

Nicole Cox  
Teaching Statement

I'm a writer who teaches, so my pedagogy is simple: writing is real. It's not a practice that exists in a vacuum—an assignment for this teacher, a tweet into that void—it's a way of understanding our world and making meaning. It's an instrument of community involvement and a tool of social change. Local, national, and global issues generate numerous forms of public conversations, and writing is one of the many ways we can contribute to, participate in, and expand our world. Nowhere is this practice more important than in a university writing classroom.

I've spent 15 years teaching Composition and Rhetoric to first-year students and feel a tremendous responsibility to fulfill three main, intersecting objectives. First, I aim to demystify the academy and help students access it with language and critical thinking. Second, I support students' intellectual and personal growth through the practice of writing. Third, I work to instill in all students the same knowledge and skills central to their future civic and professional lives, regardless of their educational, financial, or linguistic backgrounds.

To build trust and confidence, my classroom is organized around many small-group, student-centered activities to show, concretely, the importance of rhetorical choices and information literacy: analysis of miscellany from Davy Rothbart's bestseller, *Found*; a library scavenger hunt; legal debates; tiny ethnographies; public writing; and group annotation. Major writing projects, besides an evidence-based academic inquiry, have included feature stories, photo essays, discourse analyses, case studies, and reviews. All assignments, activities, and projects support my thesis because every semester, students must submit, post, or publicize their writing to make it real. This extra step always inspires students to independently revise, proofread, and polish their work beyond their normal efforts. They learn by practicing and by doing because that's what it means to be a writer.

Nicole Cox  
Teaching Statement

It gives me great satisfaction to guide students through rhetorical choices and then cheer them on as they apply lessons learned, gain confidence, and assert their independence as writers. Helping them understand the flexible relationships between audience and language, and between prescriptivism and descriptivism, stimulates the writer-teacher in me. Certainly, Standard Academic English is valuable currency, but it doesn't suit every situation, and it's not always necessary or helpful. All writers enter the classroom with their own Englishes. It's my job to help them raise and craft their voices. Helping students code-mesh and integrate their specific cultural and linguistic backgrounds with academese or profession-specific language is valuable intellectual and practical work for them—and it's important, critical work that benefits academia. It's empowering. As a writing teacher, there is nothing more gratifying than watching my students wield their power to make space for themselves in the world.

Whether at a state school, an R1 institution, a charter high school on the West side of Chicago, a community college in the DMV, or a PWI, I teach my students that writing is a series of rhetorical choices, and they learn how to make effective choices based on their understanding of the situation, genre, audience, and intended consequences. No matter the student population or demographics, the critical thinking and writing tools I offer students are the same. When my students understand that they bring their whole selves to the work, and that their transactions with academia can change both for the better, I know I am doing the deep and maybe even holy work of building a more diverse generation of writers and thinkers who value and promote linguistic justice and equity.