

Teaching Statement for Hayden C. Dawes

My Teaching Goals and Strategies

As a social work instructor, I am responsible for equipping students with experiences, knowledge, and skills to assist them in becoming ethical social work practitioners. As an instructor, I want my students to be engaged and feel valued in the classroom environment while actively interested in the course material. Most importantly, I want my students to embrace becoming life-long learners about themselves and the world. My teaching is characterized by three principles: (1) valuing the voice of each student while honoring the collective community; (2) the use of experiential activities; (3) and life-long learning with the development of a sense of mastery.

Valuing the voice of each student and honoring the collective community

On the first day of class, I describe my educational background, areas of interest, and research and practice experience. I also explain how my worldview and approach to learning have been informed by personal experiences of being a gay, Black man. By demonstrating who I am as a scholar and individual, I illustrate to students that there is value in all who they are as much as what they know.

Whether I am teaching a research or practice course, students are asked to reflect upon the value of their lived experiences and that of their classmates. By reflecting on their backgrounds and current social contexts throughout the course, students begin to value their contributions and the offerings from their fellow students. Creating space for the totality of students shows that each person in the class has a valuable perspective. As an initial activity, the students in small groups discuss class norms and behaviors that they wish to see in our community and what behaviors they do not wish to see. We complete the activity by having a group discussion and using consensus to form the basis of our community agreements. This practice illustrates that each student may have different needs separately, but collectively, we must honor the classroom community in which we are to all learn.

The use of experiential activities

Students need various experiences and activities in their learning process. These experiential moments can be drawn upon in the future when students are working in the field. Given this, I draw from an assortment of teaching and learning activities, which include (1) PowerPoint presentations incorporating text, charts, graphs, and images; (2) reflection and discussion questions for the whole class, small groups, and student pairs depending on topic sensitivity; (3) discussing multimedia (e.g., video, podcasts); (4) generating and organizing ideas on the board; and (5) small group application activities such as roleplays.

Within all of my courses, the focus is on learning practical skills. Therefore, I use experiential activities because they allow students to apply ideas presented in class or the course readings. Further, these experiential activities form the basis of bridging content from the classroom to “the real world.” For example, in a class I taught on working with clients with substance use issues, students role-played how to interview the client and provide a follow-up session. In class, each group of students received feedback from their peers in addition to the other instructor or myself. After the small group, this was followed by a whole-class discussion where each group discussed the process of being the clinician and client. This technique helps students deepen their experiential knowledge about a particular topic and allows them to give and receive feedback, which are vital professional skills.

“I really enjoyed the power points and the virtual in-class activities and discussion. I was never bored and felt engaged the entire class time. I feel that Hayden's teaching style supported my personal learning and reflection, as well as fostered a learning environment where I felt comfortable contributing.”

Life-long learning with the development of a sense of mastery.

My approach to teaching begins by practicing a commitment to lifelong learning while noticing the sense of mastery that is being developed along the way. I demonstrate this with students by reviewing course materials weekly and quizzing periodically. A critique from my previous students and teaching mentors

was the importance of owning my expertise while learning to have more confidence in my teaching abilities. Therefore, I have learned that students (as well as myself) need to trust that they have mastery in areas. For example, in a class session that I taught on building a positive relationship with clients, I had students generate a list of what makes for a healthy relationship with clients (or anyone). After completing the lecture, the students could see that they already knew many components of a healthy therapeutic relationship.

Through the use of self, I express to students that although I have attained higher degrees, I am committed to life-long learning to improve my teaching and social work practice. I share what I am reading and learning regarding social work scholarship with the importance of exposing oneself to various contemporary viewpoints and political arguments - whether one agrees or not. Ultimately, future (and current) practitioners should remain committed to developing their practice with a cultivated love of learning.

“[Hayden] was clearly prepared, and his knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm showed in his teaching. He did an excellent job of reaching students through Zoom, in a context where it is easy for us to check out or get distracted. I appreciate how he respects the complexity of the material-- he doesn't oversimplify or flatten it, and when we asked about clinical practice, he did justice to how 'messy' things can be in the field.”

My Teaching Experience

I have a range of instructional experiences, including in-service training for professionals and working with undergraduate and master's level students. Modes of instruction for these settings have included in-person, entirely virtual, and hybrid; I feel comfortable with all these forms of instructional delivery. I have taught courses in social work practice and social work research. Regarding teaching pedagogy, I completed an anti-racism teaching seminar where I learned fundamental and advanced tools for teaching and discussing challenging issues in the classroom. I finished a teaching practicum with a highly awarded clinical professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Social Work in an Adult Mental Health course. During this practicum, I led the instruction of two class sessions and assisted with planning, grading, and meeting with students. In the Spring of 2021, I independently taught an MSW course in research methods to over 20 students with an average of 6.44 teaching evaluation scores (scores range from 0 to 7; higher scores indicate greater satisfaction). Outside these academic experiences, I also guest-lectured various graduate and undergraduate courses.

My Teaching Interests

I envision teaching a range of courses in an academic environment, including bachelor's, master's, or doctoral. I would prioritize teaching practice courses related to clinical work, especially those focused on race, culture, and ethnicity. Furthermore, given my clinical and research experience, I am qualified to teach in other practice and foundational social work courses. I am also ready to develop special topics on trauma, LGBTQ+ issues, social media, digital social work, research translation, and dissemination. Through teaching and developing courses in these important areas and mentoring students, serving as a faculty member in an academic environment would allow me to help shape the next generation of social workers and the social work profession.