

Teaching Statement

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My pedagogical approach as an instructor is to create safe learning environments that are respectful and inclusive, and that facilitate professional growth by helping students identify their strengths and skill-sets to address society's most challenging social problems. This approach has been cultivated with over 20 years of experience delivering evidence-based intervention trainings for behavioral and mental health providers, as well as developing culturally relevant trainings for service providers, informed by community wisdom and promising practices in the fields of HIV/STIs, harm reduction, social justice, and Indigenous approaches to health.

Applying the basic tenets of community-based participatory research and Indigenous ways of knowing is how I ground and teach social work practice as an educator. During both years I sole instructed Historical Trauma and Healing, I restructured the course to have a dual focus on providers' own trauma and healing, as well as centering the traumas and healing of Indigenous people and communities. This grounding allowed students to explore strategies on *how* to create spaces for marginalized voices to be participants in their own healing work and allowed students to explore their *own* healing in relationship to course content (i.e. genocide, colonialism, and white privilege). A student highlighted this approach in their course evaluation this past year, **"...it was holistically stretching and stimulating. So often academics compartmentalize the human person and ask you to engage only cognitively; the way this class was structured and taught, it asked us to engage with our whole selves and was challenging intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. I wish more classes were as holistic as this one was, especially since in social work so much of our tools are relationship, presence, and community"** (Student 14).

Moreover, I believe a core component of teaching social work practice and research methods is to emphasize the importance of what Tervalon and Murray-Garcia (1998) refer to as, cultural humility. Educating students on the tenants of cultural humility illustrate how to redress power imbalances in the client/provider relationship and sets the stage for building and fostering meaningful relationships with marginalized individuals and communities. One effective way for me to educate on how to work from this perspective is to role model it through every interaction while teaching. Another student highlighted this approach in their course evaluation this past year,

“Matt has a way of inviting students in, of giving us the space and grace to explore and learn by modeling authenticity and what it means to be in community. His grace and the amount of time and planning he put into the course made it so powerful. The way he curated the course with a unique balance of guest speakers, discussion, small group, individual work, and even field trips (!) was so appreciated” (Student 06).

Additionally, while teaching I employ a range of methods to meet the needs of students with different styles of learning. I believe it is important to incorporate self-reflection, group discussions, and small group work activities to facilitate students’ comprehension of course content. Furthermore, given my experience as a direct service provider, I share a variety of case examples and past mistakes I have made to use as teachable moments. Another student described the use of these various methods in their course evaluation from this past year, **“The readings, guest speakers, teacher's facilitation of the material and class time, reflections, and assigned projects. Matt's ability to engage the class and provide a meaningful space for students was really astounding”** (Student 13).

In sum, my pedagogical approach stems from professional experiences spanning over two decades, informed by theory and research. I actively role model how to build safe learning spaces for the exchange of ideas in a respectful manner. I incorporate the cultural teachings I have received as an Indigenous person and rely on a variety of methods to instruct both social work practice and research courses. More recently, I have begun building a teaching career that underscores the provider’s healing and wellness in relationship to the healing and wellness of the client. I look forward to continuing to build and grow my teaching career as an Indigenous social work professor.