

History, as a discipline, has the potential to engage students in multiple varied areas of content inquiry and to develop the most crucial of lifetime skills in critical thinking, discussion, and writing. Its impact reaches far beyond academia, into the ways we participate in critical debate and understanding in society at large. In my classroom, my goal is to continually lead students towards opportunities to understand, question, and, ultimately, make *use* of our shared histories. To that end, I have consistently sought to expose myself to as many proven and exciting techniques and classroom environments as possible, and I have always been acutely aware of the need to fully support and encourage my students in their dedication to their work and their particular curiosities and interests. My teaching experience at Columbia has included being a non-participatory grader, a teaching assistant, and an instructor of record for one of the University's most rigorous core curriculum courses in the humanities and social sciences, Contemporary Western Civilization (CC). I have augmented my classroom work by completing extensive training within my department and at the University's Center for Teaching and Learning, where I have completed the Advanced Track of the Teaching Development Program.

CC is a course which begins with Plato's Republic and ends with a consideration of intersectionality in the 1990s. It is a wide-ranging, fast-moving course which, as a flagship component of the Core Curriculum, demands not only constant engagement and thought but also shapes students' ideas of canon formation and the bedrock concepts which inform how we live in the twenty-first century. As such it can be intensely controversial, and has been accused of intellectual imperialism or discrimination on many fronts. I found in the course of teaching the class that it was crucial to explore many different potential approaches to the course as a whole, to give my students as much agency as possible in determining their level of comfort with texts and the extent to which they wanted to move beyond the texts into contemporary discourses, and to lead discussions in which canon formation and its history played a central role. At the beginning of both years of my teaching CC, I therefore had students begin our first session with a brainstorm, or word association activity, in which they divulged their expectations for the syllabus based on their assumptions of what our texts would be like and what they expected to learn (or be force-fed). This activity was helpful not only in airing their concerns, but because it allowed me to tailor my delivery of the course to address, allay, or affirm their thoughts about it. At the end of each year, having recorded the resulting wordcloud, I reproduced the activity and asked my class to reflect on whether or how their notions of the course had changed. This led to an extremely thoughtful conversation on my students' part as to what they felt they had learned from the year and how they evaluated the usefulness, the deficiencies, and the world-tilting provocations of the great books of 'Western' philosophy and political science.

I have encountered the principles of inclusive teaching in many environments at Columbia. The realization that inclusive practices and accommodation encourages students to learn and absorb far more information and skills than they would if they were in a hostile environment has spurred me to consistently consider the needs of my students in confronting both physical and intellectual challenges. I have modified my grading practices when it comes to participation to allow shy or intimidated students to receive credit for paired or small-group discussion, for example, and have changed the makeup of groups of students from one class session to another to encourage exposure to as many individual perspectives as possible. During the spring 2019 COVID-19 crisis, I worked to develop asynchronous activities and assignments to accommodate students who were unable to participate in scheduled online class sessions, including some who were

digitally ‘commuting’ from as far away as the Philippines. Shifts in my demeanor, language, and accessibility which may seem small in retrospect have clearly had enormous impacts on a students’ ability to share their knowledge and presence, as well as – from my particular disciplinary perspective – being able to demonstrate that empathy and understanding are central to historical study, and separating those skills from necessarily ‘approving’ of views which students in the twenty-first century may find repulsive. I am proud and grateful to have found in the course of my time teaching CC that students of color and LGBT/non-binary students were comfortable and happy in my classroom, to the point that they recommended my section to their peers for the following year.

A third aspect of all of my semesters of teaching has been to attempt to inculcate good habits of research and writing in my students. Most recently, I developed an in-class activity in which my students could use both myself and each other as resources to work towards papers which clearly and coherently conveyed their theses. I began the class by demonstrating, using an example essay prompt, several ways in which I might break down its question into its constituent parts and organize how I could answer each of those questions step-by-step in my essay’s structure. The activity then proceeded in two stages: in the first, students practiced constructing their own paper outlines in which their structures and sequences of paragraphs address the entirety of example paper prompts; these outlines were then discussed in pairs to expose students to the variation in their peers’ work, the point of the exercise being that a paper can answer a question in many different ways so long as it has an internal logic as to why it is addressing its topics in a particular order. In the second stage, students trawled through an example text to find any and all quotations they could regarding the topic of ‘history.’ This phase is meant to emphasize and reinforce the necessary work of constructing an argument from the evidence at hand rather than cherry-picking evidence that could succinctly answer only part of a question, as well as reminding students of the need to consistently refer to textual evidence while in class conversation as well as in their written work. Over the course of both years of CC, I saw notable improvements in my students’ clarity of thought and organization of their written work, and several wrote in their evaluations that they found my feedback clear and helpful. Given that CC is not a ‘history’ class per se, my aim for these assignments was to communicate and teach skills which could be used in all disciplines, and treated more as a method of thought than a formulaic, single-class set of requirements.

My students’ well-being has always been my first priority despite my initial reluctance to consider teaching as a principle vocation, and over my years of teaching experience I have written letters of recommendation which successfully aided their applications to international study abroad programs, jobs in New York City, and NASA, among other institutions. It has also been my pleasure to informally mentor prior students, including in their efforts to complete the requirements for the bachelor’s degree in history and in developing multimedia projects for women and students of color in STEM. My own work in history has been spurred on by curiosity and enjoyment, and I endeavor to imbue the work of presenting it with that same enthusiasm. No matter a student’s incoming level of interest in the *content* of any course I teach, I aspire to have them leave the class having learned or found fascination in something, however small or life-changing.