

### **Dr. Jeffrey S.J. Kirchoff—Teaching Philosophy**

As a writing teacher, I strive to work with students to help them become comfortable using their (writing) voice for a variety of purposes, situations, and audiences. At the heart of this work, then, is helping students understand how writing acts as a form of identity, or at the very least a way to discover identity. For instance, there are regional and cultural differences within language and I want students to recognize that there are appropriate places for the multiple voices of written and spoken discourse. When this is not realized, the written text can be seen as a barrier in understanding and acceptance. At the same time, I recognize that because writing is inextricably connected to identity, students may view writing as intensely personal and as such, be apprehensive to share. Much of my work, then, is helping students find the confidence to share their writing.

To that end, my approach to teaching writing recognizes that students are active, intelligent individuals with valuable experiences and insights that can make for a dynamic, interactive classroom environment. One way is through community-based assessment; when appropriate, for each major assignment students are asked to provide input for the grading rubric. This is done through both small group and large group conversations between the students and me. This approach to writing assessment works towards teacher-student collaboration while further establishing that I respect and appreciate what the students are hoping to learn within the course and more specifically, each assignment. Often, the rubric-constructing discussions turn into powerful conversations about the form, purpose, and audience for each assignment. This student-centered approach gives students a larger stake in their education by helping keep the material meaningful to them.

While it is important to give students' confidence to use their unique writing voice, it is equally important to prepare students to compose in a variety of settings for a variety of purposes. One way to achieve this goal is to actively encourage students to think about the many forms that writing, or composition, can take. Too often students think about writing as only 8.5" x 11" essays that follow a very strict form or as students put it, formula. This tends to be a limiting point of view. Thus, I ask students to compose in public blogs, discussion, boards, and wikis—modes and forms of writing that function as very public discourse with an audience that extends beyond their peers and their professor. I also I ask students to read and analyze a variety of compositions that expand traditional notions of writing, such as comic books/graphic novels, interactive/dynamic web pages, blogs, wikis, and videos in an effort to start a dialogue about how we can best mediate communication to achieve our purpose and effectively address an audience. I also provide students with more traditional alphabetic texts from major works of literature, selected prose, and scholarly journal articles; not only do we analyze these texts—along with the aforementioned multimodal texts— but I also hope that a text will spark a particular interest in a subject or infuriate students and motivate them to write a rebuttal piece.

My goal is to be an engaging professor who can provide a worthwhile experience for students. I hope to teach them different styles and modes of writing while encouraging them to appreciate various voices. To achieve this, I create a safe, workshop environment where collaboration between all stakeholders is welcomed and practiced. I want students to be actively involved, comfortable expressing their ideas, willing to experiment with writing, and to develop a rapport and respect with one another, with me, and with the written word.