

Teaching Philosophy

The classroom is a scene of co-creation. We (students and professor) are all learners engaged in discourse around the subject matter. The art of teaching involves a repeated cycle of design, delivery, and evaluation. This cycle inevitably results in course evolution or transformation.

Course design begins with the identification of need. The need may come from students, potential employers, or administrators and faculty involved in assessment. Needs that all of these stakeholders agree upon are considered critical. Student needs are anonymously assessed using survey questionnaires in classes and on-line. In-person interviews of employers, administrators, and faculty are also held in order to identify challenges. These issues (attendance, engagement, scholarly citations in writing for instance) become pedagogical opportunities for me. Design next involves identification of foundational literature. This exposes students to the historic key players in the field. Contemporary innovators in the field are also included to stimulate the students' imaginations as well as prepare them to influence the future.

Subject delivery is designed to reach students using visual, auditory, and kinesthetic/experiential methods. Visual and auditory delivery methods often involve digital slide presentations. These presentations are laden with images and diagrams to reach the visual learner. Presentations frequently end with a small group engagement exercise (kinesthetic/experiential) either in the classroom or on the campus grounds. My pedagogy is influenced by the work of Parker Palmer and I work to create a feeling of safety in the class so that students can process information at deeper levels and be open to new ideas. Joseph Campbell's work helps me to include metaphors and symbolism in my teaching; while William James' interdisciplinary blending of psychology, physiology, philosophy, and personal reflection also spur me to provide cross-disciplinary subject links

Affective, cognitive, and physical skills are assessed in all classes. Affective skills are evaluated through the reflective essay. This type of essay contains three components: new knowledge, a past experience, and personal concluding actions. These connections are intended to encourage memory retention, to build personal responsibility, and support positive change. Cognitive skills are assessed using paper and pencil tests. Tests are hand crafted and designed to reinforce essential material. They are not designed to trick students or be explorations in minutiae. Physical skills are evaluated in numerous ways-oral presentations, landscape designs, and survey data collections are a few kinesthetic activities that receive grades. Critical thinking skills are taught in the Sustainable Landscape Garden Design, Installation, and Maintenance class where students complete a pre and post California test to assess performance. Ethical judgment skills are demonstrated in Senior Capstone class.

Evaluation occurs throughout the class experience-anonymous surveys are administered after each test to determine the clarity and fairness of the test. Additional survey questions collect approximate hours of study time; and what items specifically (readings, digital presentations) were reviewed.