

TEACHING PORTFOLIO

Yolanda Anyon

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SUMMARY OF TEACHING BACKGROUND

I have refined my teaching practice over the last fourteen years with youth, adults, and working professionals from diverse backgrounds. Prior to graduate school, I facilitated leadership programs and taught service learning courses at urban high schools serving low-income students of color, later publishing curriculum guides related to this work. As a research assistant on public health and social welfare projects, I led meetings and trainings for healthcare professionals, teachers, therapists, and child protective service workers. My experience in higher education has taken place in California's public university system, where my students reflected a wide continuum of cultural backgrounds, educational preparation, and interests.

At the undergraduate level, I designed and taught a course on positive youth development and served as a teaching assistant for an introductory policy class at UC Berkeley. There, my students were predominantly members of underrepresented groups or participants in international exchange programs. At San Francisco State, I was the lead instructor for a course on professional practice with youth that included many transfer students from community colleges, most of whom were working full time or caring for children while enrolled in school. I led graduate level courses in social welfare policy at San Jose State University, where a sizeable number of my students were non-native speakers of English. I also served as a teaching assistant for a masters-level research methods class at UC Berkeley, for which I received a course improvement grant to enhance students' understanding of the connection between research and practice. I am qualified to teach many foundation courses the BSW and MSW levels, but would be especially excited to teach human behavior in the social environment (macro), advanced macro practice, social policy in FCY services, and practice in multicultural contexts.

I find it incredibly fulfilling to support students in their efforts to realize their academic and career goals. I have advised undergraduate, masters, and doctoral students about their course selection, employment opportunities, graduate school or fellowship applications, and overall professional development. I have written countless letters of recommendation and enjoy networking on behalf of my students. I have provided guidance and mentoring to master's and undergraduate students working on research projects, from the beginning stages of proposal development to the final analysis and write up. Finally, I have experience collaborating with students on research projects and presenting this work to practitioner and scholarly audiences. My ability to engage, support and mentor a diverse student body is evident in my teaching evaluations, which have been excellent and consistently above departmental averages (summarized below).

My diverse experiences with multiple forms of instruction and learning, across a range of ages, levels of preparation, and settings have prepared me well to be an Assistant Professor at University of Denver. Still, I am always humbled by the challenges and opportunities brought by a new group of students. The task of building a socially responsible learning community within (and outside) a classroom, lecture hall or department is never easy, but it is one that I look forward to and am eager to begin.

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STATEMENT OF TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Engaging students in learning. Across all the courses I teach, my goals as an instructor are to facilitate learning, foster critical thinking, and improve communication skills. To achieve these aims, I use active learning techniques that require students to engage with course materials through a reflexive and dialectical process. My pedagogy is informed by social constructivist theories of education and neuroscience research on cognition. Both demonstrate that learning is maximized when students construct meaning through dialogue with the instructor and then apply new concepts to solve problems. In practice, I have found that the task of creating such a student-centered classroom requires a significant outlay of time and creativity. Yet I believe it is well worth the investment. Social work programs are an important venue for translating research for practice by training future professionals in evidence-based approaches that can improve outcomes for vulnerable populations. This view of education as a mechanism for creating social change underlies my commitment to teaching excellence.

Over the last fourteen years, I have developed a portfolio of successful teaching methods with students of diverse backgrounds in a variety of interdisciplinary courses. On the first day of class, I provide an overview of my teaching approach, stress that my classroom is a learning community, establish group agreements for participating and giving feedback, and emphasize that mistakes are an important part of experimentation and discovery. In subsequent class sessions, I have students submit open-ended critical questions addressing major themes from the assigned readings. I use these questions to frame my lectures, as prompts for written reflections, and to start discussions. This process has been an effective means for tailoring my course materials to each cohort's unique interests and concerns, motivating students to read assigned texts, and encouraging them to think analytically about the ideas presented.

