

Teaching Philosophy

My priority as an educator is that from my teaching, mentorship, and advocacy, students take with them the tools they need to encounter and navigate a new consent-based cultural dynamic that has not been seen in the theatre before. By instilling in my students ethical, culturally aware protocols aimed at lifting those with the least access to have their voices heard, my students leave the institution to become leaders and game changers within and outside of the industry.

One tool that I use to train students in a consent-based methodology is by giving students agency over their own development and progress. At the beginning of the semester, I ask students to fill out a thorough journal reflection discussing what goals they have for themselves in terms of artistic, professional, and skill-based development through the course. I also ask if there are areas that they are wanting to explore (ex. a role type) that they have not had the chance to play. I then document these goals and work to find material that supports these goals and speak to them. In one case, a student had always been cast as the “ditz” girl and wanted to tackle more assertive roles, so I gave her Amy in Ruby Rae Spiegel’s *Dry Land*. This student was thrilled to assert her dominance and claim space with this role and her classmates remarked at how much she grew in this particular role.

After goal setting, I will vet content and partnerships between students before assigning performance text. I present material for the student to examine from a variety of backgrounds and intersections of identity, such as race, gender, and sexuality. I include texts from underrepresented groups such as *Baltimore* by Kirsten Greenidge, *Good Kids* by Naomi Iizuka, or *In the Blood* by Suzan-Lori Parks. By selecting works that speak beyond the dominant narrative, I advocate for actors of color and those at varying intersections of the gender spectrum to feel seen and heard. As an educator, I never know what emotional triggers a given student may have, create space for dialogue as to what material best serves the student’s goals. On very few occasions, students have asked for a scene change and I have been able to provide a new scene without any issue.

I also implement intimacy practices into my curriculum. All my students are required to ask before touching another person in a scene or activity. I teach a boundary establishment practice so the students can express clearly to their partner what their physical boundaries are. In addition, students are required to journal each rehearsal they have outside of class and have a third party present in case an issue arises in the rehearsal itself. As intimacy work is currently dominated by White women, I would seek students from underrepresented communities interested in this work and mentor them in intimacy work to diversify the field as a whole.

It is important for my students to be able to offer each other and myself thoughtful, useful, critical feedback. For this, I employ Liz Lerman’s *Critical Response Process* to constructively give feedback without making students feel like criticism and critique where the student who is receiving the critique to be in control of what feedback they are receiving.

By offering these tools to my students, I encourage them to become independent critical thinkers that are conscientious and respectful of others. They will develop empathy for their fellow person, learn to give constructive feedback, and learn the ways to advocate for what they want to get out of their educational career before moving on to the professional world.