

Kristin LaFollette

Teaching Philosophy

My background is in creative writing and rhetoric, and these parts of my identity intersect in both my scholarship and teaching. Much of my work examines arts-based research, explores the intersections of art and writing, and advocates for creative-critical approaches to scholarship and teaching. Leavy writes that “recent research in neuroscience...indicates that art may have unmatched potential to promote deep engagement, make lasting impressions, and therefore possesses unlimited potential to educate” (3). As such, I consistently encourage my students to be curious, exercise creativity, and utilize arts-based approaches in the classroom (like collaging or writing poetry) as I want to foster an environment of investigation, innovation, and “thinking outside the box.”

Students come to my classes with different identities and backgrounds, and these life experiences contribute to who they are as writers. In Alexander and Rhodes’ *Techne: Queer Meditations on Writing the Self*, they discuss the concept of the “rhizome.” They compare identity to a rhizome (following Deleuze and Guattari’s concept) where each individual’s identity is an intricate, entangled map of knowledge and experiences. The rhizome illustrates how complex identity is and shows that every person has intersecting strands that represent the individual experiences and perspectives that come together to create who they are. Because of the complexity of identity, it’s unrealistic to consider that there could be one superior composing form or that every audience could have a message communicated to them in the same way. Because of this, I advocate for a queered approach to pedagogy that creates space for new ways of thinking and communicating and breaks down over-simplified dichotomies and outdated traditions.

A way I enact this queer approach is to give students the opportunity to compose using multiple modalities and tools. Sometimes these tools are digital (like with audio, video, or online tools like Piktochart or VoiceThread) and sometimes they are non-digital (like with collaging, drawing, or painting). Selfe notes that “by broadening the choice of composing modalities...we expand the field of play for students with different learning styles and differing ways of reflecting on the world; we provide the opportunity for them to study, think critically about, and work with new communicative modes” (644). In giving students the opportunity to utilize composing forms outside of the alphabetic, they learn to communicate their points more clearly, understand the process of composing more fully, and make in-depth rhetorical decisions about what goes into their projects.

In addition to my queer approach to teaching, I also take a feminist approach. I strive to break down the teacher-student hierarchy and invest in each of my students as people, learners, teachers, and scholars whose voices deserve to be heard. I desire to engage in mutual learning and meaning-making with my students, and this often comes through facilitating an active learning space where students frequently collaborate with each other and myself. In addition, “flipping” the classroom and giving students a platform to teach and share their knowledges is another way I give them agency and the opportunity to take ownership of the course and their learning. Through this, I also am able to create clear moments where I learn from them and have moments to fully engage with their thoughts, ideas, and how they are learning, experiencing, and

perceiving the course. Through this teacher-learner approach, I am always gaining new knowledge and reflecting on my practices as an instructor. As a result, I consistently return to my teaching philosophy to reexamine and reimagine it.

Works Cited

Leavy, Patricia. "Introduction to Arts-Based Research." *Handbook of Arts-Based Research*, edited by Patricia Leavy, Guilford Press, 2017, pp. 3-21.

Rhodes, Jacqueline, and Jonathan Alexander. *Techne: Queer Meditations on Writing the Self*. Computers and Composition Digital Press/Utah State University Press, 2015.

Selfe, Cynthia L. "The Movement of Air, the Breath of Meaning: Aurality and Multimodal Composing." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 60, no. 4, 2009, pp. 616-663.