

Teaching Statement—Aleksondra Hultquist

The principles of close reading, archival context, performativity, and emotion theory that guide my published research are integral to my teaching methods. Through these approaches, I teach students to read critically and think analytically through their writing. Sharing my enthusiasm for the subject, challenging students, and giving them clear assessment parameters allows me to encourage them to develop their own interests and potential in whatever fields or areas of study they choose to enter.

My teaching approach stems from my belief that if students are engaged from the beginning, they will attempt anything. Understanding where students are coming from, and making them understand where I am coming from, are crucial components of my classroom. The best ideas that they produce occur when they make mistakes and try different approaches. To this end, I follow two main pedagogical approaches to engagement: discomfort in the classroom and specifying the tasks of writing. Michalinos Zembylas and Claire McGlynn, argue for productivity in discomfort, that it makes students confront their emotions, which in turn challenges and changes their viewpoints. Following Art Young's ideas about how students can write effectively across the curriculum, I create assignments that clearly distinguish between "writing to think" and "writing to communicate": responses and free writing are required and turned in, but marked for ideas rather than structure or grammar; final essays have clear parameters for structure, research integration, and basic editing requirements.

Inspiring students can take several forms: demonstrating my own enthusiasm for the subject matter; connecting their experience to the text; encouraging innovative engagements with the text. One project in discomfort that has been successful in the classroom requires that students choose a piece of text to gloss and perform (a dramatic reading of a poem or fictional work; present a scene or soliloquy). This discomforting assignment accomplishes several pedagogical tasks. First, it requires students to close read text in order to understand (and memorize) its full intellectual and emotional reading. Second, students engage in the relationship between text and presentation; they must think practically about how to convey ideas. Finally, the project introduces them to tangible research they may be unfamiliar with, such as production reviews or historical reading practices. The students find that through preparation and research, performance is much easier—their discomfort leads them to new understanding. Another project I've devised inspires students by creating assignments based on a university's rare book collections (or other local historical archive), where students can actually engage with the ephemera of the age that we study in the subject. The material context of the book, such as paper and printing quality, the repetition of illustrations and printers marks, even the accessories of reading (furniture, space, magnifying machines), can be a link to a world with which they are unfamiliar; they learn that tactile connection and context are as significant to meaning as is textual analysis. Both of these projects are accompanied by writing components; they gloss a section of the original text and they write a "response" to the project, their impressions, discoveries, challenges, and thoughts associated with the assignment (both "writing to think" tasks). Students also compose a traditional analytical essay, where they link their textual research and extra-textual experiences to the analysis of the assigned text (the "writing to communicate" task).

One of the ways that I impart my enthusiasm for the subjects that I teach comes from my belief that the literature and culture of the long eighteenth century remain significant to contemporary thought and culture. The writing of the eighteenth century is the basis for the American government and legal system (John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*), for modern economic theory (Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*), and the scientific method (Sir Isaac Newton's *Principia*). Also to have their start in the eighteenth century are first professional women writer (Aphra Behn), new literary forms (the novel and journalism), and modern literary criticism (essays on drama and satire by John Dryden). Once students understand the centrality of eighteenth-century writing to their own daily life and practices, once students realize that they are the direct product of eighteenth-century thought and culture, they get excited about the other possibilities they discover over the course of the semester.