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Teaching Philosophy

My fundamental objective as an educator is to cultivate the emergence and appreciation of critical thought. As a teacher of a number of the spokes that form the umbrella subject "English", my particular concern is with the development of effective, reasoned communicative methods. I strive to open pathways students can utilize to become more effective communicators, be it in speech or in writing. The ability to act as a meaningful participant in the many dialogues that surround our personal and professional lives is not necessarily a given. Skills, practice and patience are needed and I see it as my responsibility to my students to facilitate, in as many ways as possible, their journey along the road to communicative competency.

Students do not all come to the classroom with a single purpose, particularly if that classroom, as has mine, been situated in three different countries with remarkably dissimilar traditions and cultures. I've had few students enroll in my courses with the sole purpose of becoming a more critical, reasoning thinker and communicator. However, I like to think that the majority of students I have taught have left my course with both a degree of satisfaction that the skills they had hoped, or were assigned, to improve upon were, indeed, bolstered and, often without being consciously aware, with an increased ability to navigate the communicative channels that form the skeleton of their existence.

In its most distilled form, my philosophy toward teaching is exemplified in that whether I'm suggesting to Abdullah the Mutawa in Abu Dhabi how to appropriately respond to the question cum greeting "What's up?" or congratulating Hyuk Ju on a particularly effective use of parallelism in her application essay to Seoul National University, my transcendent, enduring goal is invariable. I want my students to gain the skills and practice necessary to feel as if they can succinctly and accurately decode social or professional discourse and respond in an intelligent, well reasoned, and appropriate vein. I believe any society prospers by instilling within its members the importance and appreciation of being able to effectively communicate their societal, professional and personal views.

Unlike my unwavering devotion to the primacy of nurturing critical thought and response, my methods for inculcating the skills necessary to achieve this end vary from population to population. Methodologically, there is one maxim I follow, however. Far from revelatory, I believe that to become a better speaker, one must speak. To write better, one writes. But reflectively and in stages that can

illustrate for students the progress they are making. Revisions and corrections are an integral part to any learning process and my courses allow great latitude for them. When possible within the institutional ethos, I prefer assignment “windows” which may span weeks as opposed to specific due dates for projects. Humor is often invited into my classroom and is well received, particularly in composition courses where the final stage of the writing process can seem so distant. Literature that exemplifies concepts or argumentative devices or even word usage is in my classroom at every opportunity. I never tire of taking reasoned chances in the classroom to motivate my students. The confidence I have in my ability to manage my classes effectively towards an ultimate goal allows me the flexibility to experiment with a medley of socially and culturally appropriate methods to achieve both the immediate goals of the course at hand and the often much more expansive burgeoning of critical discourse.

I am intensely involved with the progress of my students because, ultimately, we share a common path. I, too, seek to engage with my community more meaningfully and see communicative competence as key to that objective. Like my students, I need to be challenged to grow. Professionally, I seek positions that fuel my way towards greater proficiency in the classroom. I am particularly interested in harnessing the potential of computing technology as a means to deliver language skills and practice platforms for my students. Environments that offer avenues for both technical and practical professional growth and expansion are where I see myself performing to the best of my abilities.