arriving at their own understanding of the various educational issues I cover in class, I utilize assignments wherein students can critically analyze the world around them. For example, in the Language Problems in a Multicultural Environment and the Foundations of Composition Theory graduate courses that I teach, I ask students to write a critical discourse analysis paper in which they analyze a text such as a movie or a text book for its’ assumptions and representations of a marginalized group. Similarly, in the College Writing courses I teach, I ask students to present a poster board session wherein students share artifacts and knowledge they have compiled as a result of an investigation they conduct in their local communities where they seek to understand a community problem.

Since the ultimate goal is for students to develop their own well grounded, scholarly perspective in our class I strive to balance the didactic presentation of knowledge with teaching techniques that call for student engagement. With this in mind, I do not expect my students to play a passive role in my classroom, but instead I expect them to actively participate in their education. In doing this I push my students to reach an understanding of our class material that goes way beyond verbal understanding. By continually asking students to articulate their views in writing, and to consider the reading material’s perspective I push students to a level of understanding that is much higher than what is expected in most courses.

Finally, I take the relationships with my students very serious. Since my classes are very interactive I have the opportunity to engage in many different conversations with my students, so I could learn how to better serve them.

Sincerely,

Octavio Pimentel, PhD