

## **Teaching Philosophy**

A student told me I “*taught in a way that could be felt*”. I aspire for teaching that lingers in hearts and challenges minds long after the course ends. Every course constitutes a journey. My role is to guide students to further enlightenment and a more sophisticated understanding of complex historical factors that shaped America. My teaching philosophy is grounded in **5 key principles**.

**Critical thinking** is a cornerstone. I often employ the Socratic Method so students learn through inquiry: *why* did specific actions cause specific reactions; *why* were certain events significant in the past; and *why* are they relevant today. Students become inextricable to classroom dialogue. It is call and response between instructor and student.

Secondly, I **connect historical topics to contemporary issues**. I consider things like: *How did it impact America; who were key actors and provocateurs; what collateral effects emanated from this event; and how is this topic relevant to today*. For instance, I ask students to investigate Teddy Roosevelt’s life holistically. Students read excerpts from his personal memoirs to understand events that shaped his character. Students evaluate his foreign policy, influenced by his belief in the salience of naval strength. Furthermore, students analyze his domestic policies-- his skillful handling of the coal strike in Pennsylvania, juxtaposed with his disregard for falsely accused black soldiers in the Brownsville incident. Thus, after triangulating many sources, students decode Roosevelt’s complex legacy as an embodiment of America’s expanding world view at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond.

Thirdly, I believe in **the power of reading**. I expose students to rigorous historical texts and provide citations for lectures and assignments. Students glean from scholarly sources along with excerpts from popular culture, memoirs, and literature. I believe literature and music unearth deeper truths beneath historical ‘facts’. Hence, students studying tenets of Derrick Bell’s *Critical Race Theory*, along with lyrics from Public Enemy’s *Fight the Power*, realize the same phenomena are highlighted through different mediums.

Fourth, I **believe in the lecture** and the percussive effects of the human voice on mind and heart. As a trained teacher, poet, public speaker, and ministry leader, I’ve learned from various elocutionists. Students read, think, and write in my courses. However, I also create engaging lectures to *talk ‘to’* students, not *‘at’* them. I invite them to become interlocutors with history in a way that presumes it is both an exciting and vital discipline. Full of blood, struggle, love, hate, defeat, and triumph, History is masterpiece theatre.

Finally, I **balance exposure to anecdotal and quantitative historical evidence**. I do not elevate statistical data over the validity of story. History is full of stories that resonate powerfully—Anne Frank still lives. My goal is to show students that anecdotal and statistical evidence work symbiotically to portray historical truths. These truths urge us to locate and aspire to our greatest selves.