

On Teaching and Learning

I conceive of teaching and learning as guiding and discovering. From this perspective, teachers are guides, using their knowledge and lesson plans as a map to motivate and guide learners in a generative process of discovery. In this guide and discover process the teacher, as guide, does not act as an authoritarian source of knowledge to be disseminated. Rather, a teacher's knowledge is used as a tool for guiding and motivating learners to discover, giving learners the opportunity to practice critical thinking and self-guided discovery. Through this active learning process, I aim to guide learners to an appreciation of existing knowledge, while encouraging them to generate insights of their own. Often to aid this discovery process it is essential that the teacher disseminate the current state of knowledge, bringing learners up to speed and earning their trust. The key to generative learning, however, is that in order to motivate and empower students to take control of their learning, the teacher must maintain a balance between the roles of authoritative guide and open listener, presenting information as the launch pad for questioning and discovery.

In addition, although semantic knowledge is a crucial target of learning, I believe that the learning process is enhanced when teachers engage students, investing in their motivation and attention. Guided by the Self-Determination Theory of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985), in my teaching I am to engage students by supporting the three pillars of motivation: (1) *autonomy*—through active learning opportunities where students can practice self-guided learning (e.g., an assignment to record a podcast interview with an expert), (2) *relatedness*—building a safe, team-like environment for learning by modeling supportive dialogue, and (3) *competence*—targeting material to students' zone of proximal development (through attainable learning objectives given baseline knowledge) and encouraging students to draw real-world connections (e.g., through the use of anticipatory sets and active discussion).

On Lesson Dynamics

My approach to lesson planning is grounded in an appreciation for diversity, context, and dynamics in the learning environment, such as classroom culture, students' backgrounds and interests, course content, method of instruction, and even time of day. My goal is to take these factors into account through careful course planning, lesson planning, and classroom management. I aim to develop a positive classroom culture early in a course through classroom and small group discussions, clear expectations for how students will be asked to demonstrate learning, encouraging students to attend open office hours, being available after class, and occasionally ending class early to give students an easy opportunity for one-on-one interaction.

Within a lesson I employ a variety of tools to guide discovery, with a special focus on procedural learning, such as engagement with course content (classroom discussions, case studies, and problem solving) and public engagement (service learning, co-creation of knowledge between students and the community, and co-operative educational experiences). To encourage discussion I provide brief "reflection and connection" opportunities, giving students time for consolidation and recovery through content-relevant news stories, video clips, reflective writing or brainstorming, or small group discussions. In addition to helping students make connections and initiating class discussion, these moments of learner engagement provide insight on students' interests (e.g., reflections read in class can be referred back to in later lessons to remind students of previous concepts in a frame that they themselves generated).