

Teaching Philosophy

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Education in the field of college media must be practical. In the classroom or the lab environment of the campus newspaper, radio station or TV station, a good teacher pushes students to strive for perfection—something mass media work requires—and then helps them to recover, recoup and learn when they fall short of this ultimately impossible goal.

Starting with their first interview, reporters must learn to get their facts straight and their quotes exact. The teacher-student dialogue includes everything from effective news leads to libel—to ethics and Associated Press style and the impact of current events. Students should go into the field to find their own enterprise stories, to unearth local issues worthy of reporting, and to produce their stories in a multimedia environment, for that is what journalists do: they write what people must read. I encourage my young reporters and editors to scour local and national newspapers to discover what works and what doesn't in terms of writing, editing, layout and design, and to apply what they learn in their daily work. Studying journalism is exciting because, trite as this might sound, the events of the world—from local student council meetings to events at the White House—comprise the student's textbook.

I am blessed to have the opportunity to teach students in an exciting, dynamic time for the media industry, where they can learn practical, marketable skills while expanding their ways of thinking. In my media classes at the University of Vermont, I entwine the academic curriculum with practical application in the club spaces for The Vermont Cynic, WRUV-FM and UVMtv, where students receive real-world experience, complete with critical feedback from

those consumers of mass media who, as often as not, will challenge my students' work-product and ways of thinking. My students can learn through this back-and-forth with their audience, but mere audience feedback is not enough. I continually supplement the in-class and in-lab work with excursions to professional media environments and "staff retreats" to locations in which they can make long-term plans for these campus organizations and interact with populations that they might otherwise fail to notice, cover or connect with, including LGBTQA, Greek and POC communities.

Through the efforts of a dedicated faculty, students can become knowledgeable critics of their own work and the work of others; they can transform so as to become independent problem-solvers: vital in a generation of students might have grown up too dependent on technology, parents or other so-called authorities. As students progress from first-year to senior year, they move from knowledge and skills training to leadership training so that they can develop into leaders of one another. In this way, they can educate their peers as well as any professor could. Oftentimes they teach one another better than any professor could. Through this process, they can develop their own, socially just community of life-long leaders and learners. They can become first-rate thinkers who employ technology rather than letting it guide their thinking. Moreover, they can become civic-minded adults capable of responsibly contributing to the society of which they are a part.