

Successful learning in social work should transcend the classroom. As an applied field, the knowledge, practice, and research skills developed in social work classrooms must be action-oriented and contextualized within the overarching goal of promoting justice at multiple societal levels. Successful social work education is rooted in cultivating critical knowledge acquisition aimed toward the construction of a more just society. Critical social work curricula require pairing conceptual knowledge development with practice skills rooted within frameworks that foster students' potential to challenge orthodoxies, propose just alternatives, and advance their application within diverse socioenvironmental contexts. My goal as an instructor in social work is to advance intellectual, ethical, and practical development that inspires the promotion of effective policy makers and practitioners who will lead the development and provision of programs and services that challenge injustice and promote a more humane society.

To achieve this goal, I aim to engage pedagogical practices that foster inclusive learning communities, provide stimulation for diverse learning styles, and engage respectful and challenging knowledge and skill formation through collaborative teaching practices. Efficacious production, refinement, and application of social work learning necessitate the integration of diverse perspectives. Accordingly, in order to effectively contest unjust social structures my students are challenged to better understand extant societal, political, economic, and bureaucratic systems, offered conceptual tools and critical perspectives that support frameworks to place those systems under scrutiny, and are asked to incorporate the theoretical and practice skills they learn into their social work practice environments in order to achieve real-world change.

I have completed multiple teaching courses including course design, critical pedagogical approaches, and instruction for English Language learners (ELLs). Throughout my doctoral studies, I have sole-taught two MSW foundation courses: Poverty and Inequality (Fall 2019 and Winter 2020), and Macro Practice: Organizations and Community Practice (Spring 2020), and TA-ed for courses at the bachelor's (Introduction to Social Work Practice) and MSW (Social Welfare Research & Evaluation and Child Welfare Practice) levels. Prior to beginning my MSW education, I taught English abroad for two years (South Korea 2010-11 and Mexico 2011-12) to ELL students at the middle school and high school levels.

My teaching experience has prepared me to adapt to diverse student learning needs and cultivate vibrant and inclusive learning environments. A recent course evaluation [from an MSW student] noted:

*“The class was structured well. Joel did a power point that gave background on class topics which created powerful class discussions. Joel also encouraged students and was incredibly approachable. Because of this, I participated in class more than I ever have before. The readings were interesting, and each week applied to what we were learning in class. The class got better and better as the class became closer. Joel created that environment and that allowed for students to share which created an awesome class where we could all learn from one another. I also felt comfortable providing feedback which was always acknowledged and addressed. Overall, this created a great leaning environment. Throughout class Joel provided feedback and expectations for what was required of students and adapted class to alleviate student anxieties.”*

My goal is to create a classroom dynamic that meets students where they are and as they are. I rotate various pedagogical formats to foster an environment in which different types of knowledge are affirmed and all students feel their identities and positionalities are heard, respected, and encouraged to participate. Students have noted in evaluations my emphasis on preparing courses in multiple formats that ensure various students learning styles are engaged, as well as my focus on creating open and responsive teacher-student relationships that foster educational success.

*“The varied instruction format from small group projects to large group discussion to lectures helped take in more info and synthesize it.”*

*“I really appreciated Joel’s feedback on assignments and in his responses to my emails/questions. It is clear that Joel really cares about his students and their learning, and I received some of the most thorough and thoughtful feedback from him as compared to all of my other course instructors. When I found myself getting stuck or confused, Joel was super helpful.”*

As these student evaluation comments attest, as an instructor I have gained experience and expertise in fostering inclusive learning communities, adapting to diverse learning styles, and respectfully engaging my students while challenging them to enhance knowledge and skill formation. In this way, I strive to collaboratively equip my students to promote equity in education and develop social work practice skills that will positively contribute to a more just and equitable professional field and society.