

University of Washington School of Social Work
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Teaching Experience

For nearly 5 years, I have served as an adjunct faculty member at the University of Denver's Graduate School of Social Work and to date have successfully taught 38 MSW courses in mental health and health care policy, research methods, human behavior in the social environment, and field internship seminars to a diverse set of students. My teaching evaluations confirm the effectiveness of my pedagogical practice, students have reported feeling actively engaged, constructively challenged, and supported in their learning. For instance, one student noted that *"[health policy] is a subject matter I previously did not know much if anything about. Now, I feel confident I could join a conversation, or look into a proposed policy with purpose and not confusion. Jessica was very supportive and informative."* Another student stated, *"I took this class only because Jessica was teaching it. Jessica is organized, knows how to prioritize, and does a great job facilitating our sessions.... [S]he is hands-down one of the best teachers in this program."*

Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy is rooted in principles of empowerment, praxis, and a commitment to social justice. As a facilitator of the learning process, I encourage students to embrace a growth mindset by providing an environment that is challenging yet supportive. As a social work educator, my primary goal is to build content knowledge and develop critical thinking skills that prepare students to engage with complex, contemporary social problems. I accomplish this through a pedagogical approach that aims to (1) provide a comprehensive understanding of social work theories, concepts, and frameworks (knowledge), (2) develop critical awareness of existing social structures and inequalities (skills), and (3) encourage students to be agents of social change in our global society (application).

I view learning as an active rather than passive process; one that requires motivation, effort, and persistence. I create active and integrative learning experiences by developing course assignments and sessions that are applicable to students' learning goals and development. In reflecting on my teaching experiences, I have come to realize that each learning community and student is unique. As a result, I am constantly considering innovative ways to engage students, individualize learning, and approach different learning styles. One way I aim to meet students where they're at is by varying my teaching methodology throughout the quarter. This includes facilitating large class discussions, inviting guest speakers, lecturing on important aspects of course readings, assigning short reflective writing activities, preparing partner work, and

offering small group activities. Given the applied nature of social work, these methods provide students with ongoing, low-stake opportunities to reflect, analyze, synthesize, and apply course content. Further, these strategies provide me with opportunities to give tailored feedback in the moment, work through challenging topics, and push students to their learning edge. In evaluations, students have reported “[Jessica] communicates clearly and does an incredible job of pushing us to think about issues from all sides and explore implications, etc.” Another student stated that I am “very engaging and open to tough conversations.”

Assessment of Learning

Because my courses emphasize content *and* process, learning assessments are based upon knowledge acquisition *and* a demonstration of critical analysis skills. As such, assessments are both recurring and ongoing. I use a variety of informal and formal assessment strategies to provide students with opportunities to demonstrate mastery in multiple ways. These assessment tools include non-graded in-class activities, self-evaluations, group projects, presentations, and written assignments. Additionally, employing multiple assessment strategies allows me several opportunities to communicate, clarify and provide evaluative feedback to students in a one-on-one and iterative capacity. This is reflected in course evaluations that state, “The instructor does a great job at supporting my learning! She is very supportive, she provides constructive feedback, and she always encourages students to reach out to her when necessary.” Another student stated, “Jessica’s feedback on assignments was wonderful.”

Creating an Inclusive Environment

I create an inclusive learning environment by drawing upon a social justice pedagogy framework. This includes acknowledging and supporting individualized learning as well as attending to social relations and dimensions of group interactions within the classroom. I emphasize student-centered learning and value reflection, awareness, and personal growth efforts. Further, I am committed to building a learning environment in which several types of knowledge are valued. I encourage students to build upon their lived experiences, personal knowledge, and social identities, and I aim to provide course materials and diverse perspectives that reflect different backgrounds, experiences and contexts. One student noted that “[course] content represented diverse perspectives” and another said, “Jessica established a warm, safe class environment which enabled us as students to be able to talk about [power, privilege, and oppression] (PPO) and how the subject strongly correlates with policy. I never felt that I or other classmates were “wrong.” Jessica would elaborate and help us when we were approaching a topic, but unsure of the language to describe what we wanted to say. She is an excellent instructor.”