

Nicholas Dertinger
Northern Illinois University

Statement on Teaching

As an instructor with experience teaching at college-level educational institutions, I firmly believe that all students, regardless of their background, deserve equitable opportunities to thrive academically and personally. My teaching philosophy is grounded in the conviction that students possess untapped potential, and my role is to amplify their creative and academic strengths while collaboratively addressing any challenges they face. By fostering resilience and equipping students with the tools to navigate the complexities of higher education, I aim to empower them to achieve success both inside and outside the classroom.

Inclusion is at the heart of my teaching approach. I strive to create an environment where students feel seen, valued, and supported in their academic journey. This means recognizing the diverse ways students learn and leveraging multimodal teaching strategies—such as incorporating auditory, visual, and tactile elements. Through tools like videos, PowerPoint presentations, demonstrations, readings, and collaborative group work, I ensure that my students have the freedom to engage with course material in a way that resonates with their learning preferences. By honoring these modes of learning, students can achieve mastery of content, develop critical thinking skills, and foster a sense of belonging in their peer community. Engagement, to me, goes beyond participation; it involves cultivating a sense of agency in students. By encouraging them to take ownership of their education, they are more likely to see the value in their academic endeavors and feel empowered to tackle real-world challenges. My class approach also helps students understand and achieve learning transfer—the ability to apply knowledge and skills gained in one context to new and varied situations. I believe this approach not only enriches their education but also equips them with the skills needed for lifelong learning.

In teaching literature, I emphasize its power as a lens for engaging with criticism and formulating discourse. Literature provides a rich foundation for students to analyze diverse perspectives, question societal norms, and articulate their own positions. By critically engaging with texts, students learn to navigate complex ideas and develop their analytical skills. I encourage them to explore the interplay between form and content, the historical and cultural contexts of works, and the voices that both shape and challenge dominant narratives. This process not only fosters a deeper appreciation for literature but also equips students with the tools to participate in meaningful discourse. Whether through close readings, comparative analyses, or collaborative discussions, my goal is to help students use literature as a vehicle for critical inquiry and a means to contribute thoughtfully to broader conversations about identity, power, and human experience. This approach underscores the value of literature not just as an academic pursuit but as a dynamic platform for personal and intellectual growth.

As an advocate for inclusive and student-centered learning, I design projects and assignments that promote collaboration, critical inquiry, and real-world application. Group projects, case studies, and assignments that draw from professional and academic contexts help students see how their work transcends the classroom. I incorporate this philosophy by designing

opportunities for students to participate actively in their disciplines where applicable, whether through small-scale research projects, creative problem-solving exercises, or presentations that connect their academic pursuits to professional goals.

Education is a lifelong journey—for both students and educators. I continually seek to refine my pedagogy through professional development and reflection, especially in areas related to inclusion and threshold concepts. Once again, my goal is to cultivate a learning environment where students feel empowered, engaged, and capable of overcoming challenges. By prioritizing inclusion, fostering learning transfer, and designing opportunities for meaningful engagement, I aim to equip my students with the tools they need to thrive academically and beyond. Through these practices, I remain committed to helping every student achieve their fullest potential, becoming active participants in their education and contributors to their respective fields. In doing so, I hope to inspire the same passion for lifelong learning that motivates my own teaching journey.