

Getting Started on Your Teaching Portfolio

Please describe your teaching responsibilities.

I teach the freshman and sophomore survey of U.S. history at an open enrollment two-year college. The freshman survey fulfills a legislative mandate required of all students who want an associate's or bachelor's degree. Therefore, the majority of my students are not history majors and are taking the course because they are required to do so. I teach three or four sections of the freshman survey each semester; maximum enrollment in each section is 45 students. I teach one section each semester of the sophomore course, which is a two-semester sequence for history majors. Enrollment is usually three or four students.

Please describe your teaching methods and explain why you teach as you do. Give examples.

I teach through a combination of classroom lecture, discussion, and active learning projects. In HIST 1700, for example, I present a lecture at nearly every class meeting, but these lectures often include multimedia presentations and include a lot of traditional "call and response" in which I ask students to guess what comes next, offer possible explanations for events and a variety of other short questions. Lectures are tied to a series of active learning projects in which students engage in research with materials I have prepared for them online and then write short essays. Assessment is through a staged series of assignments, practice quizzes, exams, and a concluding summary essay paper.

In my sophomore level course, where enrollment is very small, the approach is a seminar discussion of reading. Students complete a take home midterm and final essay exam and write a book review.

In the women's history course I once taught, in which the six students were not history majors, I took a biographical approach and had students keep weekly learning journals in the form of an altered textbook.

Please describe course projects, class assignments or other activities that help you integrate your subject matter with your students' outside experience.

I do not seek to integrate course subject matter with students' outside experience. One of the great values in studying history is to take students away from their own experience and help them analyze and understand the world from the perspective of

others. To that end, I often ask students to role play people from the past and imagine their experiences in a specific historic context.

I engage students by drawing upon their emotions, their curiosity, and as many sensory experiences as I can (with music, images, and even food). The one common experience that all human beings have is love for a good story and I regularly use narrative to stimulate student interest.

If you overheard your students talking about you and your teaching in the cafeteria, what would they likely be saying? What would you like them to say? Why is that important to you?

Students who take HIST 1700 say that the course is difficult but that they have learned things about the American past that they never knew before. Students often say that they never knew history could be so interesting. When a student comes to me in distress over a grade, I always ask them if they learned anything interesting or new from the lectures or the textbook. As they describe some of the insights or revelations they experienced in the course I remind them of the value of learning and of seeing learning as a process. This is what I think is most important for students to understand and take pride in.

Give examples and explain specific ways that you motivate your students to help them achieve better performance.

I design my courses with clear and meaningful structure to course content. I articulate learning goals and course requirements clearly and frequently—in the syllabus, in class discussion, in private conversations with students. I also provide support materials online so that students can use them as they need and at times they need.

Statement of teaching goals for next five years.

Develop and teach upper division courses; develop and teach USU 1300; develop a four-year Liberal Arts major at USU Eastern.