To help students develop the interpersonal and cross-cultural communication skills needed to succeed professionally, I often ask them to apply concepts in structured dyad or small group activities using vignettes, hypothetical scenarios, or current events. I incorporate a range of other strategies to promote student engagement and learning, including multimedia presentations, role plays, and brief writing assignments that prompt students to ground theory in their life experiences. Given the controversial nature of many issues central to social work – racism, poverty, sexuality, and spirituality – I encourage the expression of multiple perspectives in my classroom, anticipate conflict, and use disagreements as openings for students to extend their knowledge and develop stronger communication skills. For example, when a discussion of race-conscious legislation became hostile in one of my social welfare policy courses, I assigned additional readings on the topic, then held a formal debate in which students represented a position that was not their own. Students reported that this exercise revealed the complexity of these policies, the value of civility in political discourse, and the utility of active listening in fostering shared understanding.

Likewise, my approach to student assessment reflects a focus on engagement, critical thinking and application of course content to tasks students will likely encounter in the field. In my class on youth development, students worked in groups to write case studies of local programs, describing how their designs reflected evidence-based practices in creating positive developmental settings. Students then created final products for their agency, depending on their personal interests and professional goals, such as a grant proposal, research paper, curriculum unit, case presentation or policy analysis. All of my assignments require students to support their claims with evidence, cite their sources, and use high quality references. Students must also submit drafts and updates of their

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work to their peers and me so that they can receive feedback and guidance before turning in final projects. This has been a useful strategy for improving students' writing and scientific mindedness.

Supporting student research. I am also committed to providing my students with opportunities to further their understanding of research as they directly serve the community. My vision for teaching and learning through research connected to practice is based in large part on my experience as the West Oakland community partnership manager for Stanford University through the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities. In this role, I facilitated action research projects that met local needs while simultaneously enhancing the intellectual capital of students and faculty. I supervised masters and undergraduate students conducting their honors or thesis research, guided them towards topics of relevance to the local community and then supported their translation of research findings for practice audiences. To ensure the financial sustainability of these activities, I raised nearly a half million dollars in grants and coordinated an invaluable number of in-kind services and donations. I understand how difficult and rewarding it can be to realize the goals of civic engagement, intellectual development, and meaningful social change through higher education. In an article I co-authored and published in *The Journal of Youth Development*, I outline the lessons I learned from this experience. They include the need to directly address community members' perceptions of university partners, translate academic theories into applied strategies, and provide human capital and financial resources in support of both research and direct practice. I am thus well prepared to support UD students in conducting community engaged research for their thesis or dissertation projects.

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SUMMARY OF STUDENTS' EVALUATIONS

Across student populations, course topics, and class sizes, students consistently rate the quality of my teaching highly. I am particularly proud of my strong evaluations in required courses like research and policy, because many students often find it difficult to engage with this content. Below are the overall mean scores for all the courses I have taught, with additional details about the scale, my role, and the course context.

Course	Overall Effectiveness	Department Average	Role	University	Term	Students	Class Size
<i>SW 116:</i> Positive Youth Development	6.28/7	6.01	Instructor (Self-designed Course)	UC Berkeley	Summer 2011	Undergraduates (Mixed majors and years. Sizeable number of international students)	38
<i>CAD 600:</i> Professional Practice with Children & Families (Senior capstone course)	4.73/5* *Reverse coded	4.56*	Instructor	San Francisco State University	Spring 2011	Undergraduates (Predominantly nontraditional students who transferred from community college)	23
<i>SW 202:</i> Social Welfare Policy & Services (Section 1)	5/5	4.2	Instructor	San Jose State University	Fall 2008	First year MSWs (Part-time & Full-time)	25
<i>SW 202:</i> Social Welfare Policy & Services (Section 2)	4.9/5	4.2	Instructor	San Jose State University	Fall 2008	First year MSWs (Part-time & Full-time)	25
<i>SW 280:</i> Intro to Social Welfare Research	6.23/7	Not available	Teaching Assistant	UC Berkeley	Spring 2009	Second year MSWs (Full-time)	34
<i>SW 112:</i> Social Welfare Policy	6.67/7	Not available	Teaching Assistant	UC Berkeley	Summer 2008	Undergraduates (Primarily students who transferred from community college)	24

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Below are select quotes from student evaluations and correspondence that demonstrate my teaching skills across a range of dimensions. I am especially pleased that students of color and nontraditional students have recognized my efforts to provide them with the opportunities, support, and encouragement they need to succeed.

