Lynne C Manzo, PhD

Teaching Philosophy

As a first generation college student, I initially viewed my professors with awe. But as I continued my education, those whom I came to admire most, and later sought to emulate, were those who did not treat the classroom as we had come to expect it (the “sage on the stage” approach), but who advocated for active engagement and critical reflexivity, and who appreciated students as whole persons. Recognizing the dignity in every student, helping them find their inspiration and their voice, and actively engaging them as co-learners is at the core of my teaching philosophy. These values have instilled in me a deep and enduring commitment to the growth of my students, and a dedication to teaching in ways that help us hold one another up, and solve complex problems together.

My teaching approach is also grounded in a deep commitment to social justice and equity. I see education as a way to achieve these goals. Our current context of deepening social and environmental problems demands that we renew our commitment to one another, and to work together toward positive change. Our Vice President of the Office of Minority Affairs & Diversity, Ricky Hall, recently reminded us of the continued relevance of Dr. King’s “fierce urgency of now” and our collective goal of “helping each other become more principled, ethical human beings.” This, to me, is the essence of good teaching.

Addressing complex problems together also requires engaging multiple, diverse perspectives. As an environmental psychologist in a landscape architecture department, with an adjunct position in social work, I live transdisciplinarity and believe it is the way forward. I chose to teach in a design department to bring my perspective as a social scientist to bear on emerging design work, to advocate for socially responsive and responsible design, to help students appreciate the role of place in justice, and to think about design as an agent of social and environmental change. This is evident in the courses I teach, such as the Human Experience of Place, the Politics of Public Space, the City and Social Justice, and Cultural Landscape Studios. In many of these classes, we engage non-profit organizations such as El Centro do la Raza and Wa Na Wari, to various community groups from Latinx farmworkers in the Yakima Valley, to alternative high school students to envision and pursue a more sustainable future collaboratively.

I’ve devoted most of my adult life to teaching – at different levels and in different institutions. Here, at the UW, I continually seek to deepen my pedagogy through critical reflexivity, engaging students and colleagues around campus, exploring new strategies with the Center for Teaching and learning, and always finding wisdom in my students, my best teachers.