

Teaching Statement

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The foreign language classroom is a space where students and teachers critically and analytically engage with the most pressing issues of our time. I strive to provide students with such a space, wherein they acquire and apply the necessary tools to grapple with complex concepts, and where they are encouraged to challenge their own assumptions and beliefs. The ultimate goal of my teaching is to empower students to reflect critically on their own environment and the world around them through German language and culture, so that they become interculturally competent citizens in our globalizing world. At the same time, I stress the practical utility of studying German, in that it equips students with a higher mobility in an evermore global employment market.

With these goals in mind, I draw on learning-centered pedagogies that allow students to take ownership of their learning. In my language classes, students review grammatical structures and foundational concepts independently, allowing classroom time to be devoted to meaningful applications of those skills. Activities are based upon authentic source materials, exposing students to context-specific lexico-grammatical structures. In my beginning German 2 class, students are asked to examine Janosch's *Oh wie schön ist Panama* at home by identifying past tense verb forms in the text, and creating a thematically organized vocabulary list of unfamiliar words and phrases. In class, they use their vocabulary lists to give brief oral summaries of the text, then work on a creative group writing assignment to compose their own original fairy tales. This sequence allows students to improve their communicative skills in all four modalities.

In addition to creating a culture of critical thinking, my assessments reflect my commitment to active student engagement. Rather than testing isolated grammatical structures, I challenge students to *apply* their structural and cultural knowledge in diverse project-based activities. For example, after discussing the history of the Berlin wall and the idea of "Mauer im Kopf" through a graphic novel, students in my second-semester German class create their own comic strip in which they illustrate "mental walls" that they had to overcome at some point in their lives. This assignment allows them to draw on the structural and genre conventions of the graphic novel, while at the same time making meaningful intercultural connections between German history and their own lives.

For many assignments, I also incorporate technology to mimic real life communicative scenarios. In a unit on finding housing in Germany, students had to respond to a rental ad I had created by leaving an inquiry on a Google Voice account indicating their interest and suitability for the fictional rental. We reviewed the recorded messages in a later class, reinforcing key grammatical concepts. In my class on representations of masculinity, students did original research on the history of an art object, which they compiled into blog posts. The digital format also allowed for students to engage with and comment on their classmates' research. Students also met with overseas collaborators at German universities via teleconferencing, which provided them with invaluable intercultural perspectives.

My research and my teaching mutually constitute one another. As a German Studies scholar focused on issues of diversity and transculturality, my students engage with different cultures through an array of sources, such as newspaper readings, short video clips, as well as literature, music, and film by German artists. Selecting diverse resources exposes students to unique, nuanced and alternative viewpoints, and enhances both linguistic and analytical skills. In my literature classes, I juxtapose canonical works with more marginal texts, and I make works by women and minority authors a core element of my courses.

In order to refine my craft as a teacher, I co-founded an interdepartmental “scholarship of teaching and learning” (SOTL) reading group to provide a space for language instructors to reflect on their teaching practices in dialogue with current pedagogical and second-language-acquisition scholarship. I am also completing the Certificate in College Teaching program at Duke University, which has allowed me to acquire skills in digital pedagogy, and a deep understanding of designing blended learning curricula that combine online elements with face-to-face instruction. I believe that an implementation of online teaching tools presents language teachers with the tremendous possibility of significantly expanding the quality time students engage with each other in the target language. My ongoing commitment to teaching excellence was recognized with the 2015 Frank Borchardt Teaching Award, and with the invitation to join the Middlebury Language School Faculty for their selective seven-week German summer program.

To me, teaching is about being a mentor, and providing students with the resources that they need to follow their own intellectual curiosities. I create an active, democratic learning environment where the study of the language engages students with interdisciplinary source materials, and ultimately enables students to connect to the German language and culture. With the help of different digital communication platforms, students have meaningful, real-world conversations, which shows them the importance of gaining a nuanced understanding of lexico-grammatical structures, and the ability to communicate in different contexts. By reaching linguistic fluency, students become proficient in intercultural exchanges, thereby allowing them to be responsible global citizens.