**Teaching Philosophy**

As a professor, one of my main goals is to encourage students to think critically and thoughtfully engage with class materials. In my Spectator Sports in American Culture class, I regularly ask students to read, analyze, and interpret historical materials. These range from academic articles and sporting photography to newspaper illustrations, and sports statues. For many students, this class offers a first opportunity to approach American sports from an academic perspective, rather than as an athlete or casual fan. I encourage students to bring their own experiences with sports and American sporting culture into the classroom, and I urge them to use this personal knowledge as the foundation for their understanding of the materials I assign. For their final project in this class, I offer students the opportunity to record a podcast conversation with up to three of their classmates. As part of this assignment, I ask students to select a conflict within contemporary sports, locate scholarly and popular sources, and offer a potential course for reform. In asking students to offer possible solutions to the debates they have chosen, I encourage students to think about the future of American sports as a space where accessibility, inclusivity, and equity can be fostered. In offering this type of final project, students can utilize skills from other disciplines, showcase their creative abilities, and share their thoughts alongside their peers.

Additionally, I aim to create a safe and supportive atmosphere for students to share their thoughts and opinions. As part of creating this environment, during the first class session, I ask students to brainstorm with their peers about what guidelines they want to institute in our class discussions. The answers that come from this conversation generally revolve around respect for one another and the topics, willingness to engage with differing opinions, and the ability to listen. In a class that covers topics such as segregation in early college sports, Title IX and inequality in women’s sports, and the inclusion of transgender athletes, I have always found it generative to have this conversation about boundaries at the start of the semester. In having this conversation, students are reminded that this is also their classroom, and the atmosphere is not solely dictated by me, but it is a reciprocal space where ideas and thoughts can be exchanged.

One of my favorite parts of teaching is advising and getting to know my students. One of the ways that I have been able to create this rapport in my classrooms is to encourage students to relate class content to the current moment or to their lived experiences. In doing this, I encourage students to bring their outside knowledge and expertise, which in turn shapes the educational community inside the walls of our classroom. This is a helpful exercise because I regularly teach students from departments across the university, and this is a good way for each person in the room to feel like they have useful and engaging insight to share. In promoting this comradery, students feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts and engaging with me and one another on a wide variety of topics, regardless of how much they knew about those topics coming into the class. I feel that fostering a community with my students is the best way to get to know them.

I also hold weekly office hours and encourage my students to come by if they have questions or concerns, or if they simply want to chat about projects and ideas. I regularly have students come to my office, and the first thing I ask them is how they are doing. In my own experience, taking that extra moment to chat with a student outside the confines of the class makes it much easier for them to reach out if they are having a hard time or need some extra help. This type of connection has become increasingly important in the years since the pandemic. Many of the students I am teaching in the introductory level classes spent at least two years in fully online educational environments, which has shaped how they engage in the physical classroom. By offering opportunities for in person conversation I have been able to create more meaningful connections with students where I can have discussions with them about class materials, the department and its diverse class offerings, and the broader university. This facet of teaching has been one of the most rewarding parts of my career thus far.