Scholarly knowledge and command of the subject matter:

“She is very knowledgeable about the subject and empowered the class to learn together and from each other.” (SW 202)

“Incredibly knowledgeable about course material. Friendly and accessible manner. Strong organization and structure of class.” (SW 116)

Demonstrated relevance of course content:

“She was extremely knowledgeable and helpful. My experience has been negative in other policy courses and she totally changed my view of policy. Now I feel that I can go about on my own and get more involved. She transmitted her enthusiasm to me that was powerful.... thanks for making me feel part of a topic I never felt represented of. You have encouraged me to get more involved and interested in policy because I learned that it can be fun.” (SW 202)

“This is one of the best courses I’ve so far taken at UCB because I learned so many things I can use when I become a professional in the future.” (Email from first generation college student, SW 116)

Responsiveness to questions and comments from students:

“She was very approachable, always prepared, always had a counterargument for ideas expressed in class to make us think. She created a safe space in class and if she didn’t know the answer to a question would always find it and either email it or discuss it in class. She also had very creative group activities that made the class a lot more interactive and fun, especially for a potentially boring subject.” (SW 202)

“Thank you for renewing my faith in higher education. You are one of only a few professors I had at State who walked their talk... We all appreciated how you took our suggestions and applied them... Know that you have had a positive influence on your students.” (Email from nontraditional student, CAD 600)

“She makes the class interactive and is very open to viewpoints.” (SW 202)

Student learning and engagement:

“This teacher is very impressive. She is extremely organized. She had multiple group activities to enhance learning that were extremely creative. She did an excellent job of engaging the students in discussion. She was great at making sure that everyone could share and no one person dominated discussions.” (SW 202)

“Used different learning techniques and relevant topics to discuss in class. She taught me to look at all perspectives critically and apply what we learned to my work.” (CAD 600)

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“She made learning research very understandable and actually at times fun. She was easily available outside of class with any questions and has a very down to earth demeanor and approach that is very helpful.” (SW 280)

Accessibility:

“Your individual attention given to students is such an asset for this class. I am grateful for how available you were to answer and clarify class terms and assignments. It is so refreshing to see someone so dedicated to students’ learning and their potential.” (SW 280)

“Thanks again for all of the wonderful talks that we had together. You are such an amazing person and the best professor I’ve met at Cal! Thanks again for enriching my experience.” (Email from first generation college student, SW 116)

“I will never forget how you told me, ‘You can do it. I’ll help you.’ They were the two magic sentences that I heard from you when I was about to give up... Moreover, you have followed those words with actions... Your dedication has added more to my desire to help others, and you have become my mentor and model.” (Card from first generation, English as a second language student, CAD 600)

Interest and enthusiasm:

“She has an incredible passion for teaching and it shines through to her students. She is knowledgeable in social work policy, very approachable, and provides valuable feedback to students.” (SW 202)

Feedback on student work:

“Yoli’s specific, practical feedback on my proposal was really helpful. Our discussions helped me think more clearly about my design.” (SW 280)

“She provided really helpful and thorough feedback on all of our assignments. This really benefitted my learning.” (CAD 600)

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PEER EVALUATIONS OF CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

Department: Social Work, San Jose State University
Course: Social Welfare Policy: History and Values
Visitation date and time: 11/20/08, 10:45-11:45 AM
Evaluator: Dr. Amy D'Andrade, Assistant Professor

This evaluation was based on one hour of observation and a total of one visit. The class was visited on 11/20/08.

