

Teaching Philosophy

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To be an extraordinary educator, one must have an effective teaching approach in both the online and face-to-face environment. More recently, the increased focus on mental health has shown the vital importance of having culturally competent and ethical helping professionals support the diverse clients and communities they serve. Teaching future counselors and helping professionals is a serious responsibility that should never be taken lightly. The American Counseling Association defines counseling as, “A professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health wellness, education, and career goals.” (Kaplan, Tarvydas, & Gladding, 2000). Furthermore, the ACA Code of Ethics indicates, that the “primary responsibility of counselors is to respect the dignity and promote the welfare of clients” (ACA, 2014, p. 4). Therefore, my teaching philosophy is centered on the established identity and core values of the counseling profession.

I believe that learning is a lifelong process and therefore, part of my role as an educator is to encourage students to engage in this ongoing process to enhance and build their acquired skills and personal strengths and abilities over time. Furthermore, I aspire for all of my students to consistently engage in self-examination and self-discovery to enhance their self-awareness and become the best version of themselves. In addition, I aim to help students develop cultural sensitivity and multicultural competence to be the next mental health change agents. I also strive to use creative methods to help students demonstrate a mastery of the course content. Lastly, I aspire for my students to incorporate content into their clinical practice and initiate their professional counseling network within the classroom.

Creating an Inclusive Learning Community

First and foremost, the creation of an inclusive learning community is my top priority in the academic setting. While my role is to facilitate the learning process, I also want to foster a safe environment where similarities and differences between students are acknowledged and appreciated. It is also vital for students to learn from one another and engage in collaboration that encourages open dialogue about the complex issues involved in counseling. As an instructor, I can illuminate new material, create interactive applications, and challenge students' critical thinking. However, students bring their life experiences into the classroom setting and in doing so they help bring abstract concepts to life. Utilizing the class as both a functioning group and a constellation of individuals from varying backgrounds enhances learning and development. This is essential within the online environment where collaborative work and relationship building can be a challenge.

My teaching approach involves the usage of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2008) that includes direct instruction, inquiry-based learning, and cooperative learning as strategies to help students engage with course material. In addition, I encourage students to use life application to add value to the educational experience for both themselves and their fellow classmates. I view the classroom as an incubator for professional connections. As such, I aspire for the learning environment to assist students in developing and honing their professional network within the classroom setting. Due to the nature of helping professions, it can be challenging to increase professional contact beyond meeting with clients. Therefore, the classroom setting provides a prime opportunity for students to begin to cultivate relationships with other professionals before entering the workforce.

Appraisal and Assessment

Evaluation and assessment are vital to the learning process. Within the classroom I utilize role playing, experiential activities, case studies, group processing, goal-setting, and theoretical critiques as interventions to ensure students are able to think critically and apply the content knowledge they are exposed to through readings and lectures. I aspire to integrate self-reflection with critical thinking and applied learning that enables students to make connections between their individual experiences within our sociopolitical context as well as their future encounters with clients in the workplace. Students bring their own rich and diverse life experiences into the classroom. As a result, I as the instructor will always encourage students to share their knowledge because I will never be the expert or final authority on *all* subjects introduced in the classroom. It is the responsibility of the students to share their outside knowledge at their discretion with the class to make the learning experience an impactful one.

The approach I use to assess student learning stems from a post-modernist perspective. This perspective involves using multiple choice format examinations, as well as essay prompts to reflect on individual experiences. It also includes research papers, group work, portfolios, and presentations. This approach allows me to assess student skills, competency, and mastery of course material through information recall, collaboration, formal writing, and public speaking. By using this method of assessment, I am able to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge even if they have difficulty with traditional examinations. By utilizing multiple strategies to assess student learning, I am able to help students enhance their problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication skills which are critical to be an effective scholar-practitioner. Integrating technology into the learning environment is also essential to my teaching approach. I believe helping students identify and utilize both traditional and innovative technology to support their learning as well as their clinical practices is key to being a counselor

educator. Consequently, I attempt to incorporate at least one technological tool into each class meeting, and I include at least one assignment in the syllabus that encourages students to identify, evaluate, and apply a technology tool to their future practice.

Ongoing Professional Development

Lastly, I aspire to continue to enhance and develop my teaching practices by assessing my instructional quality and student learning outcomes. In addition to using course evaluations, I strive to use the level of student engagement, mastery of material, and the integration of current events and contemporary research, as ways to assess my instructional quality and effectiveness. I enjoy being a chameleon in the classroom setting because it challenges me to seek out opportunities to continually improve my knowledge and teaching methods. I view teaching as a developmental process and as such, I have to continually engage in self-reflection and continuing education and training. Enhancing my skillset can only occur through my careful evaluation and examination of my teaching style. It is important for me to utilize new technologies, alter assignments, and modify activities to be reflective of practical requirements of the profession. Being actively engaged in professional associations, doing advocacy work in the community, providing direct care, participating in new training and developmental opportunities, and staying up to date on current professional literature are essential to my growth and development as an instructor. Finally, my ultimate goal as a counselor educator is to model this process for my students to foster growth in their clinical skillset and scholarly endeavors.

References

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