

Teaching with Technology Philosophy

Executive Summary

David R. Guinnup* - April 22, 2021

I view teaching as a service — a service to the student, the public, and future generations — with service to the student being the more immediate and critical priority. As an educator, I believe that I have the responsibility to create learning environments that foster deep analytical critical thinking and problem solving, and assist students to become reflective thinkers. If I find a technology that will likely enable me to enhance the learning environment and improve learning outcomes, then I owe to my students to try it, and if it works, use it routinely where applicable.**

My beliefs about teaching primarily stem from my participation in the Temple University (TU) Teaching in Higher Education Certificate Program, and helping teach and coordinate two large enrollment sections of a GenEd course over the last nine years. The course is entitled People, Places and Environment (PPE). Traditionally, this course has been conducted by lecture in physical classrooms, but with my support has gradually incorporated more active learning elements, now made more possible by cyber-technology.

I believe that I must do more than just transfer topical content via basically one way lectures. Rather, I provide a variety of learning environments, group discussions, activities, and writing exercises to encourage and successfully induce student thinking, and stimulate better oral and written expression. A variety of contexts deepens learning, and helps students organize knowledge for better retention. Also, I provide opportunities for students to apply fundamental concepts and ideas. I recognize the role of and limitations that prior knowledge has on student learning, especially for first and second year college students. PPE covers material that most students likely have not encountered in their family, school, or social lives. So, I build a progressive scaffolding of readings, videos, self-assessments, polls, and discussion boards. However, building community starts on day one with introductions and sharing some information about each other. I believe that providing frequent and meaningful feedback to students, including assessments (both non-graded self, and graded) of performance and learning, is vital.

Being inclusive is important. A book of readings is required, but very expensive. With the cooperation of the Temple University Library, I organized the retrieval, scanning, and placement of the source materials into the LMS feature called “Course Reserves.”

Providing a safe zone is important for exploring and discussing the many dimensions and aspects of inclusiveness and diversity — not just diversity of ideas and opinions, but also of experience, culture, race, ethnic background, gender, political persuasion, socioeconomic class, and physical/mental challenge. I think it is essential to bring major current events and controversies into the classroom - they provide fantastic teachable moments. As an example, this Fall, I recognized that the killing of Philadelphian Walter Wallace, Jr. with subsequent protests, violence, and curfews was the elephant in the classroom. So, I created 10 slides, I used 8 to 10 minutes at the beginning of class to discuss what happened, but ended on a hopeful note.

* David R. Guinnup, AICP, is a Urban and Regional Planner, and Applied Economist with over 40 years of professional experience, who is now teaching in the Temple University Department of Architecture and Environmental Design.

** If the technology makes sense for the environment when evaluated (e.g. see The SECTIONS Model, A.W. Bates, 2015).