

## **Susan E. Evans | Teaching Philosophy**

With a strong commitment to my students I embrace teaching as an opportunity to both inspire and empower and it is my goal to enhance student learning as a transformative experience. I want students to feel personally changed by their participation in whichever course they take with me. I believe that it is my job to design and provide courses that are challenging, interesting, current, and relevant. I endeavor to foster learning environments that are equally stimulating, motivating, supportive and participative. I strive to build on the insights and experience of each student in order to foster learning. Diversity increases the scope and extent of knowledge. Learning is a complex process that is individual, content and context specific. I am attentive to these factors and work to be flexible, adapting my approaches according to the needs of the students, subject matter and setting. The process by which I work to stimulate student engagement is unique to each individual and classroom, however students must ultimately take responsibility for their own learning.

Promoting an understanding that social and political forces shape the construction and utilization of knowledge is central to my philosophy of teaching because it helps students sharpen critical thinking skills in order to enable them to transgress epistemological limitations. I challenge my students to broaden their minds by enhancing their awareness of culture, diversity, and individual differences. I work to encourage students to examine and/or challenge existing boundaries by teaching them to question how they have come to know what they believe to be true about their world. This helps students see boundaries, whether personal or social, as constructed and affords them an opportunity to challenge and move beyond them in a supportive and encouraging atmosphere. It is this idea of examining boundaries and moving beyond them that both empowers and transforms students.

Class time is structured around four major themes: technique, aesthetics, communication or meaning and theory/history and as a firm believer in experiential learning it also includes a significant amount of student participation (e.g., debates, critiques, exercises, demonstrations, presentations and field trips). I also use a variety of other materials (e.g., outside readings, images, films, videos, guest speakers and when appropriate a cross disciplinary approach) in order to spark discussions, challenge thinking and or illustrate concepts. I work to influence learning that occurs outside the classroom by supplementing class time with a wide range of teaching/learning activities (e.g., reading, formal and informal writing assignments, internet searches, oral histories, and social or creative action projects). For courses which require more formal student assessment, I provide innovative course assignments (e.g., research based reports or projects, group creative projects, individual creative projects, student-led seminars or discussions), which provide students with the flexibility to pursue subjects of interest to them, practice at giving formal presentations as well as giving them experience in critical thinking and problem solving. I prefer the use of take-home, essay-based examinations. Such examinations remove the necessity of rote learning. Instead, students are required to assess and synthesize material, make judgments, state a position, and advance contextually specific arguments. Lastly, I involve myself with department organizations and events and institutional functions in order to model community involvement and participation in the students whether it is personal, academic or social.

I believe that teaching in itself is a learning experience and that a good teacher should strive for excellence by staying current her field, engaging in related research, and attending conferences and workshops. I believe that scholarly inquiry and teaching are interdependent and rely on each other for their mutual development. Teaching, like learning, is a life-long process and I endeavor to be constantly growing and building both subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. Today Photography and New Media is constantly evolving and changing and I find it is essential to remain up to date with appropriate literature, equipment, hardware, software as well as artists working in the media in order to provide students current subject matter for our times. A teacher acts as a facilitator to knowledge and discovery and my ultimate objective is to serve as a guide for my students and to provide them with the tools they need to visually communicate as they prepare for the global community.