

Teaching and Diversity Statement

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Thinking is an action. For all aspiring intellectuals, thoughts are the laboratory where one goes to pose questions and find answers, and the place where visions of theory and practice come together.

—bell hooks

My teaching philosophy is inspired by the belief that good education encourages students to act independently, think independently, do research on their own, and yet to remain in service to human society, contributing to a more liveable world. I have been fortunate in having had passionate teachers throughout my academic education. The characteristics of their teaching that impacted my own education most are those which I now strive to reproduce in my classroom. As a teacher I try to find ways to stimulate critical thinking, to open up spaces for lively discussions, and to encourage enthusiasm for philosophical investigation as an exploratory inquiry. With bell hooks, I understand the classroom as a place where there is a sense of struggle as much as a will to work together as scholars to overcome estrangement and alienation in and beyond the classroom in order to make the world 'more rather than less real'. By doing so, I aim to inspire intellectual and personal growth in my students. I encourage my students to make informed decisions about the merits of arguments by discussing their strengths and weaknesses, but also their socio-cultural situatedness and implications.

For the past seven years, I had the opportunity to gather substantial experience in interdisciplinary research and teaching at universities in Austria, Sweden, and the US. My course work has covered a wide range of topics at the intersection of the philosophy of technology, science and technology studies, feminist epistemology, critical theory, and environmental philosophy. For example, I have designed and taught courses on the ethics of emerging technologies, on society and technology, on feminist epistemologies and philosophies of science, as well as on the politics of new media and communication theories. As a lecturer, I have advised both graduate and undergraduate students across different disciplines and programs. I pursue an interdisciplinary focus in my teaching and employ various approaches and methods that provide my students with a broad knowledge not only of philosophical theories and concepts but also of historical and contemporary political, social, and environmental issues.

Rather than simply lecturing a class, I employ aspects and methods of experiential learning in order to cultivate critical thinking and enhance my student's analytical skills. For example, I combine project-based and problem-based learning with traditional techniques such as group work and presentations, e-learning and online discussion forums, as well as excursion to museums, research institutions, and theaters. My students do not play a passive role in my classroom but are colleagues that learn together and work together on contemporary and emerging questions at the intersection of science, technology, and society. Since I attach great importance to collaborative work, I encourage my students to understand complex phenomena and problems through collaborative reading and research projects.

Where it is possible, I strive to integrate philosophical study with professional research and work, allowing my students to learn and to grow outside the classroom through first-hand experience and

observation. For example, in one of my courses I took my students to the Globe and Cartography Museum not only to see the scientific and technological objects we were discussing in the classroom, but also to get a better understanding of the social, cultural, and political influences that play a role in the shaping of scientific knowledge and the technological objects discussed. In another course, I provided my students with a look behind the scenes of the Natural History Museum in Vienna where researchers, curators, taxidermists, and many other people were working hidden from the visitors. In response to this, a student told me that it was “fantastic to see abstract philosophical concepts and ideas coming to life”, and that she would “see the theories and objects we discussed in the classroom in a very different light now”. Writing detailed feedback on assignments can be very time consuming but, nevertheless, I believe it is one of the most important tasks of a good teacher to provide students with comments that are tailored to their efforts, abilities, and needs. In response to this practice, a student told me that it was “the very first time [he] got such a detailed feedback on [his] work”, encouraging him to pursue publication of his revised paper.

Within the classroom, I have demonstrated commitment to teaching a diverse body of students coming from different academic and cultural backgrounds. I foster an environment where mutual respect is the norm, and believe in diversity and equal opportunity. As someone whose parents were migrants themselves, I know that many students especially, but not exclusively, students of color, LGBT students, and students with special needs still too often have to struggle with social exclusion and marginalization. Therefore, I foster an environment where mutual respect and cooperation is the norm. I offer my students the possibility to discuss the papers they write in other courses or prepare for publication. For example, in a course on feminist technoscience studies, I had two students who wanted to discuss their undergraduate dissertation they wrote elsewhere. Even though I was not under contract anymore by the university where I had taught the course, I not only met regularly with the students and discussed their work but also provided them with further literature for their final exam—which both students have later passed with honors.

I understand that studying today can be challenging and sometimes even emotionally exhausting. Consequently, I have experience in teaching students suffering from emotional stress. For example, one of my undergraduates was an exceptional student but struggled with burnout and depression. After offering extra meetings outside of the classroom, he not only decided to stay, instead of dropping the class, but also to write his undergraduate dissertation in my course—his thesis on the Quantified Self movement and the role of algorithms for technologies of the self turned out to be one of the best I have ever advised. My courses have been received well by my students and the university administration, yet moments like this are even more rewarding for me as a teacher.

To conclude, I wish to build on those qualities that meant the most to me during my education. I am eager to bringing my own insights and passion for conducting research into the classroom, encouraging my students to think critically and act independently. My pedagogic strategies are dedicated to teaching in ways that will remain with the students long after they left my classroom. I can particularly envision teaching courses on topics on emerging topics in the ethics and politics of technology (particularly in the context of migration and border control), on the history of technology and society, on the relationship between science, truth, objectivity, and democracy against the backdrop of climate change, as well as on feminist epistemologies and technoscience studies.