I feel passionately about education as a tool of personal development and empowerment; thus, my philosophy of teaching is based on helping students personally integrate information that will help enrich their lives. Effective teaching involves creating a safe learning environment, investing in students, facilitating student engagement, and incorporating multicultural perspectives in all courses.

Students function best in environments where they feel safe. For that reason, I believe it is important to create a welcome community of learners within the classroom. By modeling authentic, respectful behavior to students and moderating classroom discussions to ensure inclusion, educators can facilitate trust and mutual respect among students. The degree of safety students feel is largely dictated by the thoughts and actions of their teachers. Educators must therefore invest in their students. Being fully present in the classroom and helping students integrate new information into a usable framework are mandates for ethical instruction. Processing new information can sometimes be difficult for students, as it may require a drastic shift in their schemata. Hence, it is key that instructors be sensitive to the challenges that can accompany students’ intellectual growth and development.

Lectures can efficiently convey much information to students in a limited time but are insufficient for meaningful engagement. Students learn when educators are able to use multiple modalities to introduce material. Having students develop and ask their own questions about the material, using media in the classroom, and promoting independent and group research projects are examples of alternate means of instruction that I have found to increase student engagement. Learning theory suggests that students learn best when they are able to make an emotional connection to material being studied. By selecting and allowing students to help select didactic and dynamic course readings, assignments, and assessments, and facilitating classroom discussions, students are able to experience new material in ways that are deeply personal and meaningful. Exposing students to a diversity of material while highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of it all spurs them to critically examine their previously held beliefs and values and integrate many perspectives into a framework is personal and meaningful.

Helping students find value in multiculturalism is a critical and necessary component of effective teaching. It is vitally important for educators to consider and explain how privilege and power on a global level can affect the issues individuals face. Power dynamics are omnipresent in modern life, and students’ learning is incomplete without understanding the relationships between individuals and systems. Without learning to value others’ perspectives and challenging their own beliefs, students will be under prepared for the diverse society that the country is becoming. Introducing gender-aware and multicultural perspectives into my courses has been effective in facilitating students’ ability to expand their worldview. Whether students embrace these perspectives is not nearly as important as learning that perspectives other than their own can exist in the classroom and beyond it.