

Teaching Statement

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In a 2011 *New Yorker* piece, Louis Menand asked a critical question about higher education in the United States: is it a great sorting tool for intellectual capacity and pedigree, or is it a transformative experience that can better all members of society? I agree with Menand that the latter theory is the one we should be pursuing - and it also needs to be one that is grounded in the lives we expect our students to have. The liberal arts education speaks most directly to this in that it creates critical self-learners and not just technically proficient graduates. My teaching supports an education that is premised on the growth of the individual as a person, as a member of their community, and as a part of society.

This starting point influences my teaching ideals: while there is foundational knowledge that is important to start with, we must develop a critical understanding of how this knowledge came to be, how it fits in society, and how it can serve our communities. Thus learning should be about helping students craft questions, critically understand how these can be explored with multiple methods, and to understand that what we learn is often contingent on other factors, and how to see and experience the world around them in a way to empathize and understand other views and histories.

My approach to teaching is influenced by my own education in the liberal arts tradition. I ask students to explore a diverse set of concepts, and understand the need to ground them in theoretical framings. I utilize a seminar based approach with a focus on developing students' ability to read critically, craft questions, and evaluate claims in a collaborative setting. As needed, I include technical skill based lessons in my courses, which requires a shift to lectures and workshops. Technical skills impact the success of students after they leave the classroom, and I work to share tools and methods that translate into skills for career development for both early and mid-career professionals. As a former professional planner, I appreciate the need for courses or workshops to translate into skills that provide benefits in tackling problems.

Throughout my courses, I give students a chance to put their work at risk. Putting work at risk means asking students to engage ideas and data to make claims or arguments that might fail. I program this into courses at various points in the term so there are opportunities to learn from risk taking and to allow for feedback on both analysis and writing. This approach allows for students to test out their skills and receive positive feedback for improvement. This is an approach that requires some flexibility as instructor as each classroom starts out the term with a different baseline set of skills and interests.

I have taught in two programs at Portland State University, with very different student populations. My first teaching engagements was in the Urban Honors College. I redesigned and taught the social science survey course and developed a senior seminar. The survey course introduced students to a broad set of social theory and methods, and required them to conduct field work exercises to test out the concepts. For example, as an introduction to mapping and community development, students conducted "urban transects" where students geolocated images along a path through the city. We then visualized these on

webmaps to make sense of observations. The senior seminar I developed examined the intersection of science and technology studies and political theory. As an instructor in the Honors College I advised students on their senior theses, providing one-on-one mentoring. For the Toulan School of Planning I developed and taught a graduate level community resilience planning course based on a sociology of disasters that introduced both resilience theory and hazard planning approaches. This course was a seminar based course where students were asked to develop community hazard plans as a term long practical exercise.

I have taught a diverse community of undergraduate and graduate students including students who are first generation college students, veterans returning to school after service, and communities of color. I have worked with my department through professional connections to tribal agencies and social service non-profits to recruit underrepresented minority students. I have mentored students to assist them as they are making sense of a new discipline or a new set of expectations in the University setting. As a doctoral student I have mentored other students on research design, navigating IRB processes, and grant writing and management.

In addition to traditional classroom teaching, I also design and deliver professional training programs in the Pacific Northwest. I am a course developer and instructor for the National Disaster Preparedness Training Center (NDPTC) based at the University of Hawai'i. These courses are delivered to emergency managers, local planners, and the concerned public on a variety of issues. I recently re-designed NDPTC's Coastal Community Resilience eight-hour workshop into a new broader resilience workshop applicable to more communities. This course is under review for FEMA certification. I have also developed policy and leadership programs for federal agencies in the region. I just completed the design of a new year-long series of workshops for the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA-Fisheries) targeted at their mid-level employees. These workshops provide participants an introduction to policy process, organizational theory, individual leadership, and the culture and history of the agency. These professional training programs have been developed in co-production with agencies and are designed to build the key skills staff need to navigate challenging policy and decision environments.

I also serve on a cross-campus committee for the Dean of the College of Urban and Public Affairs to develop a new cross-campus interdisciplinary certificate and Master of Emergency Management and Community Resilience program. Looking forward, my teaching goals include the development of a course around the spatial elements of resilience. This course will build on resilience teaching and expand to provide a robust introduction to geography and applied demographic analysis. The course will introduce students to spatial analysis in a variety of tools, including distributed webmapping applications, ArcGIS, and the R statistical language. I also look forward to developing an introductory geospatial course for public policy or environmental planning programs.