

I do not view the classroom as a neutral space, and I do not enter it as a neutral person. Much of my approach to teaching is shaped by questions of how to build a stronger sense of belonging, increase visibility for those who often find themselves on the margins, and create a space where students feel empowered to critically question what gets taken for granted and to engage thoughtfully with difference in academic settings. As a communication scholar, I understand the classroom as a space where meaning, power, and identity are constantly being negotiated through dialogue. Much of my research centers gender, sexuality, and religion, which shapes how I think about knowledge production in organizations and the ways that marginalized voices are recognized or silenced in institutional spaces. I often find it difficult to name any single identity as the most important to my teaching philosophy, as my perspective is shaped by many experiences across personal and academic contexts. Cultivating equitable classrooms is not only about course content but about creating environments where students do not feel pressured to hide parts of themselves in order to feel like they belong in the classroom.

One of my experiences that has most shaped my approach to teaching is my identity as a sibling to a disabled brother. Growing up with my brother taught me a great deal about belonging, difference, and how educational systems often fail to recognize the many ways people are intelligent. My brother struggled in school because his strengths did not always align with what schools typically value. My experiences with my brother continue to shape how I think about students, learning, and assessment, and he reminds me that intelligence cannot be reduced to a single metric. He has taught me to be more attentive to how students show up in the classroom with diverse needs, strengths, and ways of knowing that may not always be visible through traditional academic practices. For example, I write lesson plans that draw on multiple modes of engagement like discussion, writing, play, and arts-based activities. One lesson that I have utilized in the classroom is having students collaborate with one another to draw their own communication models with characters and storylines of their choosing. I also incorporate board games and team activities, such as Story Cubes and having students build structures with spaghetti and marshmallows, into my lessons to help engage hands-on learners. Together, these approaches create opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding in ways that extend beyond traditional academic tasks.

For me, Critical Dialogic Pedagogy means that students' lived experiences matter and that learning happens through relationships, dialogue, and shared meaning-making. My view of classroom dialogue is informed by my own experiences as a quiet student who often wanted to participate but felt anxious about speaking in class. Because of this, I try to make dialogue feel low stakes and accessible, and I think about participation as something that can take many forms, not just speaking out loud. For this reason, I often incorporate written responses in addition to verbal questions asked in class so that those who have great ideas but are afraid to verbalize them can still showcase their mastery of course materials. My lived experiences inside and outside of academia inform my commitment to dialogue as a way of creating more inclusive and relational learning environments. As an educator, I aim to support students in cultivating not only academic knowledge but also confidence and critical thinking. My experiences shape my approach to teaching that treats difference as central to learning rather than something to be managed.