Was the instructor informed of the observation date in advance? Yes **No**

Items of the course material reviewed:

<u>Course Syllabus</u>	<u>Rating</u>
* Clearly stated objectives	<u>Yes</u> / No
* Described organization of the course	<u>Yes</u> / No
* Explained how grades are determined	<u>Yes</u> / No
* Office hours clearly listed	<u>Yes</u> / No
* Weekly outline of topics	<u>Yes</u> / No
* Assignments clarified	<u>Yes</u> / No

Comment on the syllabus:

The syllabus was thorough and clear. Readings appeared to support class content well, while emphasizing the diversity of experiences related to American social policy.

1. Describe the instructor's knowledge of the subject as evidenced in the topic covered, learning objectives and instructor's performance. To what extent was class content related to the objectives?

The content of the class session was current issues and debates related to health and nutrition programs. The instructor's knowledge of the subject was considerable; she was able to draw upon a knowledge base beyond the text to provide additional examples of concepts covered in the class, and spoke with clarity and confidence. The first half of the class (which reviewer did not attend) consisted of student presentations. In the second half of class, the instructor provided a brief presentation of several relevant and fundamental policy debates, and facilitated a classroom exercise and discussion related to these issues. This content was directly related to the objectives of the course.

2. Describe the methodology used and evaluate its effectiveness toward accomplishing course objectives.

The instructor began the class by presenting several core policy debates, using a PowerPoint slide to summarize the main points, and emphasizing the continuum of belief regarding the

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importance of rights vs. responsibilities in policy choices. In the exercise that followed, the instructor had the students place themselves physically in the room along a continuum of belief in regards to the relative importance of rights vs. responsibilities in policy choices. When the students were in place, the instructor initiated a dialogue by asking students to explain why they stood where they did along that continuum. The exercise was repeated with increasingly nuanced policy choices, by introducing a specific policy arena (food/nutrition), and then increasing the perceived value of the benefit (food for sustenance, then healthy food), and repeating the questioning. At end of exercise/class session, the instructor summarized the experience and its intent. The instructional methodology appeared to be quite effective in facilitating the students' engagement with the material, by stimulating their thinking and analysis skills, and encouraging them to articulate a policy position.

3. Assess the instructor's ability to communicate with, challenge and engage the students in their own learning. Give evidence of positive and negative aspects of class interaction and interest shown by students. Comment on the instructor's ability to guide and focus class discussion consistent with course objectives.

All the students appeared engaged and participated in the exercise. Students responded when called on by professor, and some volunteered information during discussions. The instructor knew all the students' names, and class dynamics evidenced a positive relationship between the instructor and the students. Differences in the students' policy orientations emerged during the exercise; the instructor skillfully negotiated these values differences between students as they arose, ensuring that the discussion focused on the course objectives and session intent, while allowing students to challenge one another's reasoning.

Overall assessment of this instructor's teaching:

5 = Outstanding 4.5 4 = Very Good 3 = Good 2 = Fair 1 = Poor

Overall comments on Instructor's strengths:

The exercise developed and used by the instructor was creative and effective; it facilitated critical thinking, kept up students' energy, and delved thoroughly into the policy issue. In addition, the instructor did an excellent job facilitating the exercise. Her management and guidance of the discussion was skillful. She was able to reflect ideas back in a helpful manner to students struggling to articulate their policy positions; she was respectful of students' positions and yet challenged them when these positions were less than fully considered.

Comments on areas for improvement:

The initial presentation of the policy debates was somewhat brief. As this initial presentation set the stage for the exercise, it might have been useful to take a bit more time introducing the ideas. In addition, the instructor speaks very clearly but quite quickly; some students might have had trouble following.

