Teaching Philosophy and Experience   Asia Bishop

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"Asia's ability to explain course content to a group of students with a wide range of learning styles and at varying levels of understanding was very impressive. She also presented information in an approachable manner which was important to me as a learner because the course was extremely intimidating to me."

My teaching philosophy is guided by principles of learning science (Ambrose et al., 2010), student-centered practice (Weimer, 2002), and integrated course design (Fink, 2013). Integrated course design requires that teaching and learning objectives, activities, and evaluation approaches reflect and support each other within the situational context of the course. When designing syllabi, I ensure the learning objectives drive all aspects of curriculum development. I regularly incorporate student feedback and tailor my courses to fit diverse and evolving student needs. Over several years, I have refined and adapted my research methods syllabus to varying levels (BA, MSW), learning styles (visual, verbal) and formats (in-person, online). In my experience, research methods courses are routinely met with uncertainty and angst by social work students, creating a unique and challenging teaching and learning context. Yet, my strong teaching evaluations suggest students leave my class with new skills, a renewed interest, and a clearer understanding of the importance of research for practice. My syllabus for this class has been used by several colleagues and I was nominated for a student's choice teaching award in 2018.

I completed two training courses, including a teaching practicum in an MSW policy practice course. In 2019-2020, I was sole instructor for a year-long seminar and applied skills course for students conducting primary data research projects. I have been the sole instructor for research methods courses and statistics labs at the BA and MSW levels; I have TA-ed for BA courses (e.g., Evidence-Based Practices in Social Welfare); and I have mentored across levels, served as the instructor of record for independent studies as well as serving on thesis committees.

Learning Goal 1: Become Self-Directed Learners

"This class was absolutely amazing. I am thinking about research in ways that I would never have thought of it before, and it is showing up in so many areas of my life. I felt excited to learn every day and truly felt that I was learning more daily."

I aim to help students become self-directed learners through metacognition. Learning science shows that students are most successful when they build metacognitive skills including learning how to reflect, self-monitor, evaluate, and adjust their approaches. I apply these principles by incorporating journaling, where I encourage students to reflect on their learning, apply concepts, and assess whether they have the knowledge and skills needed to complete upcoming assignments. For more complex tasks (e.g., writing, analysis), I model my own metacognitive processes and provide students with different strategies and questions to ask themselves as they approach similar tasks. In evaluations, students have stated that this approach, combined with genuine concern for their well-being and success, contributes to meaningful learning.

Learning Goal 2: Apply Skills to Diverse Contexts

"Engaging in a real research project was the best way for me to learn effective research methods."

Learning science suggests that acquiring and integrating new knowledge and skills is only useful if students are able to apply what they learn beyond the classroom. I intentionally design learning activities to align with the practical skills students need to be effective social workers. In my research methods class students are given real-world examples of research needs posed by social service agencies and asked to design cost-efficient program evaluations. When learning analysis strategies, students identify and apply techniques to answer practice-driven questions using data from their field placements. Students also design and conduct their own research projects, which are later presented in different forums (symposiums, advisory councils, community agencies). In addition to an academic paper, students create dissemination tools written in plain language to facilitate knowledge sharing and research-to-practice translation. Actively applying skills facilitates transferability beyond the classroom.

Learning Goal 3: Enact Social Justice Values and Practices
"It was useful to be able to describe the problems with academic research and how possible social justice frameworks could apply to make it better."

I integrate social justice principles and practices in course content, activities, and engagement processes. Grounded in the belief that research is never neutral, students in my research methods course write reflexivity statements regardless of their methodological approach. I prioritize different types of knowledge and incorporate readings using diverse frameworks and approaches. I provide opportunities to explore issues of power, oppression, and identity in students' own and others' research. I model my own critical reflexive practice in the classroom to demonstrate how positionality influences our frameworks and actions. Combined with opportunities for reflection and discussion, I engage students to actively participate in their own identity development as social workers and change agents.

I regularly elicit student feedback and recommendations about their learning goals and adjust the course content and activities to reflect these needs. By creating a student-centered learning environment, I engage as a co-learner and encourage students to take ownership of their learning through the practice of power sharing. One student's desire to utilize research methods that more accurately honored her lived experiences became an opportunity for me to learn a new method (autoethnography) and new ways to support student learning around issues of social justice. This experience also created an opportunity for the class to engage in a critical dialogue around how research can be used as both a tool for oppression and liberation.

In sum, my pedagogical approach and the learning goals I prioritize integrate principles of learning science, student-centered practice, and are deeply connected to social work values and principles of social justice. The content, activities, and learning environment I create reflect these frameworks. First, I encourage students to take ownership of their learning and to be self-directed. Second, I provide opportunities to apply skills that promote transferability across contexts. Third, I facilitate identity development through critical thinking, self-reflection and dialogue. In doing so, I aim to provide students with the tools they need to be successful practitioners in the field. Moving forward, I aim to teach and mentor across levels and content areas. I plan to teach research methods and community integrative and policy practice courses, as well as substantive courses drawing on my areas of expertise and interest. These include human behavior and environment, poverty and inequality, health inequities, youth service systems, and social welfare history.