

## Teaching Philosophy

I believe that in order to be effective, learning must be active, collaborative and reflexive: that **students learn by doing**. I believe in creating learning experiences that allow students to integrate their own experiences into challenging theoretical frameworks: that **students learn by engaging**. But most importantly, I believe that through personal engagement and a commitment to individual student growth, I can help students grow as independent learners: that **students learn when challenged and supported**.

## Students Learn By Doing.

### Teaching Methodologies, Strategies and Approaches

One of the values that forms the foundation of my teaching philosophy and practice is the belief that **effective learning is active and collaborative**. In order to develop this value within my own teaching practice, I work to combine active learning strategies and new forms of technology in order to motivate students to engage in complex material. To achieve this, I use a variety of teaching and learning strategies and approaches:

- Collaborating with students to brainstorm sample test questions on a real-time online platform.
- Engaging students in online testing games for concept review both during tutorial time and outside of class.
- Polling survey responses during class time to adjust content focus.
- Creating cumulative and practice based assignments that allow students to apply complex theoretical frameworks to their own individual experiences.
- Motivating students to attain the highest standards in their own learning by allowing them to act as class discussions moderators, and encouraging them to develop presentations that prompt collaborative learning.

“Also, thank you for the semester! You did your absolute best in explaining everything we had to do and coming to tutorial was definitely an additive to the course and not a chore!”

- Student email (COMS 201 2016 Fall Semester)

### Evidence of Student Learning and Success

My focus on engaging students through active and collaborative learning approaches is evidenced in my sample tutorial lesson plan (see *Appendix B - Sample Tutorial Lesson Plan*), and in the high level of engagement and

100% of students

responding to COMS 201

Tutorial Surveys (Fall 2014 and Fall 2015) rated me as Excellent (78%) or Very Good (22%).

\* Please See Appendix A for Detailed Comments and Ratings.

demonstrated by students in my tutorial classrooms. Of note, attendance in tutorial classes tends to improve over the course of each term (by 19% from lecture 1 to lecture 12 in 2015 and by 11% in 2016) - a change I attribute to the active and collaborative approach I've implemented. This focus on active and collaborative teaching strategies designed to motivate and inspire students to attain high standards in learning has resonated with students, as indicated in the positive feedback offered in Tutorial Surveys and ratings (see *Appendix A - Full Set of Tutorial Survey Responses Question: Additional Comments*).

## Teaching Improvement Activities

To improve my teaching practice in this area, I have attended eight Taylor Institute sessions on active learning, student engagement and teaching with technology, and have worked hard to implement the information shared in those sessions in the classroom space. The feedback provided by students that I receive throughout the year is also a valuable source of growth and development in my teaching practice: after receiving feedback from a student in 2014 regarding the need for more class discussion, I worked to improve my lesson plans to accommodate for more active learning time, and received 15% more “Excellent” ratings on my Tutorial Surveys in the Fall of 2015.

“Thank you again for your advice today, I will try my hardest to apply it to the exam :) I also just want to thank you for being my TA, I really appreciated your approach on ensuring that we grasped onto the concepts of the different theories we learned this semester. I also definitely looked forward to attending your tutorials!”

*- Student email (COMS 201 2016 Fall Semester)*

## Students Learn by Engaging

### Teaching Methodologies, Strategies and Approaches

My teaching philosophy is further informed by the value I place on **learning that is personal and critical**, and which allows students to **integrate their own experiences into challenging theoretical frameworks**. I believe that by allowing students to reflect upon and reference their own assumptions and beliefs, they will engage

“Giving us time to work with the theories in class really helped. She always let us relate this course to things we care about, and she used examples we brought in to make the course come to life.”

*- Tutorial Survey Response, COMS 201 Fall 2015*

with theoretical material in a deeper and longer lasting manner. By holding learner-centered principles of encouraging student independence and demonstrating passion, empathy and respect at the core of my teaching practice, I challenge learners to practice and develop their critical thinking and independent learning abilities through interaction and feedback (see *Appendix C - Formative Assessment of Student Work*) In order to foster a reflexive and critical approach in the classroom, I employ the following strategies:

- Facilitating class discussions focused on personal reflection and student-generated examples.
- Integrating short-form written and oral individual response assignments directly related to class discussions and theoretical frameworks into tutorial lesson plans.
- Employing examples of contemporary culture provided by the students themselves into analytical and critical group discussions and allowing space for students to identify the issues or examples which interest and motivate them.
- Providing informal and continual assessment of assignments throughout the term to encourage students to engage with the material at a deeper level.
- Integrating self-evaluation for final assignments into class time to allow students to reflect upon their own progress as a learner and to critically assess their work before final grading.

## Evidence of Student Learning and Success

The implementation of strategies designed to engage students in critical thinking and personal involvement in the classroom has had a direct impact on student learning in all of my tutorials. Students have provided email feedback regarding the personal impact that class discussions have had on their learning and have indicated that the use of class discussions and reflexive learning practices have greatly enhanced their own independent development (See *Appendix A - Full Set of Tutorial Survey Responses Question: Additional Comments*).

