

Teaching Philosophy

As an international scholar, my teaching approach has been shaped by the diverse instructional methods and knowledge-sharing practices I encountered in higher education, both in my home country and in the United States. A key insight I have gained is that instructors who maintain a genuine desire to learn and improve their teaching can inspire students to explore subject matter beyond the planned curriculum. Guided by this principle, I am deeply committed to lifelong learning, continuously staying current with contemporary research, discoveries, and emerging perspectives in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

As a recreation and leisure scholar focused on recreational therapy (RT), I intentionally create an environment that fosters professional growth and a deep, nuanced understanding of the field for my students. Embracing a student-centered approach, I recognize the importance of cultivating an atmosphere where students feel comfortable taking intellectual risks and learning from their mistakes. I emphasize the value of critical thinking to support students' intellectual development while also encouraging self-reflection to foster their personal growth. These core tenets are at the very heart of my teaching philosophy.

To err is human

I firmly believe that every student is a unique individual with diverse abilities, interests, and prior experiences. By conveying the message that "to err is human," I aim to establish a learning environment characterized by equity, acceptance, and a shared understanding that mistakes are an integral part of the learning process. This approach sets a universal starting point for all students and helps minimize the anticipatory anxiety that can sometimes be present at the beginning of a new semester. In practice, I introduce the first assignment with a deliberate flaw, whether it's a seemingly illogical instruction or a discrepancy between verbal guidance and course materials. This intentional imperfection encourages students to engage critically, voicing their concerns and observations. Recognizing their contributions, I commend those who identify these errors with bonus participation points. My intention isn't to patronize but rather to demonstrate fallibility, emphasizing that I, too, am prone to mistakes. By deliberately introducing flaws in initial assignments and welcoming students' constructive feedback, I aim to humanize the learning experience and establish a sense of equality between instructor and student. This approach not only reduces anticipatory anxiety but also fosters a culture of resilience and growth. Furthermore, this practice provides students with the perspective that their instructor is not an unreachable person acting from a position of power. Rather than viewing me as an authority figure, I want my students to see me as a fellow human being, equally committed to our shared goal of academic success and professional growth.

Understanding that failure is an inherent aspect of growth, I seek to reassure students that initial missteps will not be met with punitive measures. This mindset shift not only reduces anxiety but also empowers students to embrace challenges, fostering resilience and supporting their professional development. In essence, by embracing the inevitability of mistakes, I strive to nurture a culture of learning where students feel supported, encouraged, and empowered to realize their potential.

Critical Thinking

It is quite important that instructors continually utilize novel knowledge from peer-reviewed journals as a resource within the classroom. As a form of behavioral modeling, I aim to instill this practice in future professionals by often assigning tasks that require independent research utilizing scientific literature. By teaching academic literacy concerning current research and providing resources and knowledge on how to find peer-reviewed literature, I empower students to understand what an evidence-based practice entails. Specifically, I ask that all RT facilitation techniques we discuss in the classroom be supported by evidence from peer-reviewed literature. When discussing treatment modalities or health models and frameworks employed in the RT field, students are instructed to find journal articles on a set topic before each course so they are prepared to participate in the class discussions and share their findings. Eventually, utilizing research in the classroom provides an opportunity for students to appropriately apply evidence-based practices to their future profession.

In assessing student progress, I employ a variety of methods beyond traditional tests and quizzes. While these direct measures play a role, they are not the sole determinants of grades. Instead, I value active participation, hands-on experience in practicum settings, critical reflections, and engagement in discussions as integral components of assessment. By prioritizing practical application and comprehensive understanding, I aim to ensure that students can effectively translate classroom learning into real-world practice.

Clinical Supervision and Experiential Learning

Direct clinical supervision involves the supervisor's active presence, influencing students' actions as they provide client services. This method necessitates organizational support, ample resources, and the supervisor's expertise. On the other hand, experiential learning emphasizes that learning emerges as a result of experience honed from observation, reflection, the conceptualization of the activity to be performed, and the application of said activity. In my teaching, I integrate principles from both clinical supervision and experiential learning.

Service-learning components in classes can be daunting for students, especially when encountering diverse populations in traditional RT settings for the first time. To alleviate initial anxieties, I provide comprehensive instructions and feedback on clinical facilitation at the outset of these experiences. Gradually, I reduce assistance, fostering students' independence and laying a strong foundation for their future success in practice. This process had previously provided a solid foundation for the students on the path to becoming successful practitioners.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Recognizing the importance of creating a just and inclusive environment, I prioritize understanding each student's unique background. Equity and justice are fundamental principles that guide my teaching philosophy. I approach students individually, validating their diverse backgrounds and worldviews, while empowering them to engage critically with the material and foster their own growth and understanding. Through personalized support and encouragement, I empower students to not only excel academically but also to embrace their individuality and contribute meaningfully to their professional field.