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San Francisco State University
Department of Child and Adolescent Development
Observation of Lecturer – Yolanda Anyon

Observation Date: March 17, 2011

Class: CAD 600, CAD Internship Seminar

Evaluator: Dr. Rene Dahl, Professor and Department Chair

Class Covered:

Reviewed agenda on power point slide; discussed mid-course evaluation by students and portrayed the data on a bar graph; discussed students' efolio concerns; had small group work; discussed competencies. The mixed modalities of whole class presentation and small group discussion was effective with this group.

Overall Instructor Demeanor:

Yolanda was friendly and accessible with students; understood the undergraduate experience; voice was clear and animated (the room was noisy – air system); moved around the classroom easily and with confidence; expressed ideas and opinions clearly and logically; gave focused and relevant feedback to students; very much in charge of the classroom in a positive way re: pace, tempo; discussion topics; posed open-ended questions for clarification, check in, and to provide examples --- an effective strategy with the students.

Student Mid-Course Evaluation:

Yolanda organized the students' feedback into areas re: strengths and weaknesses and presented the data on a bar graph – a powerful visual tool. Invited comments and clarification on some of the data by saying, "If I'm misunderstanding anything ... " Very open to students' feedback and talked about how their suggestions on areas to strengthen would be incorporated re: course organization, stimulating learning experiences. Talked about how the course enhanced critical thinking, and about how it was necessary to find a way to organize the class so people's needs were met but while honoring the purpose of the course. Yolanda also challenged the students on their willingness to dig deeper with the material and to push each other a bit more in their small group discussions.

Small Group Work:

Clear explanation of students' task: "Let me explain what you're doing to do in your groups today. I asked you to look back ... re: theorists and study ..." She explained that the discussion was in preparation for their 5th efolio assignment. The task was on a power point slide so students could refer to it during their small group work. During the group work, Yolanda sat with each of the groups to listen and answer questions, perhaps stayed with one group too long. She brought energy to the groups and probed and asked questions as well as listened intently to what the students were saying.

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Competency: Diversity and Multiculturalism; **Format:** Whole Group Discussion

Began by asking “Why is this competency important?” Tied the competency discussion to the topic of youth work, giving examples of why the competency is important. “Being receptive to who youth are, their needs, and why it is important to develop different approaches to interpersonal relationships.” With regard to theories of development, Yolanda asked, “Were those youth in mind when the theories were developed?” And followed up by explaining how Vygotsky was one of the few theorists who considered diversity. Other questions she posed to help push the students to think more deeply and in an applied way, “How do they reinforce ideas of superiority ... at your sites ... how can you adapt?” “What are some ways that things you do at your site are reflective of young children’s’ experiences?” In this part of the class, Yolanda demonstrated her skill at making connections for students to model to students what that looked/sounded like, to think at higher levels, to think more deeply, and to apply theory to practice.

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EXAMPLES OF IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

SW 116, In Class Activity: Features of Positive Developmental Settings

Time: 20 minutes.

Group Name: _____

Today's Facilitator: _____

Today's Recorder: _____

Today's Reporter: _____

Other group members here today: _____

Instructions:

1. Read the provided newspaper article.
2. In a couple of sentences, summarize the youth development program profiled in the article.
3. In one sentence, describe the population this program targets.
4. Identify at least one feature of a positive developmental setting (as described in Table 4-1 from the Eccles reading) that is evident in this article. Describe the evidence of this feature.
5. Choose a different feature. Imagine and describe at least one activity or strategy that this program could use to add this feature to their program.

<i>Provide a brief description of the program profiled in your article:</i>	
<i>Who is the target population for this program?</i> (ex: Latino youth from East Los Angeles)	
<i>What features of a positive developmental setting are evident in the article?</i> (ex: Supportive Relationships)	<i>Describe the evidence from your article:</i> (ex: The mentor helped Susan apply for college and figure out how to pay for it.)

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<p><i>Identify a feature of a positive developmental setting that is not mentioned or evident in your article:</i></p>	<p><i>Imagine and describe at least one activity or strategy this program could use to add this feature to their program:</i></p>
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