By using interaction and feedback both inside the classroom and outside of classroom hours to challenge undergraduate students to engage fully with their own critical and independent thought, I have also seen a 15% improvement in student completion of tutorial and take-home assignments (COMS 201 Fall 2014 to COMS 201 Fall 2015).

## Teaching Improvement Activities

My commitment to a reflexive and critical approach extends to my own practice: to improve my teaching I actively seek out training on reflective practice work at the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning and mentorship support focused on teaching/learning practices. I continually workshop my own lesson plans and in-class activities with other teaching assistants in order to take a critical view of my classroom leadership, and I document and review personal reflections on my teaching practice in order to implement improvements for future GA(T) opportunities.

## Students Learn When Challenged and Supported

### Teaching Methodologies, Strategies and Approaches

The third pillar of my teaching philosophy is the value I place on **supporting and challenging students to grow as individuals**. I believe that creating a supportive and open teaching environment means integrating diverse learning contexts into the student experience and that in order for students to practice and develop their critical thinking they must feel personally supported and challenged in their role as an independent learner. For me, this

*“You are the best TA possible ever – thank you for looking out for us so much and doing everything possible to ensure we excel academically and find a passion in coms!”*

*- Tutorial Survey Response, COMS 201 Fall 2014*

begins with my commitment to their growth and individual learning. I design my classroom time to include as much personal feedback to individual work as possible, and I commit to providing both feedback and assessments to students within four working days of assignment completion. Every term, I develop additional unique assignments for students to work through outside class hours in order to contribute to their individual learning, and I schedule extra voluntary office hours and review sessions to work collaboratively with students as they work through these sample review assignments. At the beginning of each term I make a personal commitment to students that I will reply to all email communication within 24 hours, and I often meet with students outside of office hours in order to answer questions or offer support as they tackle difficult theoretical frameworks. In addition, I employ the following teaching and learning strategies to enhance individual student growth through personal engagement:

- I host extra learning sessions outside scheduled tutorials for my students and any other students in the class in order to address diverse learning needs (reaching 72 students in 2013 and 81 students in 2015).
- During the 2016 Fall term, I delivered six optional hour-long learning sessions on research paper guidelines to a total of 104 students (of a total class size of 240).
- I provide exam review sessions featuring sample tests and online games for students from all tutorial sections (reaching nearly 1/3 of all students on a voluntary attendance basis in 2016 alone).

*“AnneMarie was not only a fabulous TA but inspirational to me as a mentor. Her obvious enthusiasm and passion for communications made me want to work harder and find that same degree of excellence in my own work.”*

*- Tutorial Survey Response, COMS 201 Fall 2015*

## Evidence of Student Learning and Success

By emphasizing personal engagement and a commitment to individual student growth through my own teaching practice I believe that I have had a direct impact on learning in my tutorial groups. Students have offered feedback about the value they find in the additional feedback and detailed formative and summative assessments (see *Appendix A - Full Set of Tutorial Survey Responses Question: Additional Comments*). In addition, 94% of students enrolled in my 2016 tutorials for COMS 201 downloaded or directly accessed the additional review assignments and sample tests that I developed for their use. Student work has also demonstrably improved after sample tests and review sessions (see *Appendix C - Sample Formative Assessment of Student Work*).

94% of students in my 2016 Tutorial Groups accessed or downloaded review assignments and sample tests from D2L (COMS Fall 2016).

## Teaching Improvement Activities

I continually seek to improve all aspects of my teaching work, and my commitment to individual student growth through personal engagement is no different. By implementing evaluative measures such as seeking feedback from students through an anonymous survey about tutorial focus at 25%, 50% and 75% of course completion I have been able to adjust my teaching practice accordingly. Most importantly, by integrating formal and informal feedback in the form of mentorship from my supervising professor and student feedback from Tutorial Surveys, I am able to improve my teaching-related practices and better engage students in their development of expertise.

I also serve as the President of my Departmental Graduate Association with a mandate of improving teaching and research training for my fellow graduate students, and as the Student Representative for the Faculty of Arts University of Calgary Graduate Academic Review Committee (GARC). Though this service I seek to continually improve my own teaching-related practice, and to contribute to the community of teaching and learning of which I am fortunate enough to be a part.

### **Teaching Goals and Improvement**

In the final year of my degree program, I am aiming to improve my use of active learning and learner-led principles in the classroom. To that end, I am engaged in further training at the Taylor Institute (Graduate Student Teaching Development Badge Program), and I have enrolled in online courses offered through Concordia University focused on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

For me, teaching at the GAT level is an exciting and challenging opportunity – a joyful experience which has allowed me to grow and develop as an educator and as a member of the University of Calgary’s teaching and learning community. I look forward to continuing the development of my teaching practice, and to working with students in the department of Communication, Media and Film in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "AnneMarie Dorland." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

AnneMarie Dorland  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Department of Communication, Media and Film  
University of Calgary

“Her comments are encouraging and constructive and she is always available to go over things. Very helpful. Thank you for being so enthusiastic. You built us up and engaged us so it was a rewarding and pleasant term and gave space for students to discuss, and added valuable input that takes the discussion a step further and encourages more participation.”

*- Tutorial Survey Response, COMS 201 Fall 2015*